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The Missionary Dream 1820–1842

In the Knibb Baptist Chapel in Falmouth, Jamaica, an impressive marble monument hangs on the wall behind the communion table. As the *Baptist Herald* reported in February 1841:

> The emancipated Sons of Africa, in connexion with the church under the pastoral care of the Rev. W. Knibb, have recently erected in this place of worship a splendid marble monument, designed to perpetuate the remembrance of the glorious period when they came into the possession of that liberty which was their right, and of which they have proved themselves to be so pre-eminently worthy. It is surmounted with the figure of Justice, holding in her left hand the balances of equity, whilst her right hand rests upon the sword which is placed at her side. Beneath this figure the likenesses of Granville Sharp, Sturge, and Wilberforce are arrayed in bas-relief, and that of the Rev. W. Knibb appears at the base. The inscription reads:

DEO GLORIA

ERECTED
BY EMANCIPATED SONS OF AFRICA
TO COMMEMORATE
THE BIRTH-DAY OF THEIR FREEDOM
AUGUST THE FIRST 1838
HOPE
HAILS THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY
THROUGHOUT THE BRITISH COLONIES
AS THE DAY-SPRING OF
UNIVERSAL LIBERTY
TO ALL NATIONS OF MEN, WHOM
GOD "HATH MADE OF ONE BLOOD"

"ETHIOPIA SHALL SOON STRETCH OUT HER
HANDS UNTO GOD" LXVIII PSALM 31 VERSE

> Immediately under this inscription two Africans are represented in the act of burying the broken chain, and useless whip – another is rejoicing in the undisturbed possession of the book of God, whilst associated with these, a fond mother is joyously caressing the infant which for the first time she can dare to regard as *her own*. The monument, as a whole, is one of the best executed pieces of workmanship, and is certainly well worthy of the people by whom it has been created.[1]

What can this monument, made in Birmingham, tell us of the meanings of emancipation and of the complex relation between Jamaica and Britain? What entwined histories are revealed in this celebration of Granville Sharp, Joseph Sturge and William Wilberforce in a large Baptist chapel in a small Jamaican town? Who was William Knibb, and why was this chapel named after him?

The first day of August 1838 marked the moment of full emancipation when 'apprenticeship' was abolished. (Apprenticeship was the system introduced alongside compensation for the planters by the Imperial Government, to soften the blow of emancipation for those who had lost their 'property'.) Those once enslaved were now fully free. That moment marked the end of a prolonged struggle in both Britain and the Caribbean to secure the abolition of slavery, a struggle which always had both its British and its Caribbean forms. In Britain efforts to abolish the slave trade and question the whole system of slavery were launched by Granville Sharp amongst others in the 1770s, sustained under the leadership of William Wilberforce in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, and culminated in the abolition of the slave trade by the Imperial Parliament in 1807. Popular pressure was central to the passing of that legislation. In the 1820s the recognition that the demise of the British slave trade had not been effective in transforming the system of slavery resulted in a revival of anti-slavery activity in the country.

In the Caribbean the resistance of those enslaved peaked in Demerara (British Guiana) in 1823 and in Jamaica in 1831. Both rebellions were widely reported in Britain, partly because of the central involvement of missionaries in the events and the way in which they were held responsible by planters and colonists for the eruptions which took place. In 1832 the Baptist missionaries in Jamaica decided to send one of their brethren, William Knibb, pastor of the mission in Falmouth, to Britain. He was to answer the charges which had been made against them and raise funds for the rebuilding of the churches which had been destroyed as part of the backlash. Once in Britain, Knibb defied the authority of the Baptist Missionary Society, which, like all missionary societies, cautioned its agents against any form of political involvement, and came out publicly against slavery. His subsequent public speaking tour mobilised

large numbers for the campaign against slavery, a campaign which was finally successful in 1833, when slavery was abolished from 1 August 1834. A subsequent campaign against apprenticeship, in which Joseph Sturge, the Birmingham Quaker and corn merchant, played a vital part, resulted in the abolition of that system from 1 August 1838, as the monument records.[2] Sharp, Wilberforce, Sturge and Knibb were key figures in the anti-slavery movement. Neither Sharp nor Wilberforce ever went to Jamaica, but Sturge visited the West Indies in 1837, and William Knibb lived there from 1825 to his death in 1845.

The Baptist Missionary Society and the missionary project

The name Knibb is still well known in Jamaica. But why did missionaries become so crucial to the anti-slavery struggle? Jamaica had been nominally a Christian country from the time of its British settlement, but it was only with the arrival of missionaries that substantial efforts were made to Christianise the enslaved people. The Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) had been sending missionaries to Jamaica from 1814. Initially they had been invited by the black Baptists who had arrived on the island in the wake of American Independence, having supported the British, and had established a network of chapels and congregations amongst both the enslaved and free black men and women. Both enslaved men and women and free black people had flocked to the British army during the American Revolution, and 'were then dispersed around the Atlantic after 1783'. Some of them went to Jamaica, and Lord Balcarres, governor of the island, deeply regretted the 'Pandora's Box' that had been opened up in the West Indies. George Liele, for example, enslaved in Virginia, had founded the first Baptist church in Georgia. He was evacuated by the British, and established a following in Jamaica.[3]

The BMS had its roots in the evangelical revival of the late eighteenth century, that re-emergence of vital, serious or real Christianity, as compared with the nominal forms which had come to dominate Christian worship. Both nonconformists and Anglicans were inspired by the revival, and shared a common insistence on the centrality of individual sin and the conversion experience; on the individual's capacity to be born anew and to construct a new Christian identity, whether as man or as woman, built around their particular relation to the Christian household; and on a close monitoring both by the individual and by his or her pastor and his or her congregation of each soul and its progress towards salvation.[4]

Formed in the crucible of radical Protestantism in the seventeenth century, and surviving as a small dissenting sect in the eighteenth century, the Baptists enjoyed a great revival from the 1780s, associated with evangelicalism and bringing in significant numbers of new recruits to the faith.[5] In 1838 Gilbert estimates that there were about 100,000 members of Baptist churches, and by 1851 this had grown to 140,000 in a population of 20 million in England and Wales.[6] Women dominated that world in numbers, but not in status: as with all denominations, women constituted the majority of the congregation, but men occupied the positions of power.[7] The social base of New Dissent was predominantly artisanal, as Gilbert has shown, but with a small yet significant number of merchants, manufacturers, professional men, shopkeepers and farmers. As Clyde Binfield argues, 'the undenominational religious outpourings of the later eighteenth century caught the aspirations of the mobile classes of a new society. Its natural tendency was towards Dissent, since its values could not be established values as traditionally interpreted.' But renewed denominationalism, he suggests, was an inevitable outcome of this growth, as 'Dissent turned into Nonconformity and *movements* became *Churches*'.[8] The formation of the BMS in 1792, and of the General Union of Particular Baptists in 1812, was part of this process of definition.

For evangelicals, the key struggle of the late eighteenth century, in the wake of the French Revolution and English radicalism, was for hearts and minds. The nation had become warm in politics, but 'cold in religion'.[9] Heathens at home and abroad must be won for Christ, and an army of God must be mobilised for this work. William Carey, a Baptist minister in Northamptonshire, inspired others with his belief that Christians must not confine their mission to home but should take it to other parts of the world. 'Our own countrymen have the means of grace, and may attend on the word preached if they chuse it,' he wrote, but those 'who have no Bible, no written language . . . no ministers, no good civil government, nor any of those advantages which we have', call out for sustenance.[10] Inspired by this appeal, a small group of Baptist ministers met in Kettering, and decided to 'act together in society for the purpose of propagating the gospel among the heathen'.[11] The Baptists were the first to organise a society, but were soon followed by the London Missionary Society, initially interdenominational but soon to become Congregationalist, and the Church Missionary Society, an Anglican venture.[12]

The first field of activity for the BMS was in India, and Carey, together with William Ward and Joshua Marshman, established the station at Serampore which was to dominate the early years of the Baptist missionary endeavour.[13] In 1814, after pleas for support from the black Baptists who had well-established networks in Jamaica, and correspon-

dence between Dr Ryland, the Baptist divine, and William Wilberforce, the BMS sent John Rowe as their first emissary to the West Indies. His instructions from the committee impressed on him that he must not despise the enslaved on account of 'their ignorance, their colour, their country or their enslaved condition'.[14] The first years in Jamaica were dogged by ill health, death and political problems, for the planters were for the most part extremely hostile to missionary activities; but in the early 1820s the general revival of British interest in anti-slavery affected the Baptists too, and they committed more resources to Jamaica. Three of the men who were to be most influential both in Jamaica, where each of them has a chapel named after him, and in Britain, went to the island at this time – William Knibb, Thomas Burchell and James Mursell Phillippo. Missionaries had the distinction of being the first white men on the island not primarily interested in making a fortune.

The BMS venture in Jamaica grew steadily. By 1827 there were eight Baptist chapels with approximately 5,000 members; by 1831 there were twenty-four chapels with 10,000 members and 24,000 inquirers (that is, people seeking membership and being observed by the missionary and his auxiliaries); by 1835 this had increased to fifty-two stations with 13,795 members; and for some years these figures went up as the missionaries benefitted from the conviction amongst the freed black peoples that the missionaries had been crucial to the ending of slavery and apprenticeship.[15]

Most Baptist missionaries came from artisan families, some from the borders of the middle classes. From the beginning, missionaries had to deal with planter contempt, derision and harassment, but they were used to being laughed at for their faith, used to a society in which they were discriminated against and in which they had to fight to make their voices heard, used to being part of the army of God, outfacing sin, in whatever manifestations it appeared. Their struggle both at home and abroad, as they conceptualised it, was with the forces of evil, reaction, 'dark savagery', heathenism and superstition, all of which could as easily be met in the back streets of Birmingham as in the markets of Calcutta or the plantations of Jamaica. Slavery, however, offered a particular challenge, for in the anti-slavery imagination the 'poor negro' was scorned by all. As the most favoured of the abolitionist poets, Montgomery, wrote:

> And thou, poor Negro! scorned of all mankind;
> Thou dumb and impotent, and deaf and blind;
> Thou dead in spirit! toil degraded slave,
> Crush'd by the curse on Adam to the grave;
> The messengers of peace, o'er land and sea,
> That sought the sons of sorrow, stoop'd to thee.[16]

Thomas Burchell, who came from a solidly middle-class mercantile background and was used to being treated with respect, was shocked, despite all preparation, at the way in which he was treated by planters and officials in Jamaica. 'No Englishman, except a missionary, would be treated with so much contempt,' he wrote home.[17] Similarly, James Mursell Phillippo noted that even an invitation from the governor to meet him did not save him from the disdain of Jamaican whites. 'I was treated with superciliousness and contempt,' he noted.[18] The Baptist missionaries occupied a liminal space in Jamaica: white, yet allied with the enslaved and free black and coloured peoples, coming from a very different class background to that of the planters and the Anglican clergy.

The contempt they faced, however, could be offset by the influence which they established with the black population. Missionaries loved to tell their brethren in England of the 'hunger' for Christianity which they found amongst the enslaved, a sharp contrast with the situation at home. Thomas Burchell was moved by the comparison between the 'frozen congregations' which he had known in England and the voracious demand for missionary preaching in Jamaica, which threatened exhaustion, but was deeply enlivening.[19] The missionaries delighted in sending home computations of the numbers they had baptised, of their members and inquirers, all demonstrations of the power of the Word amongst the heathen.

The first necessity for a missionary life was the experience of conversion. For Thomas Burchell, son of a wool-stapler, conversion meant freedom from sin, the only true freedom there was; 'his captivity was exchanged for freedom, and his mourning turned into joy'.[20] Conversion brought with it the need for action, for in his mind Christian manliness was defined through the work he would do in the world. For evangelical Christians the action of combating sin, of enlisting in the army of God, provided a worthy arena. For aspirant artisans or lower middle-class men, missionary work abroad offered an exciting opportunity; indeed, in the early days of the Jamaica mission it proved to be a great deal more exciting than working as a minister in England, where congregations were often pitifully small. In Jamaica, converts came in their thousands up to the early 1840s, and the influence of the missionaries appeared to be profound. Not unusually, Philip Cornford found himself at age twenty-four the minister of a congregation of 2,800.[21] The encounter with both planters and the enslaved gave an intensity to the work which was hard to maintain in the mean streets of Manchester.[22]

Some of the missionaries recorded that they had been preoccupied since childhood with stories of 'the heathen', witness Thomas Burchell, who as a young man had loved to read conversion stories in the missionary press. These provided tales of triumph against all odds, promises

of crowns of glory.[23] Boys dreamt of a missionary martyrdom, rather than the adventures of Crusoe; the imperial project and the imaginations it engendered took many forms. Such dreams inspired Bernard Barton, the Quaker evangelical poet, when he was invited to write some introductory verses for the Rev. F. A. Cox's official *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*. Barton celebrated the men who went to the colonies not for the more traditional prizes of wealth or land, not for excitement or to chart the wonders of nature. Rather, their noble task was to save sinners, for they were the tools of the living God:

> For they went forth as followers of the Lamb,
> To spread his gospel-message far and wide,
> In the dread power of Him, the great I AM,
> In the meek spirit of the Crucified, –
> With unction from the Holy Ghost supplied,
> To war with error, ignorance and sin,
> To exalt humility, to humble pride,
> To still the passions' stormy strife within,
> Through wisdom from above immortal souls to win.[24]

Burchell's reading of the missionary press made him long 'to tread their shores, to mingle with their swarthy people, and to unfurl in their midst the banners of salvation'. As he became 'more acquainted with their barbarous atrocities and superstitious rites', he was increasingly convinced that he could find the strength to give up home. As he declared at his ordination, 'All my thoughts were occupied on missionary themes, and my chief happiness was associated with solicitude for the heathen.' His dreams were of India, for this was where Baptist missionaries were then active. 'India,' he wrote in a letter in 1820, 'I long to place my foot on thy polluted shores. I long to enter the field of action as an ensign in the army of the Saviour, bearing the banner of his cross. I long to exert myself in the glorious revolution now taking place.'[25]

Entry into missionary work meant applying to the BMS committee as a suitable candidate. Once accepted, the young men would undergo some training, either at one of the dissenting academies or in the home of a Baptist minister deemed suitable to take in a small group for preparation. Most of the trainees had a very limited educational background, having left school to go into trade at the age of twelve or thirteen. This lack of a 'proper' education was another source of derision from their class superiors both at home and abroad. Ordination followed their training, and the ritual of 'setting apart' the missionaries for their work, usually performed by a group of established ministers, some of whom would have personal connections with the ordinand. The training was

designed to foster and entrench the forms of Christian manliness which missionaries were to possess. Many of the Baptist missionaries in Jamaica were trained together and 'set apart' together, often with senior missionaries officiating, thus affirming the existence of a 'mission family', which it was a primary objective to sustain. The BMS committee decided where missionaries were to go, and each missionary was responsible to the committee for his actions. In the hostile situations into which so many missionaries went, support from home was a necessary part of survival, and there was a constant flow of letters between Jamaica and England. Missionaries were always at least partially dependent on money from home to finance their activities, and also needed the committee to intervene with the Colonial Office at times of acute tension.

