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THE BAPTIST CHURCHES OF SOUTH TRINIDAD

AND THEIR MISSIONARIES

1815 - 1892

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Divinity

in the

University of Glasgow

for the

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by

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|---|
| BM | Baptist Magazine |
| BM/MH | Baptist Magazine and Missionary Herald, bound into one volume. This is normally the form in which I have used these publications, and therefore it has been convenient to cite them in this way. The volume number is that of the BM. |
| BMS | Baptist Missionary Society |
| BQ | The Baptist Quarterly |
| MH | Missionary Herald |
| P.P. | Parliamentary Papers |
| P.R.O. | Public Record Office |
| SMR | The Scottish Missionary Register |
| SMPR | The Scottish Missionary and Philanthropic Register (Revised title of SMR from 1823 onwards.) |

I have normally given full bibliographical details in citations on the first occasion on which I have cited the work concerned in each chapter. Thereafter I have normally, for works commonly quoted, cited it by author and abbreviated title, thus:

Inniss, Diamond Jubilee..... .

For works only cited occasionally I have given full details in the notes; complete bibliographical information is in the bibliography.

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ABSTRACT

Chapter One deals with the context in which the Trinidad Baptists, and others in the Caribbean area, were formed. That context is the revivalist religious tradition of the United States. The nature and meaning of the revivalist tradition, and the revivalist phenomena, is explained. The question is raised as to whether some of this behaviour is really a residual, and pagan, Africanism. Various theories about the connection between Revivalism and Africanism are discussed, and a provisional answer is suggested. The conclusion as regards the Trinidad Baptists is that they came to the island as essentially a revivalist and evangelical group who tended to lose that character over the years in which they lived in a predominantly Catholic and Afro-Caribbean environment. This posed a problem for the British missionaries who worked with them.

Chapter Two attempts to trace the origins of the Trinidad Baptists to their original home in Virginia, where blacks were recruited in 1812-1813 into the Royal Marines, some Baptists being among them. The land and labour problems of Trinidad are briefly outlined, as this forms the reason why they were settled after military service in the island. The foundation of the "Company Villages" is described.

Chapter Three traces the first beginnings of Baptist Churches in the area, and argues that in the earliest days these were fervent revivalist bodies, probably with a strict discipline, which made these incomers good, reliable settlers. In the period of nearly 30 years between the first settlements and the arrival of the missionary society, there was a decline, due to the isolation of the area, to the ignorance of their leaders, and to the infiltration of casual settlers. The initial government care of the communities was replaced by slackness and corruption, and incomers may well have introduced pagan practice to graft on to the revivalist tradition. But a visiting missionary from Jamaica still saw

evidence of a tradition he recognised as familiar to him from that country.

Chapter Four traces the impulse which led the Baptist Missionary Society to work in Trinidad. The career of George Cowen as a schoolmaster with the Mico Trust, and his 'humanitarian' historical context, is explored. His appointment as missionary, and his extensive work as preacher, pastor, evangelist, doctor, schoolmaster, in south Trinidad, is described; and his achievement assessed. The sectarian bitterness of Trinidad forms a background to all this, and Cowen's views on such matters, and his general reformist opinions, are taken into account.

Chapter Five offers a 'cross-section' of the churches in the 1860's, drawn from the writings of E B Underhill and W H Gamble and others. At this point some details of the life of the churches can more easily be discerned, because there is a resident missionary who wrote down his observations, and a visiting mission statesman who also recorded his impressions. The churches still showed signs of the old revivalism, the more so because an American negro preacher had recently visited the area; the effects of this were not beneficial but, in some cases, divisive. One church at least, at Fourth Company, was in good shape and under an able local pastor. Some of the others had suffered badly. Gamble was moved from the villages into San Fernando, but achieved little there.

Chapter Six sketches the origin of the BMS deputation of 1892, and the mission's plan to move resources from the entire West Indies. The visit was eventually made by Bailey, who was clearly disappointed, on the whole, with what he saw. The churches' ethos had not changed. Despite missionary and local protest, the mission is abandoned. One result of this was that eventually the Baptist Union was split - on the old issues arising from revivalism. In conclusion, it is suggested that much of the ensuing division and trouble could have been avoided with wiser handling.

CHAPTER ONE

REVIVALIST ROOTS

At various times during the 19th century the Baptist Missionary Society gave help to Baptist communities in Jamaica, the Bahamas, Trinidad, Haiti, and Honduras(Belize). These West Indian and Central American territories were indeed an important element in the total work of the Society, though from the middle of the century interest in them diminished as attention was increasingly directed towards Africa and China. Finally, in 1892, the decision was made to withdraw entirely from the region, leaving only the Theological College in Jamaica as a charge on the funds. In the middle of the century, however, the Society gave half its serving missionaries to the area. In 1841, Northern India, the Asiatic islands, and Calcutta were served by 37 men and 13 women, while Jamaica, the Bahamas and Honduras used "thirty-five male and thirty female agents".¹

An area of the world which represented so much missionary investment invites attention from the historian of missions. This study concentrates attention upon one territory only, namely Trinidad, but it is important to bear in mind that all the West Indian Baptist churches (Honduras or Belize may be an exception), had a common origin in the Revivalist movement among blacks in the Southern United States. All were founded by individual preachers from America, or immigrant communities. In each case the native church preceded the arrival of the mission. Thus, the generalization about mission expressed by J V Taylor, that "In the story of any new church the missionary contribution progresses through three phases: missionaries are first pioneers, then pastors, and finally partners",² does not hold good of the Baptist missions in the Caribbean. In Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Trinidad, the missionaries met churches already established, with an ethos of their own. The same is almost certainly true of Haiti, and may be true(although proof is lacking) of Honduras, to which many Jamaicans migrated. The ethos of these pre-mission churches was that of revivalist

religion, modified by residual African survivals. Missionaries did not find it easy to adapt to this ethos. To English missionaries 'Revivalism' in the American sense was strange, and the Africanism equally so. In Trinidad especially they found the churches alien to what they knew of Baptist life: but the problem was common to all the West Indies, wherever the Christian religion had been carried by the negro diaspora from the United States.

It is important, therefore, that before tracing the story of the Baptist churches of Trinidad, we should clarify what is meant by the Revivalist tradition in religion, as this is understood in the United States. In general terms, Revival is best understood as the coming to life of a church which had been dead and ineffective. More specifically, Revival may be defined as:

"an event which was thought of as the direct, unpredictable work of God. A Revival was an allegedly supernatural phenomenon; or, to put it the other way, the occasional, spontaneous occurrence of a revival, whether in the American sense or the Wesleyan sense, was regarded as important evidence both of the existence of a God who could be seen immediately at work in human life, and also of his benevolence towards the particular area concerned".³

The theology of revival is in itself an important topic, but for our present purpose what matters is the special character of American revivalism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It was out of that religious environment that the Baptist groups who later came to the Caribbean were formed. These groups brought to the islands the aims, methods, and attitudes of the revivalist preachers under whom they had been converted. With this outlook they mingled, as we should expect, traces of their African background. This American tradition of revival is defined in this way:

"Revivalism may be defined as Christianity in earnest - impatiently in earnest to produce an immediate impression on the heart and consciousness of men. Revivalism differs from the ordinary methods of religious teaching in that it concentrates all its efforts upon the supreme point of inducing individuals to make, there and then, the fateful decision (acceptance of Christ) upon which their whole future depends".⁴

R W Long, who cites this definition, comments upon it that it underscores the central feature of revivalism in America, which is:

"..entreating men and women to repent and receive Christ as their Saviour from sin. All religious awakenings tend to stimulate believers to greater religious activity; revivals in America have been characterized by more than merely renewal of spiritual fervour in the churches. Evangelism, the yearning of the 'saved' to convert the 'unsaved' has been the conspicuous trait of revivalism in America".⁵

It may be remarked in passing that this definition of revival is open to serious theological criticism. Though evangelism is a very proper activity, though the desire that men and women should be saved is entirely worthy, and though the demand for an existential decision from the audience, are all in line with the concept of New Testament mission,⁶ there is a weak area in the definition. It unduly emphasizes the human activity of the evangelist. The term "inducing" in Stead's account of revival may perhaps unconsciously reveal the temptation of revivalists to manipulate audiences to get results. At a later date (1832), Colston, an American revival preacher, writing of the American revivalist tradition for the benefit of British readers, showed that the temptation was not always resisted. He revealed that revivalists had no scruple in fixing the date of a "revival" in advance, in planning for it with advertising and posters, and in taking it for granted that if enough prayer had been offered, God was bound to co-operate. If no results were achieved, that just proved a lack of faith somewhere in the community itself.⁷