The final 'necessary preparation' before sailing was marriage, for it was assumed that a married missionary would be of more use than a single one.[26] Not only would his masculinity be tamed by domesticity, and fears as to his going 'astray' much reduced, but missionary wives were a crucial part of a mission partnership. In the 1820s all the missionaries who were sent out by the BMS were married. When unmarried ones did arrive, there was general joy and relief when they made appropriate marriages. 'We were much pleased with Mrs. Taylor', reported a senior missionary to the BMS after he and his wife had visited a newly married missionary in Old Harbour, 'and think she is likely to assist our good brother well in his important work.'[27] The debauchery, as evangelicals saw it, of planter society, with its practice of concubinage, made Jamaica a dangerous place for a man on his own. For Baptist women who were seized with the missionary spirit, this meant a window of opportunity. They could not themselves become missionaries, but were needed to accompany men, it was argued, for it would be impossible to have access to many of 'the heathen' without workers of their own sex. It was widely believed in early nineteenth-century England that Western women owed their superior position to Christianity, for it was Christianity which had raised society from its superstitions and freed women from the degradations associated in the English mind with heathenism – in particular, the practice of 'sati' in India. It was proper, argued the protagonists of a special missionary sphere for women, that the daughters of Eve, first in transgression, be the first in restoration.[28] There was no question, however, of accepting women as trainees or granting them equal access with men. Marriage, therefore, offered the only route into the work for those women who wanted to do it. Mary Ann Chambers was able to take this route to satisfy her missionary ambitions, marrying the Rev. James Coultart and going with him to Jamaica.[29] Similarly, Mary Ann Middleditch, living in Northamptonshire and fired with dreams of assisting in the great anti-slavery struggle in the early 1830s,

married a missionary and got to Jamaica.[30] Accompanying an unmarried brother was also sometimes possible, and by the 1830s a small number of unmarried women were going out to the Caribbean as teachers. A Miss J. Clack, for example, went out from England to teach the young, for which she was well qualified on account of her 'affectionate disposition', which made her the admiration of the mission circle. A fever seized her, however, and her untimely death is commemorated in the graveyard of St Ann's Bay Baptist church.[31]

Outfits had to be purchased before missionaries could leave England, for anything not bought at home would be imported and consequently more expensive. It would help if a list of necessary items could be compiled, suggested the *Missionary Herald*, the official organ of the BMS. It should include stockings, neckerchiefs, handkerchiefs, collars, hats both of straw and of gossamer, linen and cotton shirts, towels, blankets, sheets and pillow-cases, flannel and calico articles, and materials 'for the usual articles of dress'. 'The outfit of a missionary's wife', it continued, 'is composed of the articles of dress used in this country, and light-coloured prints and muslins, and flannel articles are of great value.'[32] Knibb noted in the diary that he kept of his voyage how surprised his friends in Bristol and Kettering would have been to see him in 'light trousers and waistcoat and a short jacket', rather than the usual dark suit of the dissenting minister.[33] That dark suit functioned as an outward symbol of the inner transformation through which he had gone. Furthermore, for middle-class men, dark clothes which cloaked masculinity rather than drawing attention to it in the style of their fathers and grandfathers, were among the signs of a new focus on morality.[34] Some small concessions, however, were made for the tropics.

Faith was at the heart of the missionary endeavour: a belief in the depravity of mankind and the absolute necessity of a change of heart with Christ as the only route to salvation. The rebirth of the Christian man and woman, embedded in the Christian household, the finding of a new sense of self in Christ, was central to the evangelical project. The abandonment of self, the belief that men and women were but 'worms' in God's eyes, the most abject creatures at his command, coexisted with the powerful sense of self which both sexes derived from their convictions. Thomas Burchell, described by many visitors as a patriarch and a gentleman, dispensing hospitality in ample style from his very comfortable country residence in beautiful Mount Carey, one of the free villages set up after emancipation in the hills behind Montego Bay, reported to the secretary of the BMS a series of new mission stations he had established. 'I do not wish to mention anything boastingly,' he wrote; 'I feel my own nothingness, and my anxious desire is to be found at the foot of the cross.'[35] Part of this abjection was associated with the constant

struggle for self-improvement, for missionaries sought to evangelise in part through their own spiritual example. A careful watch over the self was central to any evangelical Christian's faith, but this took on an extra dimension when ministering to others.

The strength of the missionaries lay in their sense of righteousness, their necessary dependence on their flocks because of their exclusion from white society, their capacity to face persecution linked to their oft-invoked spirit of Protestant martyrdom, their commitment to the voluntary principle and, therefore, their conviction that it was only through the agency of men and women such as themselves that the new moral world would be created. The narrowness of their set of beliefs held them in a relatively secure framework, and enabled them to withstand multiple difficulties. The savagery and barbarism, as they constructed it, of the societies they went to justified their intervention. In bringing Christianity, they were bringing civilisation, for the two were linked in their discourse. The contest over slavery was a contest with Christianity; freedom meant the light of the Word of God, the chains of bondage being infidelity and ignorance. In the 'contest for empire' between Christianity and slavery, the light had triumphed, and Satan was defeated.[36] The missionaries were the 'messengers of mercy'.[37]

Inevitably they struggled not to acknowledge doubts as to the absolutism of their faith, for in their isolation it was hard to keep their fears at bay. Their certainties were rooted in what they saw as their superior faith. Whatever the inadequacies of their own education, as perceived in England, for Baptist missionaries were denounced as low mechanics and tradesmen, they did not hesitate to scoff at their opponents in Jamaica. They were possessed of the truth, *the* reading of the Gospel. Those first missionaries who had to establish themselves on the basis of the work done by black Baptists found much to contend with. They were shocked by the bad teaching, as they saw it, of the 'pretend preachers' on the island who claimed to teach the Gospel. Missionary disapproval of their popular preaching was compounded by their difficulties in understanding patois, and with making themselves understood. 'Their understandings are very limited,' wrote Thomas Knibb to an English friend, 'exceedingly so with field negroes, so that we find the greatest difficulty in understanding what they mean.'[38]

Any hopes for the construction of a New Jerusalem depended on the ceaseless industry and activity of the little band of missionaries, who had set themselves the task of converting the heathen. Their project was rooted in the 'mission family' which they worked hard to create and sustain. The Baptist missionaries came from a society in which family enterprises were at the heart of economic, social and cultural life.[39] They were used to a world which was physically organised around the family,

to which men, women and children each contributed in their particular ways: men as the public and legal front, women as the informal partners, children by running errands or undertaking tasks. In the world of tradesmen, small proprietors and merchants, artisans and ministers, from which they came, women played a vital part. Men might provide the driving force and the public face, but women were often the source of capital, labour and contacts; they were the ones who bore children to carry on the family business and reproduce it in its daily life. Missionary wives, it was assumed, needed no training for any of this; it was their vocation.

But the family enterprise was only the starting point for the mission family. Family was crucial to the missionaries themselves, for they were isolated figures, white men with black congregations, facing the hostility of much of the white community on the island, and often living in places where there were very few white people. Furthermore, as one of the missionaries noted, if any minister became too involved with white people, black people would lose their confidence in him.[40] Mission stations thus became the site of an extended family, stretching across the island, linking one isolated mission family to another. The family, moreover, was defined not by blood but by religious kinship: 'friend', 'brother' and 'sister' were all terms whose meanings crossed blood relations and ties of friendship. Stations might begin with only one couple, but would hope to bring in others as their work expanded and the numbers of chapels, schools and Sunday schools under their care grew. When new stations were established, they kept in close touch with their 'parent' stations, and relied on them for succour and support. A Jamaica Baptist Association was formed in 1824 to link the missions across the island. Family was indeed a many-layered concept in this context: there was the family of origin, the family of marriage, the family of the chapel, the mission family, the family of Baptists at home and the family-to-be in the sky – this last providing the key to the overarching spiritual nature of the Christian family. Without a religious family, individuals would be hard pressed to maintain their faith. The family was a bulwark, a defence against the immorality of 'the world', a haven in which Christian morality was practised.

The overlapping family networks provided a series of settings in which people could live their daily lives and enjoy a promise for the future to come. The initial pain of leaving home was lessened by the dream of a shared heavenly future, 'a family anew, unbroken in the skies'.[41] New missionaries were welcomed to the island by those already established, and the mission family was literally tied by a web of cross-cutting relationships. Many of the missionaries came from Baptist families and

carried their fathers' and grandfathers' activities into pastures new. They married into Baptist families, named their children after Baptist luminaries and friends, saw their children marry missionaries or become missionaries themselves. Thomas Burchell's grandfather was a Baptist minister, his wife's sister married another Jamaican Baptist missionary, Samuel Oughton, his daughter married a missionary, Edward Hewett.[42] William Knibb's brother was a schoolteacher in Jamaica; his nephew, left orphaned, was cared for by him and returned to Jamaica also to work as a teacher; one of his daughters married one of the newly trained 'native' pastors in the early 1840s, and their son became a minister; his other daughter Catherine married Captain Milbourne, the commander of a schooner specially designed for BMS work in West Africa. Two sisters, the Misses Drayton, who came to Jamaica in the 1840s as teachers, both married missionaries. Missionaries who were widowed married relatives of their extended mission families; widows often remarried other missionaries or ministers.

Naming patterns confirmed these connections and friendships. Two of William Knibb's sons were named after missionary friends, James Coultart and Thomas Burchell. Knibb's second son was originally to have been named Augustus Africanus, but the missionary connection triumphed. Knibb's first son was named after Andrew Fuller, one of his mentors and a celebrated Baptist divine. James Phillippo sealed a friendship for life with a Baptist brother when they were both undergoing their missionary training. They exchanged names and each took the other's surname as a middle name. He became James Mursell Phillippo.

Like all families, the mission family was subject to acute tensions and conflicts. Its structure was patriarchal. It was the missionary who was appointed by the BMS and had all formal responsibilities. Direct correspondence between missionary wives and the BMS was usually when the wives were acting for their husbands, in cases of illness or death, for example. The missionary's role in the family enterprise was closely linked to his fatherhood – head of household, father of the family, father of the congregation, father of the children in 'his' schools. The range of his activities was immense, his working hours prolonged. Hours for prayer and reflection, family worship, superintendence of schools, chapel, class meetings, singing classes, training leaders, adult evening schools, sessions with individual church members, these were part of the pattern of each week. On Sundays there were the services and the Sunday schools. In addition there were monthly meetings with members and inquirers, visits to the sick, chapel meetings, the settlement of disputes, marriages, burials, baptisms, meetings with other missionaries, encounters with officials and all the other myriad responsibilities of the pastor. They acted as mediators

of the public world to the enslaved and those who were freed, they were 'everything religiously, politically, civilly' as Knibb put it.[43]

He and his brothers relied heavily on their wives to support them in whatever ways were appropriate. Hannah Phillippo lived above the school in which she worked alongside her husband. She taught the girls, while he taught the boys, a division of labour firmly established in evangelical schools, whether Sunday or day schools, from the late eighteenth century. In addition, she ran the household, bore nine children, five of whom died, and suffered extreme ill health. As a missionary's wife, her home was one in which hospitality was always available, and callers and visitors could be received. She would also visit sick and poor women and children, and question female applicants for church membership. Mrs Coultart, one of the earliest missionary wives on the island, described to a friend how she had 'thirty-five little ragged black children' whom she taught for two hours every evening. At that time there was only one member of the church who could read, and young children, having learned themselves, would then teach their aged grandparents.[44]

Missionary wives received none of the public praise which was heaped on their successful husbands in the heady years of the 1830s and 1840s. The grand funerals, the public meetings, the obituaries, memorials and biographies were not for them. They had to be satisfied with a quieter form of praise; they were buried beside their husbands, as their helpmeets and supporters. When husbands were ill, wives did as much of the work as they could for them, even to the point of occasionally reading a sermon. When wives were ill, husbands found their labours greatly increased. 'The affliction of a wife, accustomed to take every domestic care is peculiarly trying to a missionary,' wrote James Coultart to the BMS committee.[45] The death of a spouse was a common affliction, for in the 1820s and 1830s the average duration of service of a missionary in Jamaica was three years, as a result of illness and death.[46] Philip Cornford mourned the loss of his wife, which left him 'a poor lonely widower in a foreign land'. His wife had comforted him, worked alongside him, taken care of the Sunday school and of the teaching of the young women. The house felt large and desolate without her, and he did not want to go back to it.[47] 'To be alone in Jamaica is solitary indeed,' wrote Edward Hewett after the death of his wife.[48] When wives died before husbands, daughters often took on the task of providing help and support, running the establishment for the mission family under God the father and the father/head of household. The pressure to do this was immense. Sons or daughters who did not move in a clear line towards adult baptism and a life of service were pressured, prayed for, publicly urged to identify themselves with Christ.

Since, during slavery, the plantation provided the major community to which the slaves belonged, one of the essential tasks of the missionaries, both before and after emancipation, was to build an alternative community around the chapel. The chapel could potentially provide a place of belonging, a source of identity, a social life. Much of the strength of dissenting congregations in England derived from this sense of community, the cohesion of the chapel world, with its voluntary principles and clear rules of conduct. The missionaries worked to develop equivalent structures in Jamaica. In order to extend their supervision and build up a band of helpers outside the immediate family but within the family of the church, missionaries took up the pattern already established by black Baptists and used by Wesleyans: that of appointing class leaders. Teachers, deacons, leaders – all were appointed by the missionary and delegated by him. He sat at the centre of this web, aiming to manage and organise. 'The characteristics of this organization', wrote Phillippo, 'are union, division of labour, and classification, combined with the most vigilant pastoral direction and supervision.'[49]

Each congregation was divided into classes, each class superintended and fuelled with the 'holy ambition' to surpass their brothers in duty. Each individual was encouraged to see himself as part of the whole, and there were frequent social meetings to foster a sense of union and mutual effort. The leaders 'instructed inquirers, visited the sick, sought after backsliders, superintended funerals, and reported cases of poverty and distress throughout their respective districts'. Each member of the church was encouraged to think of himself as his brother's keeper; together they were one family. 'Bound closely to each other by mutual knowledge, intercourse and love, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither male nor female, there is neither bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus",' wrote Phillippo, quoting St Paul. But at the centre, 'planning, improving, and directing all its movements', was the pastor himself, the white patriarch.[50]

If gender hierarchy was inscribed at the heart of the missionary enterprise, so was that of race. Missionaries arrived on the island with their heads full of images of 'poor Africans', 'savages' and 'heathens'. Dr Ryland's charge to Knibb reiterated contemporary wisdom: 'the Negro and coloured population are generally very ignorant, and are like children of a larger growth, who will need the simplest and plainest instruction to be given them line upon line.'[51] But there was also a long tradition of thinking of Africans as natural Christians, open to salvation.[52] The missionary task was to bring these 'poor creatures' to salvation, manhood and freedom. Missionaries were the angels of mercy with the news of the Gospel. 'From isle to isle the welcome tidings ran,' wrote Montgomery,

> The slave that heard them started into man:
> Like Peter, sleeping in his chains, he lay, –
> The angel came, his night was turn'd to day:
> 'Arise!' his fetters fall, his slumbers flee;
> He wakes to life, he springs to liberty.[53]

Their encounter with slavery and plantation society softened the notions of savagery and heathenism, which indeed were increasingly attached to the planters in missionary discourse, and intensified the emphasis on pity. Slaves, Phillippo argued, were the hapless victims of a revolting system; they were

> men of the same common origin with ourselves, – of the same form and delineation of feature, though with a darker skin, – men endowed with minds equal in dignity, equal in capacity, and equal in duration of experience, – men of the same social dispositions and affections, and destined to occupy the same rank with ourselves in the great family of man.[54]

The celebration of this family of man was an important part of the new rituals introduced by the missionaries. Thus, for example, at the death of a missionary wife, Thomas Burchell instructed that the coffin should be carried by black and brown men as well as white. This was an important break with established practice, for burial grounds were strictly segregated by colour.[55] But this family of man was, like all families, internally ordered. Jostling with the language of equality in Phillippo's mind, 'neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female', was the language of hierarchy, undercutting that very equality he claimed to espouse. There was an evolutionary ladder, he believed, at the top of which were Europeans, and up which freed black people would climb. This assumed that black inferiority was encoded in the language of the family, naturalising relations as of parent and child. Black people were 'the sons of Africa', 'babes in Christ', children who must be led to freedom, a term which had a cluster of meanings for the missionaries, including salvation, emancipation, a free labour market and adulthood. The missionaries were the parents who would act as their teachers and guides, admonishing and improving, giving praise where praise was due.