The earlier type of revivalist worked with the conviction that the source of revival was God, and was perhaps not especially tempted to put undue pressure on his hearers. He was not, like his 19th century successors, equipped with a battery of rhetorical, musical, and psychological techniques to enable him to do so. The ancestors of the Baptist West Indian communities were converted for the most part during the latest stage of the 18th century revival, a transitional period when the older concept of revival as an unexpected, unplanned, wholly supernatural event was giving way

to the newer idea of revival as a programmed occurrence. In the 1780's and 1790's revivalist preachers were learning to be professionals in a way that had not been necessary before. They were inventing techniques to produce effects. Since some of these techniques were evidently carried from the Southern States to Trinidad, and reproduced there to the dismay and bafflement of the British missionaries, this is significant for the story. The earlier preachers had been able to appeal to the living tradition of the Reformation, epitomized by Bunyan in the story of the Pilgrim whose burden of guilt fell away at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. Serious Protestants re-enacted this mythology in their own lives. By the end of the 18th century, secular attitudes were dominant in the American colonies, and had replaced this tradition; and revivalists had to rely increasingly upon professionalism and technique to get results. Such, at least, is Kent's interpretation.⁸

A good example of the old revivalist conversion is preserved in the story of George Leile (or Lisle), who went on to found the Baptist work in Jamaica. His own account runs:

"...the Revd Matthew Moore, one Sabbath afternoon, as I stood with curiosity to here(sic)him...unfolded all my dark views, opened my best behaviour and good works to me, which I thought I was to be saved by, and I was convinced that I was not in the way to heaven, but in the way to hell. This state I laboured under for the space of five or six months. The more I heard or read, the more I felt that I was condemned as a sinner before God; till at length I was brought to perceive that my life hung by a slender thread, and if it was the will of God to cut me off at that time, I was sure I should be found in hell, as sure as God was in heaven. I saw my condemnation in my own heart, and found no way wherein I could escape the damnation of hell, only through the merits of my dying Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ...".

Leile gave himself up to prayer, and found relief. He

"felt such love and joy as my tongue was not able to express. After this I declared before the congregation of believers the work which God had done for my soul, and the minister, the Revd Matthew Moore, baptised me..."⁹

Bunyan would have recognised this experience as that of his Pilgrim,

but here it is the account of a negro evangelized on a Georgia slave estate, during the course of the revival. It must reflect the typical preaching of the revivalist:

"The basic pattern discernible in Leile's experience and generally in those recounted by others consists of a tripartite movement - first a feeling of sinfulness, then a vision of damnation, and finally an experience of acceptance by God and being reborn or made anew. The essential dynamic of the conversion is an inward, experiential realization of the doctrines of human depravity, divine sovereignty, and unconditional election made vividly real to the imagination and the emotions".¹⁰

This is precisely the Puritan tradition in revival. The tradition was defined in terms of justification by faith, and meant that a man had to recognize that he was helplessly guilty in the sight of God, and that he needed the forgiveness which was mediated only through Jesus, the Son of God. These propositions were not to be accepted intellectually only. It was essential:

"to incorporate their spiritual sense into the core of one's being, emotionally and subjectively; one had to live through an experience of self-rejection that left one almost without God and without hope - and then, in the depths of the crisis, it was asserted, the truly religious man, whom God wanted to save, found that a new personal level of meaning had been added to what before had been only an intellectual awareness of the forgiveness that God offered men in Christ...".¹¹

It is likely that this was the type of revivalist religion which was introduced into the various Caribbean islands by Baptists emigrating from the Southern States : Puritan in its background, deeply personal and subjective in practice, evangelistic in emphasis. None of this would have troubled the British missionaries, who shared a similar background. The Trinidad emigrants, however, brought with them a revivalist technique, the "camp meeting" invented at the end of the 18th century, which looked forward to the more pressurized revivalism of the following century. The camp meeting, as will be shown, was a matter of some concern to the missionaries in Trinidad. Something must therefore be said about its origins.

No one knows quite how the camp meeting was born. The Separate Baptists of Guildford County in North Carolina are said to have held meetings under this name even before the Revolution, but only the men could stay overnight and no provision was made for feeding the crowds. The Methodists of the Rehoboth congregation in Lincoln County, North Carolina seem to have organized a forerunner of the camp meeting in 1794, while their chapel was still being built. These were temporary expedients; the first true camp meeting in America, according to Long, was the "sacramental meeting" held by McGready at Caspar River, in Kentucky, in July 1800.¹² Thereafter such gatherings became highly popular. They fulfilled genuine needs for ministers and lay people alike. The protracted religious services satisfied the spiritual and social wants of country folk to a considerable extent. Settlers who had not seen a minister for several months found that the inconvenient wagon trek over bad roads was a small price for having four entire days of preaching, praying, and singing. Even people not religiously inclined found that the social fellowship of the large assembly interrupted the dull monotony of a frontier farm:

"curiosity drew many people somewhat after the fashion of the later country fair".¹³

The ministers, especially those who had to cover many congregations scattered over a wide area, found these events useful. It was economical in time to have a protracted meeting at one central location rather than preaching single sermons at many distant points. They knew that the people would appreciate feeding and camping facilities when they assembled from a distance. Whole families could camp out of doors in summer, in and around wagons parked near wood and water.¹⁴ Thus the camp meeting became a contribution to the technique of revival. Such mass gatherings for preaching could produce high emotions. The use, or abuse, of the camp meeting became a major issue between the local churches and the Baptist missionaries in Trinidad right up into the early years of the present century.

Revivalism spread widely throughout the American South, but we shall at this point concentrate attention upon Virginia alone. It was from that state that the Trinidad Baptists came. The successive waves of revivalist preaching which swept through the state came eventually to draw many blacks into the various churches, and, for reasons both organizational and social, the Baptists were highly successful at winning the negro population. The course of the revival movement in Virginia has been most thoroughly analysed in Gewehr's work,¹⁵ the story being summarized as follows:

"Prior to the Revolution the Great Awakening in Virginia was represented in each of its phases by some one denomination - first, the New Light Presbyterians, then the Separate Baptists, and finally, the Methodists - each seeming to take up the work where the other left it, thus making the movement a continuous one down to the war. In its final stage...all three of the above denominations fell common heir to the revival, and simultaneously experienced a new Awakening which covered the entire state. The Awakening commenced in different regions in 1785, reached its crest everywhere about 1787-8, and, before it had subsided, had added thousands of members to the Baptist, Presbyterian and Methodist churches."¹⁶

We shall not attempt to do more here than to show how, and why, it was the Baptists who were especially successful in evangelising the black population, though the Presbyterians had initiated work among them, and Methodism proved very effective among them. The great Presbyterian minister of Hanover County, Samuel Davies, who did so much to establish Dissent in the colony, took a special interest in the slaves; he baptized about one hundred of them.¹⁷ Davies found the negroes willing to learn to read, and he supplied them with books. Another discovery was that negroes loved "above all the human Species" to sing, and would spend all night in his kitchen singing their religious songs. Davies' colleagues Wright and Todd also made successful attempts to convert the blacks. Todd sometimes preached especially for them, and under him they learned to hold their own meetings. This was a portent for the future, for negro Christianity grew most rapidly among the churches which allowed or encouraged negroes to have positions of leadership and responsibility. Presbyterianism,

however, was on the whole conservative. Davies saw no inconsistency between the Christian religion and slavery; it was part of the order of Providence that some should be masters and others slaves. The relationship between master and servant was not destroyed by Christianity but was regulated by it.¹⁸

The second phase of the Great Awakening was dominated by the Baptists, or, more accurately, the Separate Baptists, for the Baptists were divided into two wings, the radical Separates and the more staid and conservative Regulars. The two groups were finally united in August 1787, at the height of the revival. By that time the strict adherence of the Regulars to the Calvinist Baptist Confession of 1689, and their reservations about the excesses and "enthusiasm" of revivalism had broken down. The Separate Baptists were the wing of the denomination who brought the revival to the lowest strata of colonial society. Their Regular brethren were careful to distance themselves from their demonstrative ways:

"As these horrid vociferations and obstreperous commotions mentioned in the objections (i.e., that Scripture did not countenance the excesses), never were the effect of my preaching, nor are approved of by our churches as any part of religion, I am no ways obliged to vindicate any or all of them".¹⁹

For all their 'vociferations and commotions', the Separates were successful. When Samuel Davies left Virginia in 1757 the Baptists were negligible. By 1790, the Baptists had over 200 churches and 150 ordained ministers in the state.²⁰ This development is important for our account, for it was the Baptists who first reached the black population on a large scale. Unlike the established Episcopalian Church, which was a planters' church, and unlike the respectable Presbyterians, the Baptists drew their strength from the lowest social groups. This explains both their struggle to obtain legal toleration and their eventual growth:

"With the Baptist movement the Great Awakening entered an even more popular and extravagant phase than when the Presbyterians were its sole representatives. Their religious zeal and enthusiasm, the rapid increase in their numbers, coupled with

their despised social standing, aroused an opposition to the Baptists, which developed into persecution. The term "New Lights" now became attached to the Baptist ministers and people, with a fresh opprobrium, for they were the plainest of the everyday people, often unlettered, and ignorant... The people needed a distinctive symbol and a comparatively formless faith; they found the one in adult baptism by immersion, and the other in the wide compass of Bible teaching wherein the devout and emotional soul finds what it seeks".²¹

The Separate Baptist movement "everywhere had in it the fire and fervour of the Whitfield revival. It was this that distinguished it from the Regular wing of the church." The Separate Baptists used no confession of faith other than the Bible, feeling that to adopt a statement of faith would shackle them, would lead to formality and deadness, and would divert them from the Bible. The Regular Baptists were staunchly Calvinist and adhered to the London Confession of Faith of 1689, which had been adopted by the Philadelphia Association. Separate Baptists inclined rather to Arminianism. They also quarrelled over dress with the Regulars, for they strongly emphasized simplicity of attire. Another failure of the Regulars was that they did not sufficiently emphasize experience in receiving members for baptism, and that they had in their membership people who acknowledged that they had been baptized before they believed.²²

The point which attracted the most public notice about the Separate Baptists, however, was that they were "zealous and noisy", whereas among the Regulars the work was "solemn and rational". Among the Separates people would cry out, fall down, lose the use of their limbs for a time, and experience various motor and sensory phenomena such as the muscular contortions known as the 'jerks', trembling, rolling on the ground, and 'barking' like dogs. Some of these strange phenomena of revival had been seen before; but apparently not on this scale. Such behaviour is a pointer to the social status of the Baptists. Such manifestations invariably started with the lower and uneducated classes, especially in crowds directed by skilful exhorters for long periods in protracted meetings, with attention concentrated on a single idea, as salvation or hell.

By constant repetition of the central theme the crowd would be brought to a high pitch of excitement, and the emotions of fear and joy in particular would be translated into muscular and sensory reflexes. The effect was increased by the singing of a variety of short, violently contrasted verses which were commonly known and which made a vivid impression on the mind, especially when the meetings were held at night.²³

R W Long distinguishes four types of revivalist phenomena, and significantly for our theme, links them with the camp meeting. First, there was the 'falling exercise', in which the afflicted one fell to the ground. This caused no interruption except when the person had to be carried away so as not to be stepped upon. Apparently it was so common in the end as to be unremarked. There was the 'Jerks' - a violent movement of the head or of the whole body. There was 'barking' and sometimes 'going on all fours like a dog cornering an opossum'; this was known as 'treeing the devil'. Finally, there was the 'least disagreeable' of the phenomena, dancing, which was sometimes recommended by the preachers to relieve tension and to ward off the more violent manifestations.²⁴

No doubt there are psychological explanations for these bizarre manifestations, but for our purposes the point is that apparently related behaviour occurred in Trinidad among the Baptists who had introduced the camp meeting to that island. Long says specifically that:

"the aberrations were the result of the emotionally charged atmosphere of camp meetings, for people had worked themselves up to a high pitch of expectancy."²⁵

It was towards the end of camp meetings that the greatest number of such 'fallings' occurred. The campers, debilitated in body and exhausted, bombarded with fear-inspiring tirades, and pressed into association with over-wrought people obsessed with one dominant idea, the salvation of their souls, reacted in strange ways to the pressure.²⁶

This, then, was the Baptist religion which proved to have the greatest appeal to the lowest orders in Virginia, and among others, to the slaves. In November 1778 there was a complaint from the Church people of King William County, Virginia, stating that "the poor are seduced from their labour and our negroes from their duty" by Baptist meetings. These meetings were alleged to be disorderly, the Baptist leaders to be immoral and dissipated, and the effects of them to be habits of idleness and consequent poverty. The social origins of the Baptist preachers were enabling them to penetrate to the lowest levels, even to the slave quarters.²⁷

This success among the lower orders of society, and the immense growth of the Baptist denomination, even among slaves, was based on five main causes.

There was a social reason. The Baptist preachers presented the evangelical movement in a way that appealed most strongly to the masses. Wandering preachers, lacking learning and patronage, were more effective than the clergy of the establishment. Their sermons, based on the principle of direct communion with God, stirred people whom more refined and educated preachers failed to reach. For the first time people found an organization, a ministry, and preaching which was congenial to their thinking and emotions. The leaders of the movement were unlettered men, given for the first time full opportunity to think for themselves. There was no hint of exclusiveness in Baptist structures.

There were political reasons. Liberty was in the air, and republican principles were gaining ground. This fitted the Baptists' polity, which was congregational and popular. The Baptists supported the American Revolution, even though in Virginia their persecution ended only after independence.

There was an ecclesiastical cause for Baptist success. More and more the payment of tax to the Established Church of Virginia was becoming intolerable, and the irritation was intensified by a new religious antagonism.

The most significant cause of Baptist success was religious and spiritual. The revivals had radically altered the whole approach to evangelism, not least to evangelism among the slaves.

The Church of England, and other colonial Protestants, had thought of conversion as a process of nurture involving teaching. Until the wave of revivals known as the Great Awakening reminded American Protestants of the conversion experience, becoming a Christian was seen as a process of careful nurture and slow growth. This replaced the old emphasis on literacy and religious learning.²⁸ So long as the old approach lasted, evangelism among the illiterate slave population would be seriously hampered.

Finally, there was Baptist radicalism. The Baptists received many slaves into the church, regarding them as spiritually the equal of their masters. The manuscript church books studied by Gewehr reveal the status of slaves among Baptist Churches. Some Baptist leaders at least regarded slavery as wrong in principle, an advance on the position of Samuel Davies earlier. One such leader was John Leland, who introduced this resolution into the Baptist General Committee of Virginia in 1789:

"Resolved that slavery is a violent deprivation of the rights of nature, and inconsistent with a republican government; and we therefore recommend it to our brethren, to make use of every legal measure to extirpate this horrid evil from the land, and pray Almighty God that our honourable legislature may have it in their power to proclaim the great Jubilee consistent with the principle of good policy".²⁹

This resolution was passed, and helps us to understand the appeal of these lower-class revivalists to the black population.

Unhappily, the moment passed too, and the Baptists, in their hour of success, became less radical, and more respectable. The day of persecution was over for them, and as they went up in the social scale, so they backed off schemes for the abolition of slavery in the State. For example, the Roanoke Association of Baptist

Churches in Virginia fudged the whole issue in discussing the resolution quoted above. They said:

"...the subject with us is so very abstruse, and such a set of complex circumstances attending the same, that we suppose neither the General Committee nor any other Religious Society has the least right to concern therein as a society, but leave every individual to act at discretion(sic) in order to keep a good conscience before God, as far as the laws of our land will admit; and that it is the indispensable duty of masters to forbear and surpress(sic) cruelty, and do that which is just and equal to their servants".³⁰

Baptist church government was congregational, and this prevented a firm official collective decision about slavery. It was not possible for Baptists, as it was for Methodists, to take a united denominational attitude towards slavery: and even the Methodists, who took initially a hard anti-slavery line, were compelled to retreat from this in the face of their own people.³¹

But Baptists had one advantage, organizationally, over the Methodists. It was possible for an entire church to be made up of negroes, under their own leaders, within the Baptist system, and by 1793 the Dover Association of Virginia received into membership a black church at Williamsburg.³² In this way, negroes could become leaders and ministers within their own churches, and though it was common for whites to supervise them, such supervision, especially in the Virginian cities, might well be only nominal. Thus, it will not have seemed strange to the black communities who migrated to Trinidad to have charge of their own affairs. The evangelical religion of the revivals, which held all men, of every race, to be equally sinners before God, ought to have been able, logically, to eliminate racialism. The retreat from radicalism among Baptists and Methodists prevented this. Normal practice was for whites to accord recognition to negro congregations as segments of white churches. Though left largely alone, as they desired to be, the negro churches did not emerge as a completely independent institution until after the Civil War.³³ It may not be entirely fanciful to trace the suspicion of Trinidad Baptists towards white missionaries back to the desire of black

congregations in Virginia to be free of all white control. It is ironic that while Baptist churches could be formed of negroes under their own native leaders, the Methodists, the one denomination which had corporately condemned slavery, ended up with a rule that the blacks must always have a white class leader.³⁴ Both denominations took large numbers of blacks into their churches, but black Baptists had more leadership opportunity than their Methodist counterparts.

No doubt the chance to exercise leadership was one of the attractions of the Baptist churches for blacks, but it may not have been the only advantage. Certainly the revival at the end of the 18th century drew a large proportion of blacks into the Baptist churches. The figures are not easy to come by, but one estimate is that by 1793 one quarter of Baptists in the southern States were black, that is, some 18,000 to 19,000. Another has it that black Baptists increased from about 18,000 in 1793 to some 40,000 in 1813.³⁵ Such a number of black converts was a new thing.

In the early stages of the Great Awakening blacks had been converted under Whitefield or Samuel Davies, but never on the scale seen at the turn of the century. The evangelical sects, among whom the Baptists were prominent, reaped the harvest among negroes.³⁶

The attraction of revivalism for negroes has often been noted. They adopted the "protracted meeting" of revivalism, and "added emotional fervour that surpassed their neighbours'... ." ³⁷ They sometimes brought superstitions into their Christianity, too, but "probably no more than converts in the early days of the evangelization of pagan Europe". ³⁸ In this remark there is a hint of a crucial question: how far was the enthusiasm of so many blacks for a revivalist brand of Christianity simply due to their ability to assimilate their own culture into the revivalist mould? Was the ecstatic behaviour and the odd phenomena of the camp meeting only a thin disguise for a recrudescence of African religion? This question has to be faced not only for the situation at the

roots of the negro Baptist diaspora of the West Indies in their American homeland, but it follows us throughout the story in the West Indian territories themselves, not least in Trinidad. Always some who observed the Trinidad churches asked whether their ethos was as much African-pagan as Christian.

Although the question must be faced, it cannot be completely answered within the limited scope of this study. The best that can be done here is to briefly list the four hypotheses which have been put forward to explain the relationship of "revivalism" and "Africanism", to use two convenient shorthand terms, and to indicate a provisional solution which appears to us to be the most likely one.

The first hypothesis may be summed up in the statement that "Revivalism reflected Africanism". This is the theory of Alloyd Butler,³⁹ who has it that "ecstatic black piety shaped the style of American evangelical religion from the earliest days".⁴⁰ The likelihood of 18th century white Southerners being influenced by the alien and despised blacks to this degree is not large, and the reviewer of Butler's book, M D Kaplanoff, is (probably rightly) dismissive of this thesis, as "unproven, largely untestable, and probably untrue".⁴¹

The second hypothesis is the exact opposite of this, and may be expressed as "Revivalism replaced Africanism". This is the view of E Franklin Frazier,⁴² who says:

"It is our position that it was not what remained of African culture or African religious experience, but the Christian religion, that provided the new basis of social cohesion. It follows then that in order to understand the religion of the slaves, one must study the influence of Christianity in creating solidarity among a people who lacked social cohesion and a structured social life".⁴³

On this theory, the experience of slavery and transportation to America so thoroughly destroyed Africanism that the negroes were left with a cultural vacuum which could be filled only with the

Christian religion. With tribal loyalties, traditional religion, inherited language and culture, even family ties, utterly lost, the blacks had to turn elsewhere to find a new orientation. The only possible one was the Christian civilization in which they found themselves, and this they adopted in large numbers towards the end of the 18th century. They did not create revivalism; they received it. According to Frazier, it was not the African background that led them to revivalism, for that background was being rapidly lost. The attraction of revivalism was that it was a form of Christianity purveyed by simple, uneducated Baptist and Methodist preachers whose appeal was precisely to the poor and the outcast. In the message of salvation preached at camp meetings the negro could find consolation for his earthly woe and a prospect of escape in another life. In the fellowship of the Christian churches, the negro, deprived of social heritage and culture, found a new social solidarity. Moreover the Baptists and Methodists in their evangelism tended to break down the moral barriers between black and white; they brought the slaves into the white men's world.⁴⁴ Despite the vast gulf in social status between black and white on the plantations, Christianity was a force which could bridge that gap. House slaves could attend family prayers; galleries in the white churches could be reserved for slaves; white ministers cared for blacks, and supervised their churches; owners sometimes provided religious instruction for slaves. As we have seen, the more radical Baptist and Methodist preachers even on occasion challenged the very concept of slavery, and made an issue out of the relationships between free Negroes to whites in the churches. Though both denominations withdrew this challenge to slavery, both continued to use the negro preacher, both slave and free. The negro preacher was a key figure in the whole process whereby the slaves adopted Christianity. He was 'called' to office, and it gave him a position of spiritual dominance. He had to know something of the Bible, which was a knowledge in some sense previously confined to the masters. His preaching consisted largely of dramatized Bible stories. Slave preachers were noted for

the imagery of their sermons. This was a point noted about the Trinidad preachers:

"who were remembered as having the attributes of successful Black folk preachers everywhere - good poetic vision, a command of infectious metaphor, strong oratorical powers, and a fierce conviction in their role... as crusaders and guardians of the faith".⁴⁵

From the Bible, as taught by the preachers and by the instructions provided by masters of the estates, the slaves absorbed the new theology in place of Africanism. They learned that the God of the Bible was ruler of the universe, superior to all other gods, and that he punished and rewarded black men as well as white men. The Bible supplied the rich imagery of negro preacher and negro song. It gave the slaves their new orientation toward the world, though they did not necessarily absorb all its moral idealism.⁴⁶

This hypothesis is far more credible than the first, but even Frazier concedes that there were areas in the United States where Africanisms were not entirely lost, as in the islands off the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina where the slaves were most isolated from whites. Here some of the negro spirituals revealed a continuity with African culture, and "were sung, and still are sung, while the worshippers are engaged in what might be called a holy dance"; this, Frazier remarks, is "an example of the most primitive and elemental expression of religion among American Negroes". These "shout songs", as they are known, reveal a connection with the African background; but they are still addressed to the "Good Lord", the white man's God, and they are based on Christian ideology.⁴⁷ The possibility is still present that there may be a real connection between revivalism and Africanism.

This leads to the third hypothesis, that of M J Herskovits,⁴⁸ which may be summarized as "Revivalism translated Africanism". Herskovits believed that the slave system did not destroy African culture in America; on the contrary, considerable African influence continued to define Afro-American culture. Within the general

culture of West Africa, the central focus was religion, and throughout the New World negro culture the strongest Africanisms are to be found in religion.

Herskovits studied a wide spectrum of societies in West Africa, Dutch Guiana, Haiti, and Trinidad; and to a lesser extent Brazil. He then placed the negro cultures of the Americas on a continuum according to the degree of Africanism they had retained. On this scale the negroes of Dutch Guiana had kept the maximum African influence, and those of the United States the minimum. In the United States, African retentions could not be ascribed with assurance to specific areas of West Africa, as they could in varying degree for the Caribbean and Brazil. But Herskovits thought that in the United States he had found subtly disguised clues to African culture patterns among American negroes. Taking it that the whole of West Africa, the area of origin of the slaves, had a more or less common culture (despite local differences), and that the focus of that common culture was religion, Herskovits alleged that the strongest Africanisms in the New World were to be found in religion.

A linguistic point will serve as an example. All negroes in the United States learned English, whatever their original tongue, in order to communicate with one another. But the new words they used they "poured into African speech molds"; and from this Herskovits went on to make the stronger assertion that as the European words were translated into African speech patterns, so the European culture was translated into African value and behaviour systems. Thus, the very factors which had been advanced to prove that Africanism had died out turned out to be elements which in fact encouraged the continuation of Africanisms. If the Herskovits theory is correct, the implication would appear to be that, though the Christian religion in its revivalist form was widely adopted by the slaves, it was in subtle ways translated into African values. The words of preachers and negro spirituals spoke in Christian language, but the meaning was African.

A more specific example of interest to Baptists concerns the alleged adaptation by negroes of the "water cults" of West Africa into Christian baptism. We have seen that many negroes were brought into the Baptist churches, being received into their membership through immersion as believing adults. Herskovits noted that in Africa, in Dutch Guiana, and in Haiti, possession by water spirits drove devotees to hurl themselves into the stream, river, or pond. He observed, that in the baptismal service of black Baptists the spirit occasionally fell upon the new Christian emerging from the water and caused him to shout or to behave in ecstatic fashion. Herskovits concluded that baptism was one of the easiest ways in which negroes could make the transition to the new beliefs.

But this does not seem to follow, and both Frazier and Raboteau are critical of Herskovits on this point. Frazier makes the point already mentioned, that many blacks responded to the Baptist preachers not because of the practice of adult baptism but because they were plain, unlearned men who could relate to the lower levels of society including slaves. Moreover, they accepted slaves even into the leadership of churches. The connection of baptism with the African "water-cults" was invalid, for Herskovits could not, in respect of the United States, tie down this alleged African survival to any specific area of West Africa. In the African cults the devotee is possessed by his god, but the Christian baptism has the tradition of Scripture behind it: "He will baptize with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:8). The appeal of Baptists to the slaves lay in the attraction of evangelical religion, the emotional appeal of revivalism, the ease with which Baptist congregations could be founded, and the chance for even the slaves to participate fully in the fellowship. These factors, acknowledged by Herskovits himself, were enough to account for Baptist success among the negroes, without resort to the hypothesis of "water-cults".⁴⁹

Our final hypothesis on the relationship between revivalism and Africanism is that of Raboteau,⁵⁰ and may be stated as "Revivalism adapted Africanism". On this view, African religion largely

disappeared; but its outward habits were in certain respects retained within the revivalist framework. In our view this is the approach which best fits the facts. If true, it means that the Baptists who fanned out from the United States to Jamaica, the Bahamas, Trinidad and elsewhere were probably exporting to those countries mainstream Christian religion in its revivalist form, that is, accompanied by the ecstatic behaviour of the revivals, but not the belief system of African religion thinly disguised as Christianity.