Missionaries and planters

Amongst these fathers, teachers and guides – these patriarchal pastors – the most influential was William Knibb: 'King Knibb', as he came to be called. William Knibb was born in Kettering, the Northamptonshire boot

and shoe town, in 1803. His father was a tradesman, and his mother a member of an independent church. He attended a dame school and then the town's grammar school, as well as Sunday school at the chapel. In 1816 he was apprenticed, along with his brother Thomas, to J. G. Fuller, the brother of Andrew Fuller, then the Baptist minister in Kettering and the secretary of the BMS. The BMS had a particular relation to Kettering, since it was there that the society was formed in 1792, and it was some time before it moved its administration to London. J. G. Fuller lived in Bristol, and the Knibb brothers became attached to the Baptist chapel there. In 1820 Thomas was baptised, and two years later William followed suit.[56]

In 1822 Thomas decided to become a missionary, thinking 'that it would be far more delightful, more honourable, to go to heaven from a heathen country than a Christian one'. Responding to the revival of anti-slavery sentiment in the 1820s, he chose to go as a schoolmaster to Kingston, rather than to the more familiar Baptist pastures in India.[57] Thomas's choice inspired William, and he too began to dream of a future in which he could minister to 'the swarthy sons of Africa' and become an instrument for Christ with 'the poor degraded negroes', by 'unfolding to them the wonders of redeeming love'.[58] In 1823 Thomas died, and William was accepted to replace him. After learning the recently developed Lancastrian system of teaching at the Borough Road school, he sailed for Jamaica with his new wife Mary, a fellow member of the Baptist church. A long delay off the south coast meant that he was able to preach a couple of times on the Isle of Wight, and encounter that heathenism at home which always stood as a counterpoint to the heathens abroad. Niton was 'a deplorably dark and benighted village', Knibb recorded in his journal. 'Mud was thrown at the door but I escaped unhurt. Felt thankful that I had the opportunity of unfolding to them the word of life.' His first encounter with a slave-holder was with a fellow passenger, whose very attempts to justify the system showed 'it to be complete with every enormity', from cruelty to immorality.[59]

After landing in Port Morant, the Knibbs took a boat to Kingston, where they had their first taste of Jamaica. 'I have now reached the land of sin, disease, and death,' wrote Knibb to a friend,

> where Satan reigns with awful power, and carries multitudes captive at his will. True religion is scoffed at, and those who profess it are ridiculed and insulted. . . . The poor, oppressed, benighted, and despised sons of Africa, form a pleasing contrast to the debauched white population. Though many of them seem to have lost nearly every rational idea, such is the beautiful simplicity of the gospel, that though fools, they understand it, and joyfully accept the truth as it is Jesus. . . . They are bursting through the thick

> gloom which has long surrounded them, and it will be a long time ere they may be denominated by any other name than babes in Christ.[60]

Knibb's anti-slavery sentiments, bred in the nonconformist culture of provincial England, and replete with images of 'poor negroes' and benighted souls awaiting enlightenment from white missionaries, were fully confirmed by his experience of Jamaica. He was shocked by the moral degradation of slavery and the mindless existence, as he saw it, to which the enslaved were condemned. No doubt his assumptions as to the 'barren wastes' of their minds had a good deal to do with his difficulties in understanding their forms of speech and making sense of their customs and rituals. But he was convinced that his own people carried the responsibility for this appalling system, and felt ashamed 'that I belong to a race that can indulge in such atrocities'. 'The white population', he concluded, 'is worse, far worse, than the victims of their injustice.'[61]

Knibb soon started to preach, though the BMS was hesitant to give him the requisite papers, since he did not have the usual academic qualifications. In 1825 Mary Knibb had twins, and her husband was troubled at having a black wet-nurse, a sign of the difficulties associated in his mind at this time at the thought of very intimate relations between the races. To be teacher and guide of the enslaved was one thing; to have to rely on a black wet-nurse for the sustenance of his own babies was another. His attachment to whiteness was perhaps deeper than he realised. 'Dear Mary is pretty well,' he wrote to his mother in the following year, after the birth of another daughter, 'and we are truly happy in each other, which is a great mercy in this place, where all temporal pleasure is concentrated in the home. Here are no fields to walk in, and few, if any, friends to visit.'[62] By 1826, when the Jamaica Baptist Association was formed to link the churches across the island, Knibb was well established amongst the missionaries, and he served as its secretary. In 1829 he and his family left Kingston to set up a new mission on the west coast, in Savanna-la-Mar.

The Consolidated Slave Law was passed by the Jamaican House of Assembly in 1826; this confirmed new restrictions on the dissenting preachers who were proving a major irritant to the plantocracy. Tensions had increased between missionaries and planters, and the pattern of appeal to 'the government at home' and British public opinion became increasingly important. James Stephen at the Colonial Office had become convinced that complaints of cruelty and injustice should be investigated, and it was increasingly clear that the enslaved were being denied religious freedom – a right which the ameliorative legislation of 1823 had

supposedly secured.[63] Despite the opposition of many planters, however, by 1833 there were sixteen Wesleyan, fourteen Baptist, eight Moravian and five Presbyterian missionaries on the island, forty-three missionaries in all, most of whom were assisted by their wives.[64]

In 1830 the Knibb family moved to Falmouth, a well-established mission station in the heartlands of plantation society. Here Knibb worked hard on the estates, on which he was allowed to preach, but many planters were still determined that the enslaved should receive no religious instruction. He was soon involved in a case that raised political temperatures considerably. Sam Swiney, an enslaved man who was a deacon in Knibb's previous congregation in Savanna-la-Mar, had been sentenced to whipping and hard labour for preaching and teaching. Knibb was outraged, since to his knowledge there was no evidence of Swiney either preaching or teaching, and he contacted the BMS as well as telling the local press. In Knibb's view, and that of the Colonial Office which investigated the case, Swiney had only prayed. The punishment was excessive, a warning to black people not to become involved with Christianity. The offending magistrate was in due course dismissed, though in the interval he had died.[65]

Not far from Falmouth, in St Ann's Bay, lived the Rev. George Bridges, the rector of that parish. Bridges was a leading advocate of slavery, an Englishman, a graduate of both Oxford and Cambridge who had gone to Jamaica as a young man. Having been educated to *critique* slavery, on arrival in Jamaica he felt that he had been misinformed. He 'found their masters a most injured and slandered race of men', and set to work to defend them. His particular enemies became the dissenting missionaries, men whom he accused of being of 'the lowest and most dangerous description', only too capable of stirring up the specious superstitions of ignorant people. It was 'the poison of sectarianism' which had disrupted the unity and purity of the church.[66] In 1829 the secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society sent an anonymous letter to the Colonial Office about Bridges' treatment of an enslaved woman, Kitty Hilton, owned by him. She had appealed for help and accused him of severely kicking and flogging her, leaving her naked. Bridges was at the centre of a complicated legal and political tangle.[67] In July 1831 he formed the Colonial Union, an organisation to protect the planting interest and the established church against the depradations of the enslaved and missionaries.

Bridges' anger towards the missionaries had its roots in a virulent defence of the established church against all others. He was passionately anti-Catholic (a sentiment which he shared with the Baptist missionaries) as well as anti-dissenter. 'The want of employment in the fields or

manufactures of England', he raged, 'sent crowds of ignorant and itinerant preachers to these shores, where they found, or expected to find, a rich harvest, or a glorious martyrdom.' This 'cloud of itinerant preachers hastened to exchange a parish pittance in England for a lucrative profession in the West Indies'. The effect of this was that the pulpit, 'that safe and sacred organ of sedition, resounded with the ambiguous tenets, or at least the words, of freedom and equality; and the public discontent might be inflamed by the promise of a glorious deliverance from a bondage which the slave would rather apply to his temporal, than to his spiritual condition'.[68] This was indeed the heart of the complaint against the missionaries: the slippage that occurred between temporal and spiritual freedom. If religious freedom were granted, what certainty was there that the claims of the enslaved would stop there?

In 1828 Bridges published his *Annals of Jamaica*, an attempt to reclaim the high ground from the forces of anti-slavery in Britain and to strengthen planter resolve in Jamaica. One of the dangers of the tropical climate, he believed, reiterating familiar ideas, was that it paralysed white men. He hoped to awaken them to the dangers they faced. 'An Englishman', he wrote, 'born beneath a sky of varying temperature, is continually sensible of new impressions, which keep his senses awake. He is vigilant, active, and inconstant as the air he breathes. The West Indian, who is constantly exposed to the same intolerant temperature, to the same oppressed sensations, is listless, languid, and dejected.'[69] Bridges drew on the traditions of colonial writing on the island, particularly the work of Edward Long and Bryan Edwards, who had both articulated the colonials' desire for relative independence from the metropolis, with a defence of slavery. He insisted that the slave trade was of English origin, that that quintessentially English queen, Elizabeth I, had encouraged it, and that white Jamaicans were British subjects with a right to manage their own affairs. His hope was that the Imperial Parliament would not dare to interfere. Neither Long, Edwards or Bridges had been born in Jamaica, but all became powerfully identified with planter culture. Their writings were interventions in the ongoing debate between metropolis and colony about slavery and power. As early as the 1770s, Long was utilising the stereotype of 'Quashee', which became a stock element of pro-slavery discourse, to connote a series of what were deemed to be specifically negro characteristics which marked off one race from another. 'Quashee' was evasive, disguised, lazy, childlike, lying, thieving, distrustful, capricious. But he was also kind, cheerful, a songster.[70] Here was a condensation of traits and a stereotype which carried both negative and positive poles of colonial discourse. For Long, slavery was close to being a divine institution. His imagined Africa was a place of barbarism and terror, and, by contrast with this, the West Indies was

a paradise, and slavery an institution which could only improve utterly uncivilised peoples. At the same time he was a convinced Whig, a defender of the House of Assembly, and a critic of the Imperial Government, with a Lockean belief in the rights of white subjects to rebel against an unruly crown.[71]

Bryan Edwards's book on the West Indies was written in 1791, and by 1806 had reached its fourth edition in London. He was well aware of his debt to Long, and drew on him for much of his detail, about obeah and African 'superstitions', for example. His book was written with the abolitionist debate constantly in mind; careful in its tone, reasoned, moderate and relatively humane, it aimed to provide an account of plantation society and the benefits that it could confer on Africans. Edwards wanted to enlist sympathy for the planters in their economic difficulties, and to convince the British public that the situation in the West Indies was more complicated than the supporters of anti-slavery allowed. The planters were not responsible for the system of slavery, he argued; slavery had always existed, and it was possible to make some improvements. His description of the different African peoples he encountered, with information collected from his own servants, recognised different ethnicities, but argued that slavery reduced these differences, that general 'negro' characteristics became more pronounced – lying, thieving, cowardice, lack of trust.[72] Negroes were brutal to animals, did not understand the meaning of love, made noise not music. Their dances were licentious, their funeral rites barbaric and riotous. Enslaved women came in for especial criticism. They were promiscuous and neglected their children. Indeed, slavery was 'unfriendly to population'.[73] On the plantations hours of work were not excessive, the cabins provided for the slaves compared very favourably with those of the Scottish or Irish peasantry, their medical care was good. 'On the whole', he concluded, in a vein that was to be repeated again and again by defenders of slavery, 'the slaves in the British West Indies . . . might be deemed objects of envy to half the peasantry of Europe . . . the general treatment of the Negroes in the British West Indies is mild, temperate and indulgent'.[74]

Edwards's reasoned tone was very different from the shrill polemic of Bridges. By the late 1820s the planters were infinitely more aware than heretofore of the dangers they faced from the enslaved and abolitionists alike. Bridges needed to justify racial inequalities. His case was that abolition was impractical, but he did not defend slavery in principle. Rather, he assumed, as did most protagonists of the system, that eventually it would melt away if there were no outside interference.[75] Africans needed the civilising hand of Europeans for much longer before they would be anywhere near ready for freedom. Similarly, he rejected the claims made by free coloured people for equal rights with Europeans. Slavery was for

him a historic institution. He linked its formation to the subjection of women, for the 'original servitude, of the weaker sex, became the bond and seal of the social contract'. The woman became 'a constituent part' of her husband's property, 'over which he had an uncontrolled and unlimited authority'. The father then acquired the same rights over his children as over his wife, and so at the heart of the family there 'naturally sprang a mild and tender species of servitude'. Such servitude was then extended by war, and became the institution of slavery. In Bridges' account, over centuries of European history, white men, once slaves, had been able to become free men; but negroes were different. 'Kindness and indulgence have never yet been able to eradicate the generic character of deceit, ingratitude and cruelty', he maintained, amongst the '*adult* objects' of negro slavery.[76]

Here we have Long's 'generic character' again. The 'vagrant tribes' of Africa, in Bridges' imagination, who refused to cultivate the soil and thus eschewed regular labour, the great civiliser, may have come from vastly different areas. The only differences across Africa, however, Bridges concluded, lay 'in the degrees of the same base qualities which mark the negro race throughout. They are a people who have never emerged from a state of primitive infancy and natural barbarity.'[77] Africa was, for Bridges as for Long, a place of horror. So, he reasoned, many of the enslaved were content to be in Jamaica, for their moral, intellectual and physical condition had improved. Amelioration had continued, and Jamaica had been 'humane in the government of a servile race which it has been her misfortune to possess'. So mild was the species of servitude which now existed, he insisted, that the enslaved had been raised 'to a level with the labouring classes in many parts of civilized Europe'.[78]

Bridges' polemic had become more shrill as the tensions had increased between planters, on the one hand, and the enslaved and missionaries, on the other. In 1826 he had instigated an attack on the Wesleyan mission in St Ann's Bay, which produced outrage in Britain and demands for a full inquiry as to the circumstances. He could not tolerate the claim which the enslaved were making: the right to worship a Christian God, for that God was a dissenting God. As Bridges was only too well aware, the demand for religious freedom always potentially opened up the demand for other kinds of freedom. Planters did not want the enslaved to learn to read any more than conservatives in England in the 1780s and 1790s had wanted working-class adults or children to learn those skills. They did not want them treated as spiritual equals, partaking of communion, addressed as 'brother' and 'sister'. They heartily disliked the idea of leaders interpreting the Bible to their classes. They knew all too well that some forms of religious belief had long been a source of

radical thinking about the individual. For Bridges, enslaved African men and women were not the same as white people; they were different and inferior. Yet they were claiming the right to religious freedom.