Raboteau makes his point by contrasting what happened in the mainly Catholic Caribbean lands with negro religion in America. In French, Spanish, and Portuguese colonies Catholic Christianity was the established type of religion. This Catholicism offered to the slaves "a supportive system of piety similar to their own". Catholics venerated saints, celebrated their feast days, appealed to them as patrons, and represented them with emblems, pictures, and blessed objects. They might have special attributes like the old gods, and could therefore easily become assimilated to the gods. Thus the African character of the religion so produced could easily be preserved under Catholic forms. Essentially this happened in Cuba, Haiti and Brazil. But in the United States it did not work out in this way, for that country was mainly Protestant, and in any case had a proportionately much smaller negro population. Of all Africans enslaved in the hemisphere, only 4.5% went to the States. Haiti imported twice the number, Brazil 8.5 times the number, of negroes imported by America. In addition, negroes in America increased faster by births than by imports; when the American slave trade ended in 1808, a majority of the slaves were native born and had no direct experience of Africa. In the Caribbean and in Latin America, or much of it, there were continual reinforcements from Africa. In British North America there was a higher ratio of white settlers to slaves than in French or Iberian areas. Slaves were generally more widely dispersed in the States than in the Caribbean.⁵¹

Raboteau thus accepted that the imprint of Africa was far less deep in the United States than in the Caribbean or South America. But he did not think that Africanism was totally extinct. By working back from what happened in the French, Spanish and Portuguese territories, examining the ways in which Africanisms had been prominently retained there, it would be possible to identify certain elements of African practice which had survived, in disguised form, to be adapted to Christian use, in America. It was superficial to conclude, as others had done, that because such things as worship of the gods, veneration of the ancestors, African-style drumming and dancing, rites of initiation, priests and priestesses, spirit-possession, ritual sacrifice, sacred emblems and taboos, extended funerals, and systems of divination and magic, all of which occur in the Caribbean, had vanished from America, that the African past had disappeared from the United States.⁵²

Fusion between Christianity in its Catholic form and African religion was easy because African gods could be explicitly identified with Catholic saints, because the slaves were given virtually no religious instruction and did not understand the new religion, and because Christianity, totally different in structure, was unable to fill the cultural gap left by the disruption of African traditional religion. The result was a syncretistic form of religion represented by Vaudou in Haiti, and similar phenomena in Cuba and Brazil, in which the negroes became nominally Catholics while belonging at the same time to their own cults, under the direction of priests whose functions were essentially African.⁵³

The link between Africanism and Christianity worked itself out differently among the Protestants of the American revivals. Though African gods and Catholic saints could not be fused in such a context, evangelical revival could supply a behavioural analogy to the ecstasy of possession:

"Arguably, spirit possession has been the most significant and distinctive feature of Afro-American religions, proof positive of their family resemblance despite many physiognomic differences..."⁵⁴

Spirit-possession was central to African religion. It was encouraged by expectancy and by such external stimuli in the rituals, such as particular drum rhythms, rattles, singing and handclapping. The motor behaviour of those possessed follows a predictable pattern, conforming to what is expected of the possessing spirit. The worshipper, who may have been feeling restless and discontent for some time, or who may have been designated by the leader of his group as the recipient of the god's attention, begins to be possessed by clapping hands, nodding his head, and tapping his feet in time to the drums. His fellow-worshippers do the same, but the possessed one soon goes well beyond them in the violence of his movements - running, jumping, rolling, falling, spinning, climbing, talking in 'tongues', and prophesying. Later, he subsides and joins the dancers, who always move about the dancing circle in a counter-clockwise direction. He may fall in a faint and have to be removed by those about him. The drummers continue to beat the rhythms of the god until all under his spell have come to themselves, or their own spirits would not come back to them.⁵⁵

This feature of African religion is similarly described thus by Raboteau:

"Ecstatic behaviour, in the form of spirit possession, is... central to the liturgy of West African peoples and their descendants in many parts of the New World. Commonly, the rites of worship consist of drumming the rhythms of the gods, singing their songs, creating a setting so that they will come down and 'ride' their devotees in states of possession. The possessed takes on the personality of the god, dancing his steps, speaking his words, bearing his emblems, acting out his character in facial expression and bodily gesture".⁵⁶

Raboteau then observed that in America the slaves and their descendants, though not possessed by African gods, 'shouted' in black revivalistic churches, and asked: Is there a connection?

As we have already seen, Christianity, in its revivalist form, became attractive to negroes at the end of the 18th and the

beginning of the 19th century. Revivals encouraged ecstatic behaviour in a fashion earlier forms of Christianity had not, and the outward physical expression of religious experience, expressed in falling, jumping, shouting, and dancing, was reminiscent of African spirit possession. The slaves took easily to these "physical exercises", and incorporated them into their regular worship. In this way, Protestant revivalism provided an analogue to African spirit possession, just as Catholicism in the Caribbean provided an analogue to Africanism, in the fusion of saint and African god. But Africanism was not the basis of revivalism, or its creator; the slaves believed that they were being filled with the Holy Spirit, not possessed by some African god. It was the Christian theology that was new; it was the slaves' response to it that was traditionally African. Thus:

"...the rhythmic drumming, repetitive singing, and constant dancing, reminiscent of possession ceremonies in Africa, were replicated on the plantations of the ante-bellum South. Slaves used hand and feet to approximate the rhythms of the drum, they substituted spirituals for the hymns to the gods, and they danced in a counter-clockwise circular ring, called the 'shout', the steps of which bore a striking resemblance to possession dances in Africa and the Caribbean".⁵⁷

All this revealed the slaves' African background. The camp-meeting, where ecstatic religious practice was encouraged, offered a congenial setting for the fusion of African patterns of response with a Christian interpretation of the experience of spirit-possession:

"Despite the prohibition of dancing as heathenish and sinful, the slaves were able to re-interpret and 'sanctify' their African tradition of dance in the 'shout'. While the North American slaves danced under the impulse of the Spirit of a 'new' God, they danced in ways their fathers in Africa would have recognised".⁵⁸

Though both whites and blacks participated in much the same way in revivalist camp meetings, it was noted that the negroes were more inclined to be:

"more noisy in time of preaching than the whites, and are more subject to bodily exercise, and if they meet with encouragement in these things, they grow extravagant".⁵⁹

This response was not due to any innate negro emotionalism; it was simply that negroes were accustomed to express their religious emotions in this way because of their African heritage.

Thus, the revivalist churches from which the Trinidad Baptists came were probably genuinely Christian in theology and ideology, though African in some ways in ritual action. There is a discontinuity between the African heritage of spirit possession, and the evangelical revivalist religion adopted by the slaves. The continuity is not in the content of the faith but in the style of the ritual. The point is important because there are in Trinidad and other parts of the Caribbean sects and groups, in which though the style may be similar, the religion is actually more African than revivalist. The Baptists of Trinidad were in origin an evangelical denomination, not one of the "Afro-Caribbean rites" as Salthouse calls them.⁶⁰ The line between mainstream Christianity of a revivalist type and the Afro-Caribbean rites is admittedly a very fine one. There is a continuum between, say, vaudou in Haiti at one extreme, and the mainstream evangelical denominations at the other, in the Caribbean region. British missionaries had much trouble in understanding the Baptist churches in Trinidad in the 19th century because they did not properly appreciate their origins or understand their responses. The motor-behaviour of Afro-Caribbean cults and those of mainstream Christian groups is sometimes so similar that the distinction is hard to discern. That distinction has to be found in the realm of belief and theology, which is African in the former, revivalist Protestant in the latter.⁶¹ Baptists from America spread out into Jamaica, the Bahamas, and Trinidad to bring the mainstream faith with them, but in every case as they interacted with local conditions they found some difficulty in maintaining that position, and in relating to the missionaries, who in turn found them sometimes hard to understand.⁶²

The fortunes of the Trinidad Baptists illustrate the missionary problems of a revivalist church in an Afro-Caribbean and Catholic

environment. We must now account for the migration of a group of Virginian Baptists to Trinidad, who established their religion for the first time in that Catholic-dominated island.

NOTES ON CHAPTER ONE

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6. e.g. 2 Corinthians 5:20-21. An examination of verbs of 'persuading' and the like in the New Testament would reveal both the aims of the evangelists and their expectations of a response.
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58. Raboteau, Slave Religion... p.72.
59. Ibid., pp. 60-61, quoting the Baptist leader in Virginia, John Leland.
60. Salthouse, Indigenous Worship... p.239f.
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62. For Jamaica, see Catherall, British Baptist Involvement in Jamaica 1783-1865 (Ph.D., Keele 1971), who argues strongly for the sound and solid nature of the 'native Baptists' as established by Leile. There is much material on the problems of all the West Indian fields scattered around in BM/MH. Only that which relates to Trinidad can be considered here, but all the areas show traces, at least, of a similar pattern.

CHAPTER TWO

SLAVES, SOLDIERS AND SETTLERS

In the south of Trinidad there are a group of villages still known as the "Company Villages", situated in the area around Princes Town.¹ It is generally remembered that these villages are so called because they were military settlements, and that they have strong Baptist connections. The reasons for their existence, even which war led to their foundation, and the unit in which the original settlers served, have largely been forgotten. The Royal Marines in which the ancestors of the villagers fought had largely forgotten this part of its own history.

In 1965, however, the Marines made a start towards the recovery of this lost story. Captain G H Hennessy, of the Marines' archives in Portsmouth, began research on the American war of 1812-14, and wrote to Major Stewart Hylton-Edwards, a Marine officer then serving with the Trinidad and Tobago regiment, for information. The file of letters between them established that the villages were indeed settlements of ex-marines, negro soldiers but distinct from the troops of the West India Regiments, some of which had also been disbanded in Trinidad. Major Hylton-Edwards also discovered that the story of the settlement had been written by K O Lawrence in an article in the Caribbean Quarterly.² Some of the men thus settled after military service with the Marines had brought the Baptist religion into Trinidad with them from America. In order to discover what kind of religion they introduced in to the villages we must trace these communities back to the occasion and place of their recruitment. This takes us back to Virginia, from which area the Marines recruited refugee blacks while the British fleet operated in the Chesapeake River in 1813-1814; and Virginia was a centre of revivalism in which Baptists were prominent.

It is not surprising that Baptists should have been found among the blacks picked up by the British forces in these years. The areas in which the campaigns were fought were precisely those where

Baptists had become strongest during the later stages of the revival: north of the James River, between the James and the North Anna and York Rivers, between these and the Rappahannock River, and between this and the Potomac. Between the Baptists and the Methodists, all eastern Virginia was swept by the Great Awakening of 1785, with the James River as the rough dividing line between their areas of activity, though all the revivalist denominations were represented in all parts of the State. The western limit of strong Baptist influence was along the line of the Blue Ridge Mountains, while the Regular Baptists of Virginia, united in 1787 with the Separate Baptists, were settled mainly in the area of the upper Potomac as far as Fredericksburg.³

This, then, is how the negro diaspora of black Baptists came to Trinidad. They came not as individual preachers, like George Leile in Jamaica, whose conversion we recounted in Chapter One, but as a community, who had been slaves, became soldiers, and in the end were granted land as settlers. They were among the crowds of fugitive slaves, who beset British officers from the fleet in the Chesapeake when they came on shore to procure provisions and water, "imploring to be rescued from a state of bondage". Such appeals being too piteous to be always disregarded, hundreds of slaves were taken on board the British vessels, most being transported to Halifax, a few being landed in Jamaica. By taking so many blacks on board, the British commander was said to be overstepping the strict line of his duty, for he was seriously overcrowding the vessels, "so as to render them almost unfit for going into action", and causing a victualling problem. Thus, the American assertion that the slaves were being dragged away by force was absurd; no commander would act in this way while lying off a hostile coast.⁴ This was the humanitarian view of the matter. It was expressed not only by Auchinleck in the terms just quoted but by William James, whose account repudiated with indignation the American charge that the British took away the negroes by force, and shipped them to be sold as slaves in the West Indies. The editor of the "Norfolk Herald", who wrote of the special cruelty of tearing away

the blacks of Virginia from their filial, parental, and conjugal ties, and from their attachments to their owners, came in for special rebuke. James pointed out that the negroes were a valuable part of the planters' stock, as the American newspapers showed; and alleged that:

"the treatment of slaves in the United States is ten times more horrid and disgusting than any thing that occurs among a similar class of 'human beings' in the West Indies".

In any case the British in the Chesapeake River were often in want of provisions; and under those circumstances it was ridiculous to imagine that the ships' captains sent parties on shore to drag away negro slaves.⁵

Such humanitarian gestures were apparently confined to the navy and Marines. Army policy was different. On the retreat after the burning of Washington the army was joined by large numbers of negro slaves, who begged to be taken along, offering to serve either as soldiers or sailors if allowed to have their liberty. General Ross, the army commander, however, took the view that private property of every description was to be protected; as this included most of the slaves,

"few of them were fortunate enough to obtain their wishes".⁶

In any case, the navy had motives other than humanitarian in rescuing negroes. They needed manpower, and they embodied the negroes into the Marine forces. It is no easy task to trace the individual soldiers from recruitment in Virginia to settlement in Trinidad. Additional research in the Admiralty records in the Public Records Office, and in Virginia would be needed for this; in any case the records are probably defective. "There must have been irregularities as to their attesting",⁷ as Blumberg wrote, in the rapid recruitment of negroes during the course of a campaign.

There is, in fact, no serious doubt that the negroes fled from

slavery eagerly, and were entirely willing to take arms against their former masters. The Colonial Marines, as the black companies were designated, were not negligible. Captain John Robyns, in his Journal for May 11th 1814, noted that he was getting on well with the fortifications, and

"also in forming a Black Battalion of Colonial Marines from the Refugee Negroes, who are in general fine able stout Fellows. We have now about Eighty. Admiral Cockburn gave my Serjeant-Major Wm. Hammond an acting order as Ensign and Adjutant to them".

The same officer wrote on the 30th May that Admiral Cockburn

"presented the field piece to the Colonial Corps for their steady and good behaviour before the Enemy. It made them very proud."⁸

Most of the British battalions in America in 1814 had been drawn from the Peninsula army; they fell short of their establishment strength of 936 all ranks, and typhoid on the transports from Europe, coupled in many cases with heatstroke on landing, still further reduced the number of effectives.⁹ This helps to explain the recruitment of the negroes, and the value of their services. It appears that they made good soldiers,

"temperate in their habits, and cheerfully yielding the most ready obedience to their superiors".¹⁰

They must have been efficiently if rapidly trained. Captain Robyns recorded that William Hammond,

"for his zeal and able management in training these men previous to their being embodied in battalion, was promoted to the rank of second-lieutenant".¹¹

Among the early services of the Colonial Marines was a small part of the battle of Bladensburg, during the advance on Washington. A company of 75 men is on record as having taken part in the battle, under the temporary command of Captain Reid of the 6th West India Regiment; it suffered one man killed and two wounded.¹²

The connection, so far obscure, between the negro recruits and the Company Villages of Trinidad, becomes a little clearer with the next stage of the campaign, following Bladensburg and the subsequent occupation of Washington. Early in September 1814 there was a re-organisation of the Marine forces, and for the first time we can identify black troops who were eventually taken to Trinidad. Up to that point the black Marines seem to have operated only as odd companies, but in September 1814 Admiral Cochrane ordered the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Marines, formed in January 1814 at Portsmouth, to be reconstituted. Three white companies were transferred to it from the 2nd Battalion, and three black companies added to it; and Major Lewis was put in command.¹³ Thus a completely new 3rd Battalion had been formed, and for the first time we are able to say with assurance that the black companies in it were among those settled in Trinidad, "where they made good settlers".¹⁴ It is not, however, possible to identify the other three black companies who settled in Trinidad, where the villages were originally numbered 1 to 6, the First Company village having changed its name and the Second become extinct.

The new unit, having taken part in the operations against Baltimore,¹⁵ encamped on Tangier Island in the Chesapeake and under the impression of passing the winter there, commenced building barracks for 600 men. They were now commanded by Captain William Clements, Lewis having been sent home seriously ill. It was evidently a winter of hardship. The troops had to cut timber for building in a neighbouring island, and make nails from the ironwork of stranded ships on the shore. They suffered from bad water, short allowance of provisions, and lack of wine, spirits, and any kind of medicine; and "dysentery prevailed to a great extent". Nevertheless, the work was accomplished, the hardships "borne with cheerfulness", and a hospital for 50 men was erected. Just as this, together with the repair of Fort Albion and the construction of a parade and battery, had been completed, orders arrived (11 December 1814) for the battalion to sail for the coast of Georgia.¹⁶

During the sea voyage from the Chesapeake to Cumberland Island off the coast of Georgia the battalion buried its surgeon and 69 men,¹⁷ though they suffered less than the men of the 2nd West India Regiment who joined them there from New Providence, five degrees to the south. These experienced frostbite severe enough to require several amputations. The 2nd Battalion of the Royal Marines also joined them at Cumberland Island, the whole force amounting to about 950 men of whom 560 were in the two Marine battalions. The state of the 3rd battalion was by now poor:

"The colonial battalion did not muster above 120 white men, the rest were blacks wretchedly equipped; some without blankets, others without great-coats, and scarcely a havresac (sic) or a canteen amongst them, and many even without shoes".