It was well known in Jamaica that continuous efforts were being made in Britain to abolish slavery. In 1830 the House of Assembly had been forced to concede rights to free coloured and black people in an attempt to defuse some of the political tensions on the island.[79] By 1831, knowledge of the British anti-slavery campaign was widespread, and there was hope and excitement on the plantations. Then news began to circulate amongst the enslaved that the king had granted their freedom and that the planters were preventing this from being implemented, and conflict erupted. In December 1831 a major rebellion began, brutally put down by the authorities. As Mary Turner has shown for Jamaica, and Vittoria Emilia da Costa for Demerara, Christianity played a vital part in articulating new claims for freedom, just as Bridges had feared.[80] The enslaved, argues da Costa, 'appropriated symbols that originally were meant to subject them and wrought those symbols into weapons of their own emancipation'.[81] The missionary belief in the brotherhood of all men, that Africans were women and men almost like themselves, coexisted with a belief in white superiority. Turner demonstrates the contradiction at the heart of missionary teaching: while they appealed for obedience to the authorities, the missionaries insisted on the right to individual salvation, and thus opened up the question of freedom of thought. The Rev. Thomas Cooper enunciated the problem this way: if the enslaved learned Christianity, 'they would find out that they were Men, and as such would ask the Question, why are they to be treated as mere Animals – Goods and Chattels?'.[82]

New thinking was framed by new forms of organisation: the chapel community offered an alternative to the plantation. Mission churches gave opportunities for new forms of leadership and skills, and provided networks of connection which were crucial to the organisation of resistance. The political consciousness of the enslaved, suggests Turner, was 'fed and watered' by the mission churches, and came to fruition in the religious groups which they formed themselves under their 'leaders', men like Sam Sharpe, who was a deacon in Burchell's congregation in Montego Bay.[83] The rebellion was centred in the western part of the island. It was organised by Christian converts who used the mission networks, took inspiration from the Bible, and claimed the missionaries as their allies. Sharpe proclaimed the natural equality of men, and refuted the planters' claim that they could hold black people in bondage. Although a member of Burchell's church, he was heavily involved with the Native or Black Baptists. The latter had their origins

in the congregations formed by black Baptists who had come to Jamaica in the late eighteenth century. White Baptist missionaries, as we have seen, were anxious from the start to dissociate themselves from the Black Baptists, since the latter's doctrines were at odds with the orthodoxies of English Baptists, their organisation was separate, and they could not be made subject to the regulation of the missions. For the Native Baptists the link between religious freedom and political freedom was explicit. The rebellion of 1831 was about creating a new society, in which black people could be free. It lasted a week, and much property was destroyed. White vengeance then began. There had been only two acts of violence against white people, but 626 of the enslaved were tried, and 312 executed. The rebellion and its aftermath played a crucial part in the recognition in Britain that slavery could not survive as a system. Sam Sharpe is now celebrated as a national hero of Jamaica.

In the wake of the rebellion, the planters wanted to expel the missionaries, whom they blamed for what had happened. As da Costa argues in the Demerara context, the planters felt that the world was against them. Their rage against East Indian traders who were challenging their dominance of the sugar market, London merchants who were ruining them with their rates of interest, colonial officials who interfered, Manchester manufacturers who believed in free trade, British consumers, abolitionists and dissenters – all became condensed into the hated figure of the missionary.[84] The missionaries had heard of the plans at the last minute, and had tried to teach obedience to civil authorities from the pulpit. But this did not save them from the wrath of the planters. Hostility was focused on the Baptists and the Wesleyans, who were most significant numerically in the rebel areas. Some missionaries were arrested, while others were threatened with lynchings and tarring and feathering.[85] Then in February 1832 a wave of violence began, orchestrated by Bridges through the Colonial Church Union which he had founded. Numerous chapels were destroyed, and leading Baptists were put on trial. Bridges identified three enemies: the missionaries, those members of the free black and coloured classes who were supporting them under the leadership of the newspaper editor Edward Jordan, and the imperial government whose 'unnatural conduct', as he deemed it, was threatening the whole system of slavery.[86] The rebellion had united the Europeans across the island, and the governor took no steps to restrain white violence. Burchell was threatened with lynching, and had to escape the island. The missionaries were forced to recognise that their work could not continue unless slavery was abolished, and that, whatever the rules of their societies, they would have to take a public stand against the system. It was at this point that the Baptists met and decided to send William Knibb to make their case in the mother country.

The war of representation

Long, Edwards and Bridges all wrote for both England and Jamaica. Their articulation of the pro-slavery case was crucial to the interests of the plantocracy, and was heavily utilised in defence of slavery as an institution. The virulence of the debate over slavery masks the links between planters and abolitionists. Both groups were united in their belief in hierarchy and order, their use of Ireland as a touchstone for colonial questions, their contempt for Africa, their assumption that Britain was the most civilised country in the world and that European empires were fundamentally a good thing. But in this period it was their differences which came dramatically to the fore. Planter interests had long been highly organised in the metropole. West Indian merchants and planters wanted their interests in the mercantile system represented in Parliament: the growth of parliamentary power made it ever more important to orchestrate that influence, particularly as anti-slavery interests became more organised themselves. As B. W. Higman shows, the 'interest' included an inner ring of those born in the West Indies, absentee planters and merchants who had never been to the colonies, colonial agents, naval and military men who had served on the islands, together with all their relatives and friends. Planters and merchants, absentees and colonists, had distinctly different concerns, and the group was never univocal. Around the 1820s there was probably a group of fifty or more in Parliament, but this steadily declined.[87] A key figure was William Burge, parliamentary agent for Jamaica, who orchestrated responses and resistance to anti-slavery initiatives.

From 1823 a propaganda war had been waged between planters and abolitionists in Britain. At stake was the question as to what was the truth about the system of slavery. Both sides were interested in mobilising public opinion, that increasingly powerful phenomenon. The abolition of the slave trade in 1807 had seemed to inaugurate a new era, but, as noted earlier, by the early 1820s it was clear that slavery was not simply going to die away as a result of the ending of the British slave trade. Pressure began to mount for other forms of change, and the Agency Committee was formed to focus public opinion more effectively on the issues. Absentee planters liked to present themselves as English property-holders rather than slave-owners, distancing themselves from what went on in the colonies. From the 1820s they were increasingly concerned with the question of compensation.[88] Slavery was defended as a well-regulated system, a necessary regime for Africans. But it became more and more difficult for the planters to conceal the brutality of slavery: the enslaved told missionaries, who reported it to their societies,

the Colonial Office and MPs, and published details in the missionary press. It was the truths from the plantations which drove anti-slavery initiatives, the colony which led the metropole. Missionaries began to publish material giving their stories of slavery. A significant body of eye-witness accounts from white people thus began to challenge the planter orthodoxy that they were the ones who knew. Previously it had been medical men who supplied the most informed criticisms of the system.[89] Now missionaries, many of whom had gone to the West Indies in the 1820s with anti-slavery sympathies, were fuelling the abolitionist fans with vivid narratives of the refusal of planters to countenance Christian worship amongst the enslaved. Christianity and slavery began to seem more obviously at odds.

Crucial to this war of representation was the disputed figure of the African – what kind of a man was he, what kind of a woman was she? While the supporters of anti-slavery claimed that African men and women were brothers and sisters, the plantocracy claimed that they were fundamentally different from, and inferior to, their white superiors. While the icon of the planters was Quashee – evasive, lazy, childlike and lacking judgement – the missionaries and their allies constructed new figures, the black Christian man and woman.[90] This man and woman were childlike, and in that sense linked to established colonial discourse, but also able to accept guidance, ready to learn, ready to labour and to live in families. These men and women were human beings, with feelings and thoughts, and with the capacity for redemption. The attempt to construct these new Christian subjects was at the heart of the missionary enterprise in Jamaica, just as it was at the heart of evangelical activity at this time in Britain.

The war over representation took place on many sites: in the press, in pamphlets, in fiction, in poetry, in paintings and engravings, in public meetings.[91] One key site in 1831 was the House of Lords, which had instituted a Select Committee on Slavery – a committee which gained urgency when the Jamaica rebellion took place at Christmas. In the Commons, a Select Committee was also established in the wake of this, taking as one of its framing propositions the view that there would be more danger if emancipation were withheld than if it were granted.[92] Both committees focused on Jamaica. The House of Lords took evidence on the condition and treatment of the enslaved, their habits and dispositions, the means of improving and civilising them. Their findings, they concluded, 'were of the most contradictory Description'.[93] The House of Commons committee was formed to discuss the ending of slavery in the safest possible way, and wanted to investigate particularly whether enslaved people, once emancipated, would be industrious and maintain

themselves. Their inquiry was unfinished, but they concluded that there was an urgent need for serious legislation.[94]

Both plantocracy and abolitionists had marshalled their forces and made full use of the public platforms which the select committees offered them. The same debates dominated the two sets of proceedings, and some of the same people gave evidence at both. While overseers and attornies, planters and managers, naval and military men, told one story, dissenting missionaries told another. The Duke of Manchester, governor of Jamaica from 1808 to 1827, opened the proceedings of the House of Lords with a statement which combined an insistence on the stability of the system with an assumption that the enslaved would rise and emancipate themselves whenever the opportunity arose. Asked what he thought negroes understood by emancipation, he responded that he assumed it meant, 'To have nothing to do . . . not to be obliged to work, I should say'.[95] This was one of the key issues to be fought out. Would Africans work without compulsion? The conventional wisdom of the planters was that they would not; Quashee was lazy, and slavery was a regrettable but necessary institution, part of the civilising process, along with the whip. The whip was not used to excess, but as a necessary part of the labour process. Eventually negroes might be trained to work without compulsion, but this would certainly not happen in the short term. The abolitionists, on the other hand, were convinced that negroes would work, that forced labour was a disgrace, and that Jamaica could become a free market economy. Much of the contradictory evidence in the Select Committees concerned this. Henry John Hinchcliffe, a barrister and later judge in the Vice-Admiralty court, spoke from 'my Observation of the Character of the Negro people, of which I think Indolence and Improvidence are the Two most marked Features'.[96] John Baillie Esq., a planter on the island from 1788 to 1815, insisted that the slaves were 'happy and contented' and that negroes would not work without compulsion.[97]

The plantocracy insisted that it knew the heart and mind of the negro, that the prejudicial stories spread by the anti-slavery lobby were simply not true. As Keane put it, it was impossible for any person in Britain to form a proper opinion. As for him, he was simply a military man who had arrived on the island with no prior knowledge or opinions, for he had never given Jamaica a thought. 'If a great number of the Inhabitants of this Country', he argued,

> who are very much prejudiced on this Question, which I am not, would but visit that Part of the World, and see the State of Slavery in all its Bearings, they would have a very different Feeling from what they have at this

> Moment; and, speaking of the other Side of the Water, I have seen more Misery in Ireland in One Day than I have seen in the West Indies during my Service there.[98]

This comparison between Ireland, alongside Scotland, and the West Indies was a much-repeated one. William Shand, an attorney, argued that 'My sleek well-fed Negroes would form an extraordinary Contrast with the wretched half-starved Weavers in Angus and Kincardineshire'. Vice-Admiral Rowley even went so far as to say that, 'If I had been born to labour . . . I had sooner been born a black in the island of Jamaica than a white man in this country, or any other'.[99]

The planters claimed that the enslaved were both better off than some white labourers and unequal to them. 'Is there the same Variety of Character in the Negro there is in White Persons?,' Hinchcliffe was asked, and he replied 'I do not think there is,' for negroes were defined by indolence.[100] The African, argued Andrew Dignum, a solicitor who had worked in Kingston and Spanish Town, 'has no feeling'. In other words, negroes were not human beings of the same order as white people.[101] Meanwhile, William Burge, the agent for Jamaica and a key figure in orchestrating the defence of slavery, insisted that the enslaved population had as yet acquired no degree of civilisation or habits of industry, and that if emancipation were granted, the island would become 'a perfect Wilderness'. These men had 'the fire of Africa in their Blood', they were driven by 'strong Passions', they had not yet learned the restraints of civilised society.[102]

The missionaries, encouraged by the Anti-Slavery Society, were equally determined to use this platform to counter the claims of the planters and discredit that old story of the prosperity of enslaved people. There was now a sufficient body of white knowledge, from those who knew the island and had witnessed slavery at first hand, to tell a different story. Jamaica had been a 'sealed country', and the plantations a 'sealed book', for white people rarely visited them. William Taylor, who had managed property on the island, was willing to acknowledge that the missionaries knew things which others did not. 'I believe that a Missionary', he argued, 'has Opportunities of acquiring a great deal of Information from the Slaves which no other Class of Persons can; I believe that a Missionary actively employed near Estates does acquire a great deal of very intimate knowledge of the Negro Character.'[103] They did not understand, however, about sugar or labour, he continued. Those missionaries who gave evidence systematically refuted the notion that the enslaved were better off than British labourers, or that their intellect was inferior. Furthermore, it was vital for them to be able to claim that enslaved men and women were being Christianised, thus civilised,

and that, once freed, they would work. The black Christian subject had feelings and thoughts, was open to redemption, accepted the guidance of Christian missionaries, wanted to buy clothes and items for their houses, and would labour. Negroes, insisted the Rev. John Barry, a Wesleyan who had been sent out by his missionary society in 1825 and had worked in Kingston and Spanish Town, 'possess as high a Degree of Intellect as the Irish Peasantry'. Or, as he put it to the House of Commons, 'They are just the same as other men.' It was their condition which was degraded, not their innate faculties.[104] The Rev. Peter Duncan, who had been in Jamaica since 1821, argued that 'the desire of liberty is so natural to man' that of course, once emancipated, those previously enslaved would work. They loved to consume, and would want to buy clothes and furniture. He did not doubt that they had equivalent energy to Englishmen in the tropics. 'I conceive that there is a sort of Lassitude,' he reflected,

> occasioned by a Residence in a tropical Climate; but if compared with Europeans, there is certainly no Inferiority whatsoever. I conceive that the emancipated Negroes manifest much greater Energy in Labour where they possess equal education – that they are superior to Europeans residing in that country. I cannot undertake to say there is a spirit of Perseverance in them equal to Englishmen residing in England.[105]

So Barry both equated negroes with the Irish peasantry while claiming that, all things considered, they were the same as other men. Duncan argued that they might not be equal to the English in England, but each was uncertain as to the question of full equality. Enslaved men and women had the right to salvation, of that there was no doubt, but once civilised by white men, the question as to whether they would really be the same remained an unresolved conundrum.