Cumberland Island was occupied, but the news came on 9th February that peace with the United States had been ratified on 27 December 1814. "This was not found credible", and on 23 February there was a last, unsuccessful action by the force. Meanwhile, some 500 black refugees had been brought back by Captain Cole of the 2nd Battalion, who had been to St Simon's Island, 5 miles north of Cumberland. In January 1815, too, Major Andrew Kinsman arrived to take command of the 3rd Battalion; he was to be the officer to conduct the settlers to their new home in Trinidad.¹⁸

The question arises whether the refugees brought in by Cole were recruited into the force and whether some of them could have been among the settlers in Trinidad. The probable answer is negative. There is nothing in the sources about what happened to these negroes. It may be that some of them were handed back to the Americans as a fulfilment of the peace terms at the end of the war. These laid it down that all property should be restored from the date of the ratification of the treaty, property of course including slaves. Nicholas says that:

"many of these unhappy men were given up to the American commissioners, after they had worn the British uniform. Although there were but few instances where this occurred, it was sufficient to cast a stigma upon the character of the British nation; and it would have been better to have

paid treble their value, than submit to so disgraceful a transaction".¹⁹

This may imply that the negroes rescued by Cole in January 1814 ought strictly to have been handed back, but that only a few were; and that some who were had been taken into the forces, and thus ought not to have been returned. At any rate, there is no evidence that Georgia contributed settlers to Trinidad. On the contrary, Sir Ralph Woodford, the governor who settled ex-soldiers in Trinidad, assumed that most of them were Virginians, and

"an intelligent People feeling themselves very superior in Intellect to the Africans and therefore not disposed to associate with them."²⁰

With the coming of peace, the whole British brigade at Cumberland Island naturally evacuated the territory, and went back, in March 1815, to Bermuda, the base for these operations. Nicolas gives details of the movements of the 1st and 2nd Marine battalions, but appears to say nothing of those of the 3rd Battalion, now under Major Kinsman.²¹ The black companies, however, duly appear in Bermuda; it seems that some of them went on from there to Portsmouth, presumably hoping for permanent enlistment in the Marines. The Admiralty, however, on 26 April 1815, said that they could not remain with the corps but could be entered as seamen or discharged. Two days later orders were given that they should be sent back to the West Indies.²²

There is a brief postscript to the negro Marines' military career. The military authorities tried to get them to enlist in the 1st West India Regiment, which was much below strength after the New Orleans campaign and guerrilla fighting in Guadaloupe. The majority of the remaining private soldiers of the regiment were distributed among other West India regiments, and in December 1815 the 'skeleton' of the 1st embarked, in HMS Niobe, for Bermuda, to pick up what were thought to be 700 Colonial Marines. Only then was it discovered that the Marines from which it had been hoped to reform the regiment numbered only 400, "most of whom were of poor physique, and, moreover, unwilling to engage". The authorities

at first determined to force them to join, but ultimately the whole plan was abandoned, and the 'skeleton' of the 1st West India Regiment left Bermuda to return to the West Indies.²³

Throughout this time there must have been a group of men in the black Marine battalion who were zealous Baptists, and who preserved their faith while on military service. No one, as far as we can discover, noted their Baptist affiliations. The chaplains who might have noticed the matter will have been the chaplains on the ships in which they were conveyed.²⁴ It is not clear how much care was taken by naval chaplains to instruct blacks. The nearest parallel case is that of the chaplains attached to the West India Regiments at this period. The historian of these units thinks that the army (unlike the civil authorities in the West Indian colonies) did provide religious instruction and care for blacks; but it is not clear whether the Colonial Marines were as well cared for.²⁵

For the authorities, there was now a dilemma: what was to be done with the Colonial Marines now that they were no longer needed for military duty? Clearly, they could not return to Virginia, after having borne arms against the United States. The solution arrived at was to settle them in Trinidad. This had the additional advantage of sorting out, in part, another dilemma, namely, what to do with Trinidad. The heart of the dilemma of Trinidad was that it was, and always had been, an underdeveloped island. It had an acute labour shortage, yet it possessed much excellent virgin soil. Since the days were over when such a territory would become, without question, yet another slave and sugar colony, it made good sense to introduce free labour to open up the land. Negro ex-soldiers might make good settlers.

The settlement of the ex-Marines in Trinidad was just one of a series of attempts to develop the colony by introducing a labour force and reducing unused land to cultivation. There is no need to re-tell the whole story of these efforts; the whole matter of

the development of Trinidad has been thoroughly expounded by C A Goodridge.²⁶

Under Spain (1498-1797), Trinidad was a neglected province on the fringe of the empire, hardly settled or defended, much less developed. A brief few years of prosperity from the production of cacao (1708-1727) ended in the latter year when a blight struck the crop. The population, such as it was, declined drastically, and Port of Spain, the governor's residence from 1757, was left with a mixed group of about 300, subsisting on whatever they could grow locally.²⁷

Not until late in the 18th century did Spain make serious efforts to expand the backward economy of Trinidad. In 1776 Charles III issued an edict encouraging immigration by the generous offer of free land; this brought in many settlers, mainly French from St Lucia. These, however, lacked capital and therefore cultivated coffee and cotton rather than sugar. Slavery remained peripheral to the Trinidad economy.²⁸

Not until the great Cedula of Population of 1783 did the Spanish manage to attract settlers in numbers sufficient to revolutionize the whole economy of Trinidad.²⁹ Gratuitous lands, and generous tax concessions brought settlers in large numbers. Such settlers had to be Catholics, of nations in alliance with Spain, and they had to take an oath to abide by Spanish laws: but they received an allotment of land for themselves, with half the amount again for each slave introduced; and naturalization and all the privileges which went with it, including qualification for public office and militia posts, would follow after five years' residence. There would be no head tax or personal tribute from the settlers for 10 years, after which they would pay one dollar annually for each slave. Free negroes and people of colour would receive half the land allotted to whites, with an additional grant for each slave brought in by them.

The economic and social effects of the cedula were dramatic. It

was followed by the rapid agricultural growth which was in vivid contrast with the stagnation of the past two centuries.³⁰ In 1787, the first sugar plantation of Trinidad was established, by M de la Peyrouse; ten years later there were 159 such plantations. In 1797 the island had a labour force of 10,000 Africans, and the French settlers were in control of the economy. They also threatened to take control of the island politically. The Spaniards, outnumbered, had only a notional control of government: "Spain Reigns But France Governs".³¹

Between the ruling white elite and the growing number of slaves there was a large intermediate group of coloured free people. Many of these had connections with French republicanism. As the English attacked the French islands, escaping French republicans came to Trinidad, where there was no force to prevent them from settling. Many even of the slaves wore the tricolour cockade, symbol of liberty. The island has been described as a "melange of ideologies, cultures, class, colour, and status". It was a revolutionary period. Revolt had already broken out in St Domingue and other areas in the Caribbean. Chacon, the able Spanish governor, knew the danger. He was well aware of the link between the growth of slavery - fruit of economic development - and the precarious nature of the society over which he struggled to rule, especially when republicanism was added to the equation. Trinidad was perhaps as near revolution at this time as it ever was to be.³²

Spain joined France in war against Britain in 1796, and the island was thus exposed to attack. Chacon, however, had no reliable, loyal force, no fortifications, magazine, or storehouse; he was dependent on the doubtful support of foreigners, with but a few Spaniards.³³ In February 1797 Britain took Trinidad with virtually no resistance.