Threaded through both sets of minutes is the sound of the whip, for cruelty and its relation to labour was another key issue in this debate. Some of the supporters of the planters were determined to declare that there was no cruelty. Admiral Sir Lawrence William Halsted, who had been in Jamaica between 1823 and 1827, described the pleasant surprise he had when he arrived on the island. 'From the Papers I had read', he declared, 'and the Speeches made at different Meetings, I fully expected to find a great Degree of Cruelty exercised towards them in the Country; and I must state that, when I arrived in the Country, I was agreeably surprised to find it was quite the contrary.'[106] The Rev. Barry, however, described how, when he lived in St Thomas-in-the-Vale, he 'frequently heard, almost incessantly, the Sound of the Whip from Morning till the Time of Cessation from Work'.[107] William Taylor's observation, after

thirteen years on the island, was, 'if you will have Slavery, you must have Cruelty'.[108] The two inevitably went together.

If the whip was one preoccupation, sexuality was another. The planters attacked enslaved women for their lack of feeling for their children and their vicious and difficult character. The women were 'much worse to manage than the men', they claimed.[109] The 'nearly universal' system of concubinage, with every white man in authority keeping a black or coloured mistress, was hated by the missionaries, and was at the heart of their critique of slavery.[110] They were appalled by what they saw as gross immorality and exploitation, regaling the select committees with evidence guaranteed to offend English sensibilities. When white men visited each other, said Barry, women were selected to sleep with them.[111] Duncan refused the planters' view that the women colluded with the system, as well as being uncaring of their children. He cited numerous instances he knew of black Christian women systematically refusing the advances of their overseers, despite the consequences in terms of flogging and loss of favour.[112] Indeed, the missionaries wanted to demonstrate that once black women were Christianised, they had the potential to be loving mothers and domesticated wives. It was disgusting that the master could have unlimited power over the bodies of his female slaves, and that no white man lost his respectability on these grounds. The cruelty of male relatives flogging wives, daughters and mothers was a particularly damning indictment of the way in which slavery had no respect for the family.

William Knibb gave evidence to both select committees. In January 1831 he had been harassed by the authorities and arrested in Jamaica. 'Value your privileges, ye Britons' was his message to his anti-slavery supporters in the mother country. 'Feel and pray for those poor Christian slaves who are entirely under the control of such beings. No Algerine pirate or savage Moor, would have treated me worse than I was treated by Englishmen.'[113] The order of civilisation had been turned upside down: Englishmen were savages, and the enslaved and missionaries were their victims. Knibb was threatened and pressured to leave the island, chapels were burnt, and a number of men 'came dressed in women's clothing to tar and feather me', the cross-dressing a sign of the complete breakdown of social order.[114] Thomas Burchell similarly evoked the terror of his persecution. Prior to his escape from Jamaica, he was surrounded by a mob:

> the most furious and savage spirit was manifested by some of (what were called) the most respectable white inhabitants, that ever could have been discovered amongst civilised society. They began to throng around me, hissing, groaning and gnashing at me with their teeth. Had I never been

> at Montego Bay before, I must have supposed myself amongst cannibals, or in the midst of the savage hordes of Siberia, or the uncultivated and uncivilised tribes of central Africa . . . I am fully persuaded, had it not been for the protection afforded me by the coloured part of the population – natives of Jamaica – I should have been barbarously murdered – yea, torn limb from limb, by my countrymen – by so-called *enlightened*, RESPECTABLE! CHRISTIAN BRITONS![115]

Britishness, and whiteness, in the discourse of the missionaries and their allies, should mean order, civilisation, Christianity, domesticity and separate spheres, rationality and industry. When it carried another set of meanings, it was deeply disturbing: white people then became 'savages', uncultivated and uncivilised.

The Colonial Church Union of Bridges and his friends was the quintessential example of such a den of infidels, their task: to burn the houses of God and lynch his servants. It was composed, as Knibb put it, 'of nearly all the fornicators in the island'. The organisation was designed 'to stop the march of mind and religion, to protect the white rebels from deserved punishment'.[116]

It was at this point that the missionaries had decided, though not without disputes amongst themselves and with the parent society, that they must break their vows of silence on political matters and represent the case against slavery to the British public. 'My duty in the West Indies', said Knibb, 'was to instruct the Slaves in Religious Matters; when in England, I am speaking to free People.'[117] Knibb's agenda became, as he put it at a great meeting at Exeter Hall, the public meeting place of philanthropists, to 'stand forward as the advocate of the innocent and persecuted', to speak for the African in England.[118] In the process he empowered himself by representing others. 'There is nothing more delightful and interesting', he observed to a packed audience in Newcastle, 'than to plead the cause of the injured, the degraded and the oppressed.' It was particularly delightful, he continued, when his audience were fellow Christians who would rise up in indignation against oppression.[119] It was, furthermore, argued Knibb, especially pleasurable to speak on behalf of the doubly oppressed, female slaves. No Englishman, in the proper meaning of that term, could stand aside and see a woman flogged. Indeed, Englishness and slavery could not go together.

Knibb insisted that the question was one not of politics but of morality. 'All I ask', as he put it at Exeter Hall to thunderous applause,

> is that my African brother may stand in the family of man; that my African sister shall, while she clasps her tender infant to her breast, be allowed to call it her own; that they both shall be allowed to bow their knees in prayer

> to that God who has made of one blood all nations – the same God who views all nations as one flesh.[120]

Having broken his silence, he was not to be stopped; a public lecture tour, a series of debates with an agent of the planters, evidence before the select committees, a packed agenda all concerned with the building of public support to the point at which Parliament would have to act. In one of his set-piece confrontations with Peter Borthwick, employed by the planters to make their case, Knibb called upon the love of liberty which he claimed characterised the Briton:

> I call upon you by the tender sympathies of your nature – I call upon you by that manly feeling which Britons have ever expressed – I call upon you by the love of liberty which now animates every breast, to leave no method untried till colonial slavery shall have passed away. . . . If we are united the bonds of the slave will be broken; his fetters will be snapped; the tears of the female African shall cease to flow; the trumpet of Jubilee shall sound; the banner of freedom shall be unfurled, and beneath its life-giving shade, Africa shall arise and call you blessed.[121]

Here indeed was a proud identity for Britons.

In his evidence to the select committees, Knibb had his larger audience ever in mind. But he was also concerned to persuade the lawmakers that they could delay no longer. He wanted to see the end of slavery, and he wanted the British Parliament to give emancipation as a kindness, not a right. This way the freed men and women would be bound to Britain for ever. If something was not done, the enslaved would take their own freedom by violence, he warned. Knibb demonstrated to his audience their embeddedness in the colonial system. Slavery was not something out there, it was linked to Britain in the most intimate ways. Many of the enslaved, he pointed out, were the sons and daughters of Englishmen and Scotsmen; 'they get English feelings and long for English knowledge,' they influenced other slaves, he suggested. Christian values, moreover, were spreading fast, a crucial indicator of African humanity and capacity for freedom.

Knibb was also anxious to separate the BMS from the Native Baptists, who he saw as certainly party to the rebellion. 'We have no connexion with them,' he insisted; 'they hate us with the most perfect Hatred.' They derided the Bible, they called themselves 'spirit Christians', the mind of God was revealed to them by dreams. They had their own churches, their own papers, thousands of members, and deluded black preachers who lived unholy lives and allowed sins of various kinds in their flocks.[122]

He had one further concern which shaped his evidence: his desire to speak for and represent people who could not represent themselves. No black person was invited to address the select committees, despite their being the subject matter. At one point the Rev. Duncan was asked by the Commons committee if he knew of any enslaved person who could give evidence. He replied in the affirmative, but the suggestion was not pursued.[123] Knibb went so far as to read from his examinations of black witnesses after the rebellion, thus introducing the only African testimony, though mediated through his editorial voice.[124]

The constitution of the new black subject

Emancipation was granted by the imperial parliament in 1833, and became effective from 1 August 1834. Great celebrations were held across the island, marking the death of slavery. Freed men and women joined the Baptist chapels in large numbers in the years after 1834, demonstrating by their attendance, membership and contributions their judgement of the part played by the Baptist missionaries in emancipation. Baptist membership went up by 200 per cent between 1834 and 1839, and there was a similar increase in the number of inquirers.[125] The dream of freedom was soon destroyed, however, by the realities of apprenticeship. Apprenticeship, the system masterminded by the planters at the time of the first Emancipation Act in 1834, had secured a further period of forced labour. Apprentices, the freed men and women, would learn how to become free labour. At the same time, the Colonial Office believed, the planters must learn how to work with labourers who were not enslaved.[126] Apprenticeship turned out to be slavery by another name. Joseph Sturge, Birmingham Quaker corn merchant, long-time abolitionist, celebrated in the Falmouth monument, had been concerned to monitor the system from the beginning, and this he did mainly through his contacts with the Baptist missionaries on the island.

The missionaries activated their anti-slavery friends to alert the British public. The Colonial Office had established a system of special magistrates to regulate the relations between planters and apprentices, but the magistrates were either unwilling or unable to control the planters. As early as 1835, Phillippo came to the conclusion that freedom could not mean much as long as the planters controlled both housing and labour. He started buying land in the mountains not far from his station in Spanish Town, with the idea of establishing a new settlement. The building of a chapel and a schoolroom began in October 1835, and the first lot was bought by Henry Lunan, the former head man amongst the

enslaved on the neighbouring Hampstead estate.[127] Sligoville, the name given by Phillippo to the new settlement, named after the Marquis of Sligo, a governor unusually distinguished by 'his prompt and generous sympathy with the oppressed' and consequently driven out by the planters, was the first village to be established.[128] It is still there, with the Baptist chapel, Mount Zion, occupying pride of place on the hill. A notice in April 1840 in the *Baptist Herald and Friend of Africa*, the cheap weekly newspaper established by the Baptist missionaries in Jamaica, invited all 'friends of equal rights of all classes' to the dinner to be held for the opening of the new township.[129] The inaugural event was subsequently described for the British public in the *Missionary Herald*. The fifty acres, when originally bought, had been chiefly 'unreclaimed wilderness'. John Candler represented the British interest at the laying of the foundation stone for the more permanent chapel and school.[130] By 1840 one hundred families were settled, and eventually it was expected that there would be two hundred. The majority of the inhabitants were described as agricultural labourers, but there was also a schoolmaster and mistress, a shopkeeper, two butchers, four masons, one blacksmith, one straw-hat manufacturer, two gardeners, one tailor, four carpenters, one farrier and two sawyers. Most of the adults were Christians, no one sold liquor, the police unnecessary and unknown. The BMS owned the chapel and school, the mission house, the schoolmaster and mistress's house and several other cottages. Phillippo had himself, as he later explained, laid out the plan of the township and supervised its construction.[131]

The readers of the *Missionary Herald* were told how the company assembled for the opening had walked round the town naming the streets. The main road from Spanish Town was to be Victoria Road, a symbol of the hopes associated with the young queen who had ascended the throne just three years before. Prizes were given for the best cottages and grounds, and Phillippo's address focused on 'the temporal interests of the agricultural classes, both labourer and employer'. He recommended

> the several duties of honesty, industry, economy in domestic expenditure, prudent provision for the exigencies of sickness and old age, together with exhortations to a faithful and conscientious discharge of the mutual obligations of masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children; illustrating particularly the impolicy, as well as sin, of dishonesty in every form; the evils of idleness, and the advantages of industrious habits; the guilt of intemperance, and folly of extravagance in dress; the benefits afforded by the institution of savings banks; and the disgrace and misery almost inseparable from depending, in sickness and infirmity, on public or private charity.[132]

Industry, domestic economy, prudent provision for sickness and old age, a proper regard for the hierarchies of family and work, a refusal of the disgrace of dependence – these were to be the characteristics of the new black subject. This new subjectivity was made possible by the linked moments of conversion *and* emancipation. It was the conjunction of these two which made a particularly decisive break between *before* and *after*. While the tropes of *before* and *after* were utilised by missions across the globe, they had a particular pertinence in the colonies where slavery had been established, for only there could Christian rebirth be coterminous with the granting of political, legal and civil subjecthood.[133] In celebrating emancipation, the congregation were also dreaming of a new Jamaica. One of the hymns sung thanked God and the British nation for freedom; another dreamed of a prosperous future for the island.

> O Lord upon Jamaica shine,
> With beams of heavenly grace;
> Reveal thy power through all our coasts,
> And shew thy smiling face.
> Earth shall obey our Maker's will,
> And yield a full increase:
> Our God will crown this chosen isle
> With fruitfulness and peace.[134]

Phillippo's investment in land, allowing his church members to free themselves from dependence on the planters, was a sign of what was to come after the end of apprenticeship. When full emancipation came in 1838, Knibb orchestrated events in Falmouth and forefronted his trusted black deacons. On 1 August 1838 celebrations were held in that town, as across the whole island, to greet the end of apprenticeship, the dawning of freedom. A great procession with portraits of the emancipators – Clarkson, Wilberforce and Buxton amongst others – gathered around the coffin of slavery an hour before midnight. On one side of the coffin was painted in large letters *Cornwall Courier*, and on the other *Jamaica Standard*, two of the hated pro-slavery papers. On the plate of the coffin was inscribed 'Colonial Slavery, died July 31st, 1838, aged 276 years', and on the lower part, 'the name of Sir John Hawkins, who first brought Africans into the colonies as *slaves*'. Just before midnight, the assembled multitude sang,

> The death-blow is struck – see the monster is dying,
> He cannot survive till the dawn streaks the sky;
> *In one single hour*, he will prostrate be lying,
> Come, shout o'er the grave where so soon he will lie.

As the clock struck the final note of midnight, Knibb cried out, 'THE MONSTER IS DEAD! THE NEGRO IS FREE! THREE CHEERS FOR THE QUEEN!' There was a great burst of cheering and then the congregation sang:

> Restored the negro's long-lost rights,
> How softened is his lot!
> Now sacred, heart-born, dear delights
> Shall bless his humble cot.

The coffin was then buried, along with a symbolic chain, handcuffs and iron collar. The flag of FREEDOM together with the British Union Jack was then raised, and a tree of liberty planted. Services were then held in all the chapels in Falmouth, followed by a public meeting in the Baptist chapel, at which all the speakers, except Knibb who was in the chair, were of African descent.[135] The contrast with the Select Committee debates was striking.

These events were celebrated in the British missionary and evangelical press, demonstrating to that public the upright, responsible character of freed black men. In the Baptist chapel in Falmouth, Knibb made the opening remarks and was followed by Andrew Dickson. He thanked the people of England. 'I do truly thank God for the light of the everlasting gospel,' he said. 'I present my thanks to the people of England for the gospel.' William Kerr spoke next:

> I stand up to give hearty thanks to the people of England for send us the gospel. The gospel bring we to see this day, the gospel bring we free. No one can tell what we see one time, and what we was suffer; but the gospel bring us joy. We bless God, we bless the Queen, we bless the Governor, we bless the people of England for the joy we have. Let we remember that we been on sugar estate from sunrise a-morning till eight o'clock at night; the rain falling, the sun shining, we was in it all. Many of we own colour behind we, and many before: we get whip, our wives get beat like a dog, before we face, and if we speak we get the same; they put we in shackle; but thank our heavenly Father we not slave again. (Cheers)

Then Edward Barrett, a deacon in Knibb's church, again thanked the people of England, and recalled the terrible way in which slavery had divided families and forced men to maltreat their wives.[136]

On 2 August a huge procession of schoolchildren paraded round Falmouth. It was led by a carriage carrying six sons and daughters of ministers. The children carried banners bearing the words 'THE DAY OF JUBILEE', 'THE CHAIN IS BROKEN', 'AFRICA IS FREE, AUGUST 1838', 'LIBERTY TO THE SLAVE'. The chapel was decorated with branches,

flowers, pictures of Clarkson, Wilberforce and Buxton; a banquet was held, and more trees of liberty were planted.[137]

The two days marked the beginnings of a new Jamaica, the possibilities of a new Christian patriotism, as Knibb called it in one of his sermons, one still shaped by the colonial relation, but with benevolent, emancipatory colonisers heralding a new dawn.[138] 'Come over and see the BLACK standing erect in the family of man' was the message of these events.[139] Emancipation made it possible for black men – and it was almost always men – to enter the public arena as speaking subjects. The existence of the *Baptist Herald and Friend of Africa* from 1839 meant that in the Baptist family there was a platform from which black men could speak, which allowed their words to circulate beyond the local scene to the national arena, and even to Britain, to other Caribbean islands and to the USA. They were no longer being represented, but were representing themselves.[140] That representation was still mediated by the powerful hand of the missionary, chairing the meetings, editing the journals, claiming to shape the perspectives from which their new thinking emerged, protecting them, defending them, applauding them.

At a public meeting in Falmouth in July 1839, by which time it was abundantly clear that all was not going to be plain sailing in the transition from apprenticeship to freedom, Knibb reported to his black audience that he had been in touch with Sturge and had 'felt it my duty to endeavour to cover you with the mantle of British protection'. Help was going to be needed to resist the planters' attempts to tie wages and rent. 'I pledge myself', he vowed, 'by all that is solemn and sacred never to rest satisfied until I see my black brethren in the enjoyment of the same civil and religious liberties which I myself enjoy; till I see them take a proper stand in society as men!' What he sought for them were decent wages and some independence from the estates. Deliberately addressing them as negroes, he defended the use of the word, 'because it means black, and you have no reason to be ashamed of it'. 'I hail the labouring population of Jamaica with joy,' he continued,

> and I trust that the propriety of their conduct will at all times inspire me with confidence in their behalf. Be kind to your wives; lighten their labours. I was glad, some time ago, to hear one of my people say that he wished his wife to refrain from hard labour, and turn her attention to domestic affairs, so that when he came home he might sit down and take his meals like a gentleman.[141]

Black men could be independent, not slavishly dependent, could have their own land and cottages, could marry and live with their families as patriarchal household heads. As Deacon Andrew Dickson said, 'let them

act as freemen had a right to do'.[142] Let them claim their rights as voters. In the words of James Allen Senior, let them 'assert their just rights . . . and defend their characters'.[143] But those rights were still framed by missionaries, still dependent on their teaching.

Meanwhile, William Knibb asked, to the fury of the planters, 'Had the black man not the same right to every privilege of a British subject that white men had?'[144] In Lucea a celebration was held for the anniversary of emancipation in August 1838, at which the greatest cheer was for 'Britons never will be slaves'.[145] Black men and women could think of themselves and be thought of as black Britons, a term which has come in and out of the language of nation and empire.

In a symbolic moment in 1841, the foundation stone was laid for the new chapel at Mount Carey, high in the hills above Montego Bay, one of the free villages initiated by Burchell and named after the founder of the BMS. The stone was laid by Miss Burchell and a 'fine grey-headed old Christian negro', symbolising the unity of black and white, the vision of a new Jamaica.[146]

The free villages

Full emancipation, however, far from quickly opening the possibilities for a new Jerusalem, was speedily followed by a harsh struggle, as the planters tried to use their control of what had once been slave huts and provision grounds to tie rents to wages and orchestrate a new kind of forced labour. Joseph Sturge, who had visited Jamaica in 1837 to collect evidence about apprenticeship and had stayed with many of the Baptist missionaries on his tour round the island, expected that the freed apprentices would stay on the estates where they had been living, because of their attachment to the 'place of their birth, to their houses and gardens, to the graves of their parents and kindred'. For Sturge and the abolitionists the new society they dreamed of was one which celebrated free labour; their case against slavery was centrally linked to their economic argument that slavery was a less productive system than that of the free market. Drawing on the English experience, Sturge initially assumed that a new class of landless agricultural labourers would emerge, working for wages under conditions and with resources 'superior to those of a paltry agriculturalist, cultivating his little plot of land with his own hands'.[147]

The combination of planter harassment and the demand of the emancipated peasantry for their own land led to a very different outcome, as it turned out. New contracts had to be established after 1 August 1838,

and estate managers attempted to coerce labour with a pincer action on rents and wages. In many instances the peasantry appealed to the Baptist missionaries to negotiate for them, and black deacons led strikes over wages in the crop season of 1838. The missionaries advised freed men and women not to sign contracts. As Swithin Wilmot has shown, during the constitutional crisis precipitated by the House of Assembly in 1838, the Baptists organised public meetings throughout the island. Members of the House of Assembly were abused as old 'slave tyrants'.[148] By June 1839 the Colonial Office was receiving resolutions from Baptist congregations refuting the allegations made against them by the planters, who were denying their rights to the houses and provision grounds they had occupied and cultivated. They insisted that they were willing to pay rents and to work for reasonable wages. As Burchell's congregations in Montego Bay, Mount Carey, Shortwood and Bethel Hill, put it:

> So far from supposing that we had any lawful claim to the houses and grounds, we have been fully and painfully taught our dependence, by notices to quit; by enormous demands of rent from husband, wife, and every child, though residing in one house; from the anomalous and unjust demand to pay additional rent for every day we, or any portion of our family, may be absent from work, whether occasioned by sickness or any other cause; from the summary ejectments which have been inflicted upon some of us, and utter destruction of provision grounds, which others of us have had to endure.

Thomas Abbott, the Baptist missionary at St Ann's Bay, who had been on the island since 1831, reported to the governor that in his experience 'the attachment of the labourers to the places of their birth, and to the burial-places of their ancestors or offspring, is so strong that they would rather make any sacrifice than leave them'.[149] But the provocations made staying almost impossible. Rents charged for every member of a family, summary eviction and the destruction of crops which had been carefully cultivated were powerful incentives to break local attachments.

'The rent question still hangs, like the sword of Damocles, suspended over the island,' commented one of the stipendiary magistrates, remarking on the bitter relations between employers and labourers. Edward Fishbourne, the magistrate in Buff Bay, reported that

> Rent continues to be the cause of most of the irritations and heart-burnings which prevail throughout this parish. The objection is not to the principle of paying a fair and reasonable sum as rent, but to the amount demanded, and the modes in which it is levied. Coupling the payment of rent with the application of the tenant's labour is one cause of quarrel. Charging it for every member of a family, husbands, wives and children

> above ten years of age, and deducting it from the labourer's weekly wage, without his or her consent, prevails to a great extent, which provokes the discontent and opposition of the negroes.

At Retreat Pen, on the north side of the island, Samuel Barrett, Elizabeth Barrett's brother (she was soon to be Elizabeth Barrett Browning), trying to safeguard the family fortune in the wake of emancipation, attempted to charge men, women and children rent.[150] Henry Walsh, the magistrate in Salt Gut, assured the governor that in his district the difficulties arose not from a refusal to pay rents but from the planters refusing to rent at all, 'thinking thereby, that the people will be more under their control'.[151] This desire for control, as Hugh Paget has argued, and for a landless proletariat which would give that control, was at the heart of the planters' policy over rents.[152]

Control over family labour was another vital issue for the planters. The withdrawal of the labour of women and children after emancipation was widespread, and was encouraged by the Baptist missionaries. They were firm believers in what they saw as a proper gender order, in which men worked for money and women stayed at home, caring for children and household. As Edward Barrett, now free and a deacon in Knibb's church, proudly told the Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840, 'while the planters during the time of slavery, compelled their children and wives to work in the fields from morning to night, they now sent their children to school, and allowed their wives to fill the station for which they were intended, that of attending to their families and homes'.[153] Such a development dismayed the planters, since women and children had been an important part of the labour force on the plantations up to 1838. This was a serious economic blow, and another reason for attempted coercion. As Fishbourne reported from Buff Bay, they again attempted to use their control over housing to control labour. 'Planters are unwilling to permit families to reside on their plantations,' he wrote, 'the females of which refuse to devote themselves to agricultural labour.'[154]

One response of the peasantry to these various attempts at coercion was resistance. Troubles over rents on the Spring Hill coffee plantation erupted in July 1839, and magistrates and constables had to be sent in. They were met with a violent reception, women being particularly conspicuous in the stone throwing that ensued.[155] The more common reaction, however, was to try and obtain land, by squatting or buying. 'I observe a great desire among the negroes to purchase land,' commented the stipendiary magistrate in the parish of Clarendon, while Fishbourne noted that the effect of planter policies was that 'many respectable people are now availing themselves of opportunities of purchasing or leasing

small pieces of land where they are preparing to place their wives and children, and where they also will retire when they can quit the estates, without sacrificing the provisions now in the ground'.[156]

Buying was a real possibility for significant numbers of freed men and women. A marketing system had been established on the island for decades, and plantation owners had relied on food grown on the provision grounds of the enslaved (land which was usually not suited to sugar production), substantial quantities of which were sold in local markets. Knibb, questioned in 1842 by the Select Committee on the West India Colonies as to the 'wealth' of the negroes – which had been made much of in England – responded:

> The reason why so many of them have been enabled to purchase land has been this: during the apprenticeship, and some times during slavery, they gained money by rearing fowls, and by their own industry. During the apprenticeship they obtained a good deal of money by working over-hours, the cultivation of sugar not being able to be carried on during crop by the eight or nine hour system; so that, as a reference to the parliamentary papers will show, a number of them purchased their apprenticeship, many others saved up their money till they were free, and then purchased freeholds for themselves; so that it is not because they have had extraordinary wages since they were free, but because they were thrifty, looking forward to freedom.[157]

Some freed people were able to make independent purchases of land. Others relied on the block sales made particularly by the Baptist missionaries and then bought from them. The hunger for land was commented on everywhere.

For Lord Olivier, one-time governor of Jamaica and a passionate protagonist of the free peasantry, writing many years later, this desire for land was connected to the old-established African view that unoccupied land belonged to the king as the trustee of the people – a belief that was powerfully in play at the time of the Morant Bay rebellion, and that Philip Curtin also sees as a significant factor in the move to land settlement.[158] Sidney Mintz argues that for ex-slaves to seek the ownership of land was at one and the same time an act of Westernisation and an act of resistance to the plantation economy – an assertion of their personhood.[159] Squatting on unclaimed land was one possibility, but undeveloped land presented problems. The decline in sugar production associated with the severe labour problems in the wake of emancipation meant that estates were falling ruinate. Land was for sale. This was the opportunity which the Baptist missionaries seized.

Joseph Sturge had kept closely in touch with developments in Jamaica after 1838. He was an avid reader of Parliamentary Papers,

often extracting reports for the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, the publication of the new post-emancipation British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, which he had inspired. He was also in regular correspondence with several of the Baptist missionaries, including William Knibb in Falmouth and John Clark in Brown's Town, and he used this correspondence to provide reports for the English press. His early assumption that the peasantry would stay on the estates had to be abandoned in the face of the rent demands, the evictions and the struggles over wages. Freed men and women could only be made into free labourers, or peasants, if their employers would play their part too. In October 1838, only two months after emancipation, he mentioned confidentially in a letter to John Clark that 'some of us are trying to get out a little plan for the purchase of land for the establishment of independent negro villages'. 'As soon as the negroes can possibly be made independent of others in pecuniary matters,' he argued, 'I am persuaded that it will add to their happiness and moral elevation.' He added that Clark should look out for suitable spots where there would be good bargains, and that he should urge the value of independence on the negro.[160]

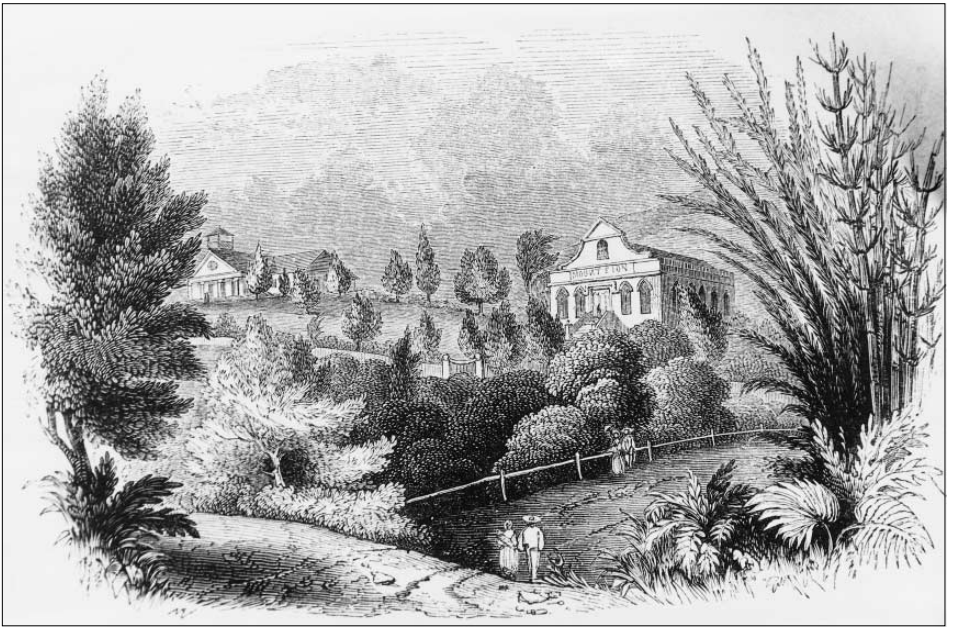
This notion of independence was central to the vision of Sturge, to the Baptist missionaries, and to the abolitionist public. Manhood for them was associated with independence, the capacity of a man to stand on his own feet, to look after those who were properly dependent on him, his wife and children. When Sturge urged that 'the negro' should be taught the value of independence, he meant the negro man, whilst the negro woman should learn a new form of dependence, not on her owner but on her lawful husband. Slavery had produced an unnatural phenomenon: male slaves who were entirely dependent on their masters, who could not, therefore, truly *be* men. Emancipation marked the moment at which they could cast off that dependence and learn to be men, in the image of the middle-class Englishman.[161] Being independent 'in pecuniary matters' was a central aspect of that new masculinity: becoming a householder with all the responsibilities attached to it, enjoying the freedom associated with the old maxim that 'an Englishman's home is his castle', paying for medical care and for education, celebrating the 'voluntary principle' which was at the heart of dissenting politics, the refusal of state intervention in church, in schools, in welfare. Jamaica offered an exceptional opportunity to carry this voluntary principle fully into effect. With a weak established church and a strong dissenting presence, with a state which had depended on the plantation to provide basic forms of care, the breakdown of the old system provided a moment to build a new society. The potential for that new society lay, both for Sturge and for the missionaries, in the linked moments of emancipation and conversion. Emancipation gave men and women their

political, social and economic freedom. But only conversion gave them a new life in Christ, the possibility to be born anew, to be new black subjects, washed clean of old ways – new black men and women.

This was the abolitionist dream – a society in which black men would become like white men, not the whites of the plantations but the whites of the abolitionist movement, responsible, industrious, independent, Christian; and in which black women would become like white women, not the decadent ladies of plantation society, locked into their degrading acceptance of concubinage, but the white women of the English abolitionist imagination, occupying their small but satisfying separate sphere, married and living in regular households. The gender order of the abolitionists was, therefore, central to their vision of the new Jamaica. Black men would survey their families with pride, and black women would no longer be sexually subject to their masters. A new marital economy would emerge, modelled on that of the English middle classes. The mission family, both literally – the missionary, his wife and his children – and symbolically – the linked families of all those attached to the missions – provided the keystone to the new utopias. Congregations constituted families and were all part of the family of man, whether black or white. They were, furthermore, attached to the family of God in part through the familial bonds with the spirits of those departed and in heaven. Each family, as we have seen, was in theory dominated by a patriarch, connected through a chain of male power to God the Father.[162]

These free villages took some building. In November 1838 Sturge wrote to Clark, telling him again that 'We are trying to form a little land company partly for the location of negro villages'. At the same time Knibb was writing to him denouncing the planters as 'slave-tyrants' and informing him that he was on the look-out for land in his area. With his large mission based in Falmouth and surrounded by sugar estates, Knibb was at one of the centres of the struggle over rent, wages and land. He was not slow to seek help from his many supporters in England to buy that land, as we see, for example, in a letter to the Rev. James Hoby, an old friend and long-time supporter of the BMS, the minister of Birmingham's Mount Zion Baptist Church, and a close associate of Sturge's on anti-slavery issues. 'Last night I had offered me', he told Hoby,

> in a lovely spot, 500 acres of land, with a good house thereon, just where we need it, for £1,000 sterling. I shall buy it today and I earnestly beg you to procure me the loan of £500 or £600, for twelve months. Do take this to Mr. Sturge, and I am sure he will assist. I will pay interest, and I am confident that I can return the principal within the time I mention. . . . The land is excellent. It is in the mountains . . . My plan is to convey the house and a few acres of land to the mission, and to resell the whole



Baptist chapel and dwelling house at Sligoville, one of the first of the free villages. Visitors were impressed by the beauty of the surroundings.

From J. M. Phillippo, *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State* (John Snow, London, 1843).

> of the rest to the members of the church of Christ, who may be oppressed, or who may wish to purchase. It shall be sold in lots of one, two, or three acres, so that on the erection of a house the occupier may have a vote at the elections.

The next day Knibb wrote to Sturge telling him that he had bought the land and called it Birmingham. Moreover, he intended if possible to purchase the first estate that came up for sale near him. 'The possession of 2,000 acres would teach these oppressors of men that we were beyond their power,' he argued. 'We would line our streets with gardens,' he continued, 'and the back lands would do for provisions and grass for the cattle. I do hope that my little Birmingham will never be cursed with a church establishment, or a monopoly; but that I shall live to see civil and religious liberty shedding on it all their lovely influences.'[163]

Much of Knibb's conception of the free villages and the new society is contained in these letters. Freedom had no meaning, he believed, unless

the people could be rid of the oppression of the planter. The land should be bought and sold, and loans would be paid back with interest, while a portion of the land would be kept for the mission. The prime candidates for this land were church members, and the lots sold would be large enough to procure a vote, but not adequate to produce a living. Men, therefore, would continue to work on the estates and be able to return to their homes and families in the evening. It was vital to be able to demonstrate that such settlements would not undermine the employment of free labour. The new villages, named in honour of their helpers and supporters, would be havens of civil and religious liberty. They would become new communities, centred on the mission and the missionary, an alternative to the old and corrupt world of the estate. The struggle for emancipation, as Alex Tyrrell points out, was being redefined – it was becoming a movement for the civil rights of the freedmen.[164]

By January Knibb was able to tell Sturge how delighted he would be by the success of 'our little Birmingham'. It was already serving as a refuge, and about seventy families had bought land on which to build houses. 'A school-house is commenced, and the preaching of the gospel will be regularly maintained. . . . If a few sugar estates are abandoned so much the better, eventually it will be the making of Jamaica. Sugar is sweet but the liberty of man is much more sweet.' In May he was reporting to Sturge that the Baptists were particularly persecuted on the estates, and that this was producing 'a longing for a home . . . a home of their own'. He told the story of one of his church members, a poor old woman called Rasey Shaw, named after the estate on which she had been enslaved, Shawfield, where she had worked since her birth. 'Her master had that evening ordered her house to be pulled down, which was done, and she was driven into the road, without a shelter or a home.' It was this constant persecution which inspired the purchases of land. 'We have the germ of a noble free peasantry,' Knibb proudly proclaimed to Sturge, insisting that the results of freedom must be judged not in the poundage of sugar, 'but by the cottager's comfortable home, by the wife's proper release from toil, by the instructed child, and by all that joy and peace which now gladdens the hearts of the beloved people of my choice.'[165] By September, the first edition of the *Baptist Herald and Friend of Africa*, 'a cheap publication by which the labouring population might be instructed in a knowledge of the rights and privileges which belong to them as free men', blazoned on its front page an advertisement for land for sale, 'to suit buyers among the labouring peasantry' in 'Sturge's Town, New Burmingham [*sic*], Hoby's Town' and other free villages.[166]

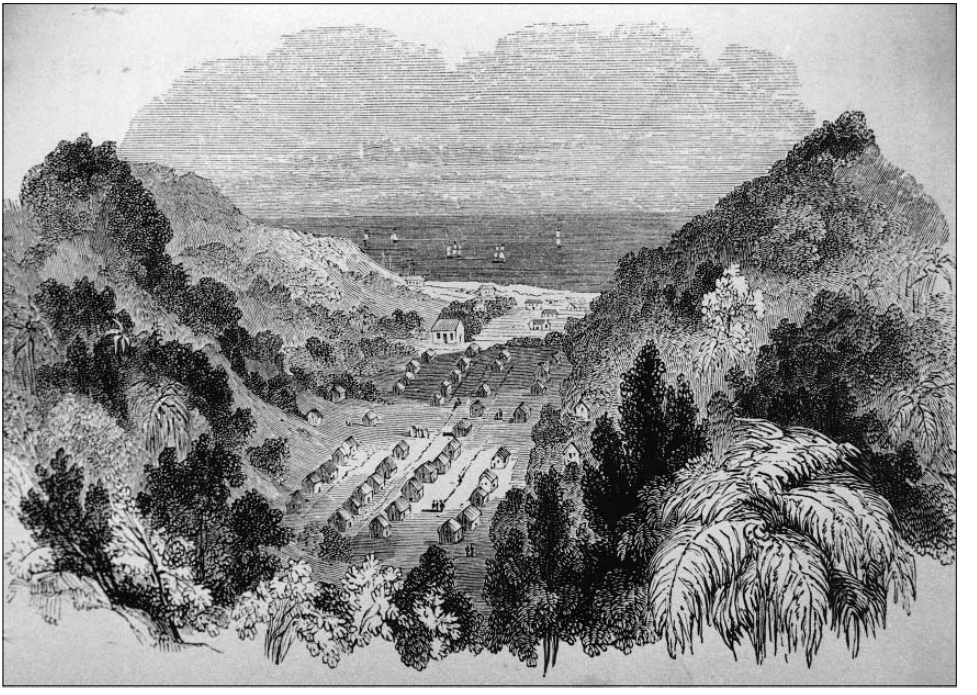
Sturge, meanwhile, was pushing ahead with the Land Company. In January 1839 he told Clark that it would be small-scale and would

require repayments, but that these could be over a three- to five-year period if necessary. In February ninety shares had been taken up, but by October it was still unclear whether it would succeed. Land had already been purchased for the company, however, with Clark acting as the steward. Among those properties was Sturge Town.[167] Clark bought the land for Sturge Town, about seven miles from his base in Brown's Town, and by the autumn of 1839 one hundred families had moved in and a school had been established.[168]

Knibb reported on these developments in his triumphant speech at the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention in London on the effects of emancipation. He told his audience of the wonderful increase in 'morality, social order and domestic happiness', of the 'universal observance of marriage', of industry wherever the negroes were 'fairly treated'. He warned, however, of the attacks on wages and unjust laws, maintaining that if this persisted, 'they must and would enable the negros [*sic*] to obtain free settlements for themselves, where tyranny could not reach them, and the power of the oppressor could not be felt'. This was greeted with loud cheers from the audience. He was pleased to be able to tell them that there were already at least 1,000 freeholders in Jamaica, and he had just received excellent reports of a new settlement he had established. He had visited it before leaving the island, and 'he had seen the people there in their proper places and the Bible on the table'. This evoked further cheers, the 'proper places' presumably meaning women in their homes and men preparing for work. 'Already they had established in Jamaica', he continued,

> a number of free villages, one of them bearing the name of their venerable president Clarkson, another was called Birmingham, and a third they had named Victoria. (Enthusiastic cheering.) To show their respect for that esteemed man Joseph Sturge – (Loud Cheers) – they had a town which bore his honoured name, although that was not needed, for it was deeply engraven on every negro's heart. (Renewed cheers.)[169]

Sturge himself, at a meeting in Birmingham (England) in 1843 to celebrate the anniversary of 1 August, referred to the names given to the villages, 'which afford a pleasing evidence of the grateful sense entertained by the people of the exertions of those kind friends and benefactors who had exerted themselves in the cause of freedom. One village was called Wilberforce, another Buxton, and another Sturge Town.' This gratitude, of a freed people to those who had given them their freedom, was taken by the abolitionists as their right, and provided the dominant contemporary interpretation of the dynamic of emancipation. The freed men and women thanked the abolitionists and the British public, the planters



Clarkson Town. A vision of a Baptist free village, with the chapel at the centre and the small houses and gardens neatly laid out.

From Phillippo, *Jamaica*.

blamed them, and the abolitionists congratulated themselves for what they had achieved. In the abolitionist view, the emancipated peasantry owed good behaviour to the British nation for their magnanimous gift of freedom, at the cost of 20 million pounds of taxpayers' money in compensation to the planters. The naming of villages after the great figures associated with emancipation – Clarkson Town, after the indefatigable campaigner against the slave trade and slavery, Thomas Clarkson, with its main street named after Joseph John Gurney, the Quaker abolitionist; Wilberforce, renamed Refuge; Thompson Town, after George Thompson the radical anti-slavery lecturer; even Knightsville, named by John Candler after his sister-in-law, the abolitionist and feminist Anne Knight. Other villages were named after supporters and patrons, as in Hoby Town, named by Knibb for his friend. Others again were named after places in England which had significance for the anti-slavery struggle: thus Birmingham, which became New Birmingham, and Kettering, named by Knibb after his birthplace.

Kettering, Jamaica, was one of the early villages founded by Knibb, not far from his base at Falmouth and close to Wilberforce, which was up in the hills. The missionaries had to be ready to follow their congregations in the wake of emancipation, for land had to be bought where it was available. It was the willingness of the Baptists to move with the people, at a time when the Anglicans were certainly not, that was in part responsible for the scale of their influence. Knibb reported to the BMS in 1844, for example, that a third of his congregation had moved out of town, and he had to follow them.[170] The site which became Kettering was on the main route along the north coast. By August 1841 three hundred building lots had been sold, the sinking of a well was planned, a normal school (or teacher training establishment) with an English woman teacher, a Miss Anstie, who was to train 'native' young women to be teachers themselves, had been established, and Knibb's Falmouth congregation had decided to build a house for him there. This was reported in the *Baptist Herald*: 'as a testimony of the confidence they have of his integrity in the application of all monies committed to his care, they have resolved to erect for him and his family a comfortable residence, at Kettering, the corner-stone of which was laid by two of the deacons of the Church, Messrs. Barrett and Reid.'[171] Philip Cornford, newly arrived with a group of Baptist missionaries and teachers in Jamaica, described in his later reminiscences the wonderful welcome he received from Mrs Knibb at that new house and the ease with which she arranged for mattresses to be spread on the floor so that the whole party could stay.[172]

By 1842 'a beautiful village' was 'fast rising' at Kettering, and it was chosen as the place to commemorate the fifty-year jubilee of the BMS, a huge celebration attended by thousands. Knibb went the same year to England for the jubilee celebrations there, attended the services in Kettering, and was deeply moved by the graves of his son Andrew (who had died on a previous visit) and his mother, by the place of his birth and his childhood, by his meeting with his twin sister and his old Sunday school teacher. Thus the emotional links for him between the two places were bound more tightly. In December 1844 he wrote from Jamaica to J. C. Gotch, master shoe manufacturer and mainstay of the town's Baptist chapel, about the progress of little Kettering. 'The village', he reported,

> is now assuming a very interesting appearance, and in a few years will be a flourishing little town. It is laid out in four hundred building lots, which, with very few exceptions, are sold. Regular streets intersect each other, and neat cottages are rising on every hand. My own dwelling-house stands in the centre, with a neat chapel and school-room adjoining, and already nearly two hundred of the members of my church have here fixed their

> abode. The grand road through the island, from Kingston to Montego Bay, runs close to the land, and a village named Duncan's, where there are a post-office and a market, is situated on the other side of the road. . . . Thus I dwell among my own people, though in a foreign land.

Knibb had hoped to raise the money for a new church at Kettering in memory of the jubilee, but was unsuccessful in this. The chapel eventually erected in 1862, long after his death in 1845, and repaired after the storms and hurricanes which have ravaged the modest buildings typical of country Baptist churches, still stands, just beside 'the grand road through the island', two miles from the sea and with a view of Cuba on clear days. The girls' school, run by Mary Knibb and her daughters, with regular financial help from the Ladies' Negro's Friend Society in Birmingham, survived for many years.[173]

Most of these villages were named by their missionary founders and give us little clue as to the sentiments of their inhabitants. The grateful populace of one new village, however, decided to call it Phillippo, as reported in the Jamaican *Baptist Herald*. 'In so many instances had their temporal interests been promoted by their Minister in these small settlements', they said, that they wanted to record their public obligations by 'associating his name with the place':

> To so great an extent had these been the means of promoting their domestic happiness and their agricultural usefulness, that they availed themselves of this occasion to testify their respect and gratitude to him, and unanimously named it PHILLIPPO. . . . and as the intellectual welfare of their children had been attended to by their Minister in laying the foundation of a school in the centre of the village, they named some of the streets after his children, and after the county in England with which they were connected by family ties, and with which *they themselves* were linked by friendly cherished names in the great act of Negro Emancipation.

Furthermore, they named streets after Thomas Fowell Buxton, the parliamentary leader of the anti-slavery group, Wilberforce and Joseph John Gurney, the eminent Quaker, 'whose late visit to the colony they had all recollected as one of the most interesting incidents that had occurred since their full and entire deliverance from bondage'.[174] A gravestone in the Baptist chapel at St Ann's Bay memorialising a J. Sturge Brown, schoolmaster, born in 1869, provides a more individual instance of this connection, across generations and oceans, linking the birth of a child in freedom with the work which Sturge had done, and reminding us of the importance of naming patterns in sustaining collective memories. This naming of streets, of villages and of people laid trails across centuries and oceans which still echo powerfully today as the

connections of the past are reconfigured in the present. The degree of identification with powerful white men and their families indicates the extent to which, in this period of transition, the free peasantry had to rely on those with leverage in England.

For missionaries had power. The celebration of missionary names by the free peasantry was associated with the access those men had to England and the potential to challenge planter control. Missionaries, by virtue of their connections with the abolitionist press and public, with the BMS in London and with distinguished public figures, could tap into channels of influence and power. Knibb's evidence to the select committees on slavery in 1832, for example, was widely regarded as important in the struggle for emancipation. The missionaries, despite their lowly social status associated with their class backgrounds and membership of the Baptist brethren, were white Englishmen with access to the governor, and through him to the Colonial Office. They regularly pressured their English contacts to take action over issues which were blocked by the Jamaican House of Assembly. The 'mother country' was necessarily the regular site of appeal – whether for money or for assistance in challenging new laws made in the planters' interests. In the setting up of free villages, missionaries could borrow capital, negotiate with merchants and lawyers, scrutinise deeds, and act as surveyors, planners and architects. Their whiteness, their use of 'proper English', their education and their training gave them, if not the actual skills, the capacity to learn what was required for all these activities. As Phillippo summed it up in his description of the free villages in his widely read book *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State*:

> The land required for the formation of these village establishments had, in most cases, been first purchased by the missionaries, who also surveyed and laid out the allotments, superintended the construction of the roads and streets, directed the settlers in the building of their cottages, and cultivation of their grounds, supplied them with their deeds of conveyance, formed societies among them for the improvement of agricultural operations, gave them a relish for the comforts and conveniences of civilised life, and improved their domestic economy. They endeavoured at the same time, by every means in their power, to convince these simple-minded people that their *own* prosperity, as well as that of the island at large, depended on their willingness to work for moderate wages, on the different properties around them.[175]

Missionary influence over the development of the free villages depended not only on opportunities to establish settlements. The missionaries also made use of sermons, public meetings and the press publicly to argue

their cause both in Jamaica and in England. By 1840 they had decided that it was essential to build an electoral base and attempt to transform the nature of the House of Assembly. As the *Baptist Herald* put it, 'If an Assembly of whites will not give relief, men of darker colour will be found to fill their places.'[176] Thomas Burchell, in his speech to a public meeting in Montego Bay in 1840, was explicit about the political intentions behind the whole drive to buy land. He argued that with their own land and their own houses built on that land freedmen could say, 'This is my own . . . this is my castle . . . We are British subjects and now none dare to molest us'. Furthermore, there was the hope, albeit a hope not to be realised, that they could in time transform the political system through an expanded franchise: if land titles were registered, black men could vote and send 'good and honest men to the House of Assembly'.[177]

The missionary vision of the new life was developed, down to the last detail, in the columns of the *Baptist Herald*. Regular leaders and features offered advice to small settlers on the proper ways of 'colonising the interior', transforming the wastelands of the hills and the untenanted areas surrounding the big estates into new and 'civilised' communities. 'It is essentially necessary', cottagers were instructed,

> that you keep your houses clean, have their walls, or plaster, washed with white-lime water twice, or at least once a year; have a good wide path to the principal door of your houses, it will not cost you much labour, as it may easily be done in your spare time. If possible have a neat painted gate at the entrance to your garden. . . . Let all the dirt or trash that may accumulate from time to time, be carefully put together into one heap in a corner of your garden, which will be of service as manure . . . have a neat white-pine or cedar table, with a good few chairs in your room, so that you and your family may be comfortably seated at meals; have a clean table-cloth, plates, knives and forks on your table, and accustom your children to come to meals with their hands and faces clean; always implore the blessing of God before you eat your food; maintain family prayer in your houses.[178]

The missionaries drew on their knowledge of England for such advice, so practical remarks for housekeepers who were in 'straitened circumstances', for example, echoed English middle-class advice to the working classes. Their awareness of the rather different Jamaican context registered periodically, with perhaps a mention of the rum-shop inserted, but this might sit next to an extract from an almanac such as *Old Humphrey's* on blackberrying in the English autumn. For the most part, however, English advice could be transposed to Jamaica – housekeepers should rise early, keep clean, have their meals at regular times, ensure

that there was a place for everything and everything in its place. A poor man's home kept clean by his wife was still the best place in the world.[179] The hope was that 'the establishment of the free villages will render the Negroes more independent of the White people, and thus show the latter the necessity of treating them with justice and moderation'. The 'White people' referred to here were the planters, not the missionaries, for it was no part of the missionary dream that black people would become independent of them. An editorial in the *Baptist Herald* was gratified to note that 'the growing determination there is among the labouring population to possess a house and land is most certainly indicative of growing intelligence and industry . . . the people are becoming more and more alive to their own interests; the feelings engendered and kept alive by slavery will very soon be extinct and their place will be taken by those that freedom calls into exercise and will sustain'. 'Buy now' and 'Build now' was the advice of the missionaries, for property gave independence and encouraged industry.[180]

Threaded through missionary discourse on the free village was the vision of a new set of relations between men and women. Cottagers would be more industrious, their wives more active and managing. The 'neat white-washed cottages which are arising everywhere around us, and adorning the landscape' would become 'the abodes of happiness . . . the nurseries of piety'. Detailed instructions were offered on the necessary infrastructure for a good family life:

> You should have a middling-sized hall, sufficiently large to have a table in the centre, with chairs around, upon which the husband, wife and children can be seated, and yet have sufficient room, for a person to pass between the chairs, and walls of the house. Three bed-rooms are necessary, you cannot do well with less, if you have children of both sexes; one bed-room will be required by the parents, one for the boys, one for the girls. You should also have a small place fitted up as a pantry, where you can put up your plates, dishes, basins etc. in order. In your bed-rooms, there is no necessity to have the mat upon the floor, it is more tidy, comfortable, and convenient to have a bedstead. . . . If you have a little taste for the ornamental a picture or two, in a neat frame, would look well, but do not purchase any that are foolish, or merely daubs.[181]

The new villages were encouraged to demonstrate a proper appreciation of the division of labour between the sexes. In Hoby Town men were urged to acquire property they could call their own. Real freedom depended on the ownership of homes, 'in which they will be able to live without submitting to exorbitant rent, unfair wages, or unmanly treatment'. In Sligoville, it was triumphantly reported, every man could sit 'under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, none daring to make

them afraid'. In Ewarton, children, 'no longer under the shackles of slavery, are to be seen frolicing about the road'. Marriage was increasingly celebrated, newly-weds were greeted by entire villages, 'the decencies of society are no longer outraged by insufficient and filthy apparel', and women were beginning to abandon their gaudy dress and appear modestly clad. The men worked on the estates, and after work cultivated their grounds, while the women looked after their homes and gardens, some of which even had roses at the front. The townships themselves, imagined as infants, were also constructed as large families, 'united in bonds of Christian love and fellowship . . . with one feeling to prompt and one principle to govern'.[182] That 'feeling' and 'principle' were to be orchestrated by the father of the family – the missionary.

By 1842, when Knibb gave evidence to the Select Committee on West India Colonies, he could confidently report that even the planters were now reconciled to the free villages, recognising that men who had their own property were more inclined to continuous labour. He made it clear that the Baptist missionaries had so designed the land sales that male employment was essential to family survival. He was closely questioned by George Charles Grantley Fitzharding Berkeley, a member of the committee, who 'delighted in wearing at the same time two or three different-coloured satin under-waistcoats, and round his throat three or four gaudy silk neckerchiefs, held together by passing the ends of them through a gold ring'. Such decoration was not for negroes, however. Berkeley grilled Knibb on the astonishing reports he had heard of the mahogany four-posters, sideboards and chairs owned by the Jamaican peasantry. Knibb proudly responded that 'he would be very sorry to see them as badly off as the labourers here; half of them starving', and that their desire for respectability would ensure that they would continue to work.[183] Such respectability was firmly encoded in a familial culture.

Knibb was right in seeing the villages as a fixed part of the landscape by 1842. Governor Metcalfe informed the Colonial Office as early as 1839 that he was in favour of the peasantry buying land, despite his generally conciliatory policy towards the planters. He saw it as a source of increasing stability and unlikely to have bad effects on the supply of labour. By December 1840 he had collected information on the free villages from the stipendiary magistrates at the request of the Colonial Office, and reported that the numbers of freeholders across the island had increased from just over 2,000 to nearly 8,000. In Trelawny, where Knibb had been so energetic, the number had increased from 71 to 406.[184] This increase was not, of course, only due to the Baptist missionaries. Many individuals had bought land, and some had organised themselves into collectives to facilitate purchase. In addition, other missionaries – Presbyterians, Wesleyans and Moravians – were involved in

establishing new settlements, and indeed sometimes came into conflict with the Baptists, as Hope Waddell did in Mount Horeb with Thomas Burchell.[185] In *Jamaica*, published in 1843, Phillippo (over)estimated that there were already between 150 and 200 villages, that 10,000 heads of households had purchased land, and that 3,000 cottages had been built. The increase in smallholders demonstrated by the census returns of 1844 was widely commented on, and Knibb used it to argue that 'full nineteen thousand persons, formerly slaves' had purchased land.[186] George Cumper suggests that by the end of the 1840s approximately two-thirds of the former estate population had left, and perhaps half of these had gone to free settlements, particularly in the eastern part of the island.[187] Thomas Holt argues that seven years after full emancipation, more than 21 per cent of the apprentice population had become resident on peasant freeholds, and that between 1844 and 1861 there was a dramatic shift of population from the western and eastern ends of the island to the centre. The most popular land for settlement was that made available from previously developed coffee and sugar estates, which was not too distant from markets, schools and churches.[188] Overall, there is no doubt that a significant class of freeholders had emerged.

Debates over the free villages were intimately linked with controversies about the place of the free peasantry in a post-emancipation world. What kind of society was Jamaica to be? The planters were convinced that the future of Jamaica depended entirely on the estates and sugar production. Others, including many of the Baptist missionaries, believed that Jamaica could have a different kind of future with a more mixed economy and peasant production for export. But the free villages were not tied into the international market as the plantations were, and this was to have many consequences. Knibb had hoped for a significant breakthrough in black political representation through the establishment of freeholds – an aspiration that was foiled by the political chicanery of the planting interest. The free villages were iconic in these debates, for they represented those independent spaces, created despite the planters, where the emancipated could live their own way, only partially dependent on wages. For the missionaries, of course, that way was meant to be *their* way, but this was a dream that was not to be realised.

The utopian vision of the missionaries and of abolitionists such as Joseph Sturge was to build 'the good society' in Jamaica. The free villages represented the ultimate moment of this missionary fantasy. Jamaica thus became a site for acting out white visions of how black people should live. That 'good society' was informed in part by the missionaries' displacement from their own society. As dissenting ministers, their class position was uneasy, their relation to conventional forms of

political power marginal. In Jamaica, because of their pivotal role in the struggle for emancipation, they glimpsed new possibilities of power, which, as they saw it, they could use on behalf of the people, to build rural idylls which could never exist in corrupted and compromised England. 'The whole island . . . had to begin the world at once,' as Knibb put it to an English audience in 1845, for in his vision there was no world as yet.[189]

For Knibb there was the possibility of a new world – neither England nor the slave plantation – where black freedmen and white missionaries could build a new society, one with which he could powerfully identify. Black people living in the image of middle-class English people were for him 'my own people', living 'in a foreign land'. At one and the same time England and Jamaica were both places in which he belonged, and likewise, freed men and women belonged to both Africa and the Caribbean. His vision – and his was the vision which most fully articulated the missionary dream to both the English and the Jamaican public – was that of a black society led, initially, by white men. He dreamed of an independent Jamaica of the future, governed by black freeholders, made in the abolitionist image. His love for Jamaica was based on a conception of black people which both gave and denied equality in the present, while promising it for the future. The missionaries fought for equality before the law and equality in political representation, yet constructed 'their' people as their pupils, learning from them the ways of the world. Such a conception was underpinned by deep-rooted assumptions about white civilisation which worked on the premiss that the corruption of some white people could be redeemed by the action of others, that a particular version of English 'freedom' must be at the heart of any civilised society. Such a conception jostled in Knibb's mind with his knowledge and experience of both white and black societies. The language of abolitionism provided the tools with which to play upon these contradictions, for a universalist rhetoric of equality was articulated with ethnocentric and patriarchal assumptions as to the inevitability of social difference. The instabilities of a missionary identity, caught between two cultures, the interpreter of the one to the other, produced the dream of a third, where Africans and Englishmen would live harmoniously, in a missionary regime, a new Jamaica.

Such a dream was built, however, on the refusal to recognise an existing black culture. For, once established, the free villages could not be maintained in the missionary image. Phillippo's fantasy of his all-seeing, all-regulating, all-supervising hand and eye – buying land, designing houses, marrying parents, educating children – reckoned without the inhabitants of 'his' villages. For they were populated by black men and

women and their children who brought their own culture, shaped by slavery, the middle passage and the plantation, and honed through their encounter with Christianity and the missionaries, to build their own syncretic forms of religion, their own rituals, their own practices, their own African-Jamaican way of life.

The missionary project, to 'colonise the interior' and create a civilisation of a new kind, was to be overtaken by the emergence of that distinctive peasant culture and the decline, from the mid-1840s, of the missionary presence and influence. But that presence has left its marks – in the commanding chapels on the hills which still play such a central part in country life, in the reinforcement it gave to the family, in the tradition of 'family land'. George Cumper sees the strengthening of the family as the abiding legacy of the free villages, for these villages had little contact with estate culture, hardly used local courts and relied on the church and the family as the regulatory institutions.[190] The power of the family has, furthermore, as Jean Besson has argued, been enshrined in the tradition of 'family land': the notion that land should be handed on from generation to generation, a heritage not to be sold. The village of Martha Brae, for example, was built on land where the Baptists had strong connections, and powerful links with Knibb's church in Falmouth have survived to the present. The origin of 'family land' was intimately linked with the free villages. Rather than simply being an imposition of the missionaries, it marked a reworking of ideas of private property, 'a dynamic cultural creation by the peasantries themselves in response and resistance to the plantation system and imposed styles of life'.[191]

According to the *Baptist Herald*, it was 'the emancipated sons of Africa' who erected the memorial to emancipation in Knibb's chapel in Falmouth 'when they came into the possession of that liberty which was their right, and of which they have proved themselves to be so pre-eminently worthy'. Two Africans were represented burying the broken chain, another was 'rejoicing in the undisturbed possession of the book of God', and 'a fond mother', joyously caressed 'the infant which for the first time she can dare to regard as *her own*'. But the vision represented there was that of the missionary dream: the dream of a new Jerusalem in Jamaica, of a society of new Christian subjects, living a familial, domesticated, industrious life in villages centred around a chapel, a mission school and a mission house. While the Africans in this monument were emblematic figures, likenesses of the good man and the good woman, specific English men – Granville Sharp, Wilberforce, Sturge and Knibb – were arrayed in bas-relief on the base. They were the named architects of freedom, the agents of history. The monument, made in Birmingham in 1840, captures that post-emancipation moment when the missionaries' future

seemed secure. Their contribution to the winning of full emancipation had been widely recognised both in Jamaica and in England; freed men and women had flocked to their chapels, and the creation of free villages had further reduced the power of the plantocracy. They looked ahead to universal liberty for all nations of men 'who God hath made of one blood', with themselves in the vanguard.[192] But was this future secure?