Britain thus inherited the problem of developing the colony. In 1797, despite the great leap forward since the cedula of 1783, it was still not yet a slave-and-sugar colony. Chacon's

administration had not completed the process of land reform. The grants given since 1783 covered 165,250 acres, or 14% of the land area. Of these, only 468 plantations, or 85,268 acres, were in a state to produce crops for export by 1797, and only 45% of these lands were actually exporting. The remaining holdings, 211 of them, may have been in any state, from clearing to the establishment of a staple crop, for at this time each incursion into virgin forest gave several crops of maize, bananas, and other provisions before being planted with sugar cane.³⁴ Another study alleges that only about one twenty-fifth of the country was cultivated, almost all of it along the West Coast excluding the Caroni Swamp and Oropouche Lagoon, on a narrow strip on land about 3 miles wide bordering the Gulf of Paria, and on the East Coast for the same width from Mayaro to Guayaguayare.³⁵ As to population, it had increased from 5,899 persons in 1784 to 18,627 in 1797. The official return published by the British government after the departure of those persons unwilling to take the oath of allegiance to the British Crown after the capitulation of 1797 was as follows:

| | | |
|-----------------|--------|-----------------------|
| <u>Whites</u> | 2,151 | (12.1%) |
| <u>Coloured</u> | 4,476 | (25.3%) |
| <u>Slaves</u> | 10,009 | (56.3%) |
| <u>Indians</u> | 1,082 | (6.1%) ³⁶ |

This compares with the population figure for the year of the cedula (1783) in this way:³⁷

| <u>White</u> | <u>Free Coloured</u> | <u>Indians</u> | <u>Slaves</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|--------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------|--------------|
| 126 | 295 | 2,032 | 310 | 2,763 |

From all this it will be apparent that immense strides had been made in the last years of Spanish rule towards a conventional West Indian plantation economy, but that there was still a very long way to go before this development was complete. Potentially, Trinidad was immensely profitable for slave owners and for sugar production. After the formal cession of the island to Britain in 1802, there came into Trinidad a small, but very influential

group of people from the British Isles, eager to open up the soil of Trinidad, together with their slaves. British merchants settled to establish commercial houses, and the class of British overseers and clerks grew up to serve the agricultural interests, the businesses, and the civil administration. For the first time an English-speaking element was added to the mixture of Spanish and French-speaking people. Already Trinidad was unusual in the mixture of races and classes in the population, and it would become even more so. It was different from most West Indian islands in respect of the high proportion of free coloured people, who considerably outnumbered the whites. In 1802, there were about 5,275 free coloured people to 2,261 whites.³⁸

There were political implications to this. The British settlers soon began to press for a constitution and an assembly like that enjoyed by the older British islands. After much dispute, this was refused finally in 1810, on the grounds that such an assembly in Trinidad must include the free people of colour. The large class of free coloured people were French in language and sympathy, and tended to be republican.³⁹ If given the vote they would outnumber the British element; and this was unthinkable. They might enjoy property and liberty, but not political power. On the other hand, if the whites alone were granted a political constitution, the numerous free coloured people might ally with the slaves to spark off a slave revolt against the white elite.⁴⁰ The decision of the British government was that political power should be reserved to the Crown, operating through the governor and the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The system thus set up by Lord Liverpool, then Colonial Secretary, in 1810, was slightly modified in 1831 by the addition of a Council of Government of 6 official and 6 unofficial members, all nominated by the Governor; but in essence this was Crown Colony government, a "gubernatorial autocracy".⁴¹

One party in Britain which supported the autocratic system of government thus set up was the Humanitarian interest in Parliament. The Humanitarians wished to prevent the planters extending slavery

to Trinidad. In 1802 they extracted a promise from Addington that no land grants should be made in Trinidad until a Commission of Enquiry, recently set up to investigate the form of government to be applied to the island, should have reported.⁴²

This leads naturally to a consideration of why Trinidad never did go down the path leading to a slave colony of the usual kind. In 1797 the island was barely started down the road to a sugar economy. It had only 1/6 of the number of slaves possessed by Barbados, and only 14% of the land was occupied by 679 landholders. There were only between 17 and 21 slaves on average per estate, as compared to 75 in Jamaica. No true sugar economy can have emerged; despite the great temptations of new, rich, fertile lands, it never did emerge. The reason for this was a change in British policy.⁴³ The apparently natural development into a sugar colony was aborted by two factors.

The first of these was economic. The needs of the market changed between 1797, when there was a world famine of sugar and consequent high prices, and 1801-2, when the world market in sugar was glutted and prices had slumped. Sugar production, from French, Dutch and Spanish colonies, as well as British, had caught up with and overtaken demand. The older sugar islands were threatened with bankruptcy, and profits on East Indian sugar were done away. It followed that the rich virgin soils of Trinidad were a threat to all the old colonial interests. It appears that from 1801 the British Government followed a deliberate policy of preventing the development of Trinidad as a sugar colony. Restrictions on the supply of slaves, on the granting of land, and the provision of capital checked the economic growth of Trinidad on the expected lines. As early as July 1797 the home government told General Abercromby's successor as commander in the Caribbean that the settlement and development of Trinidad was not in their immediate plans, as Mr Pitt had

"an insuperable objection to any grants or sales of land in the West Indies which could possibly lead to a cultivation

of them, as that could not happen without occasioning an importation of negroes for the purpose".⁴⁴

The second reason for the curtailing of Trinidad's expected development was moral and humanitarian. Wiberforce and his supporters had by 1797 convinced the British Parliament of the unprofitability of slavery, and of the injustice and inhumanity of the system. The gradual abolition of the slave trade was already in view. It is, however, unlikely that the anti-slavery lobby, and the humanitarian movement, though sincere and earnest, would have succeeded in checking the growth of slavery in Trinidad, had not the influential West Indian interest been willing to leave the island undeveloped for their own reasons. The humanitarians failed in their demands for effective reform whenever those demands were supported only by appeal to conscience; they succeeded only when their objectives coincided with more worldly political and economic interests.⁴⁵

If Trinidad was not to be developed as a slave-and-sugar colony, then perhaps it might be cultivated by a small peasantry. With the abolition of the slave trade from 1808, and restrictions on the number of slaves coming from other islands, the labour shortage became yet more acute. A variety of schemes was accordingly tried to alleviate the shortage; the settlement of the Colonial Marines was just one of the series. As early as 1802, James Stephen was arguing that the land should be granted freely or at low cost, to anyone who would settle and cultivate it with the labour of free negroes.⁴⁶ The Secretary for the Colonies under Addington, Hobart, proposed to put white settlers into the most healthy parts of Trinidad, growing crops other than sugar. For a variety of reasons, Hobart's well-meant efforts failed.⁴⁷ One feature of the Hobart schemes formed a precedent for the Marines' settlement. Soldiers and sailors from the pension list were to be offered land, in amounts proportionate to their military rank rather than their ability to work it, as a class of people with special claim to the consideration of government.⁴⁸

Administrative ineptitude was one reason for Hobart's failure.

Another was local opposition. The white elite was prepared to see a class of white proprietary and managerial personnel controlling black labour, but not whites who did their own cultivation. That was as great a menace as the abolition of the slave trade itself. Hobart recognized that white labour would not be enough, and that Chinese workers would be required as well.⁴⁹ Some Chinese were brought in but the day of Asian immigration was not yet; a mixture of local opposition and chaotic planning made this plan also a fiasco.⁵⁰

This was the situation when Sir Ralph Woodford arrived as governor in 1813. As he was the man responsible for the introduction of the Colonial Marines, and the establishment of their villages, an account of his appointment will be in place. Woodford received the governorship from Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for War and Colonies in the Liverpool administration from June 1812 to April 1827. Behind the patronage was Woodford's friend Charles Bragge Bathurst, barrister, Member of Parliament, and holder of sundry public offices. It was to him that Woodford applied for a post, preferably abroad, so that he could restore some of the comforts his sister had once enjoyed but had now lost, presumably because of the blow to the family fortunes when the French had taken Woodford's father's property in Tobago.⁵¹ Woodford had served as a clerk in the War Office in 1804, which was presumably where he had met Bragge Bathurst, who was Secretary at War from 1803-1804.⁵² Woodford's application for office was supported by his friend the Duke of Atholl, and was well received by Percival. But Woodford did not possess the same access to Lord Liverpool, and in June 1812 he wrote to Bragge Bathurst again asking for his backing to obtain a post.⁵³ The following month, having heard that the Governorship of Demerara was likely to become vacant, Woodford was urging his claim to that post on the ground that he knew German, could soon learn Dutch, and had useful connections with that nation.⁵⁴ This position, however, had been reserved for a military man.⁵⁵ Next, Woodford was writing to say that he had been offered the post of Registrar of Slaves in Trinidad, an office created by the Order in Council

for the Registration of Slaves (1812). Woodford discussed the offer with Lord Bathurst, who told him the job was more than simply a clerical one; but, feeling that the regulations under which the Registrar would have to work were very minute and left no room for discretion, Woodford turned this offer down.⁵⁶

Woodford, however, must have impressed Lord Bathurst, for the next offer made to him was the governorship of Trinidad. In making the offer, Bathurst warned him that "altho' it is one of Importance, the trouble and Embarrassments are likely to be considerable". Woodford felt that

"..if his Lordship considers me qualified for the Trust, it is not for me to decline the Situation, I presume, but I fear my talents are far from adequate to the Charge; Exertion however shall not be wanting to make up, as far as it is in my power, the great deficiency, and I trust I shall not prove totally unworthy of your kind Patronage of me".⁵⁷

Though amazed at his good fortune,⁵⁸ Woodford appears to have justified his patron's trust and Bathurst's good opinion of him. The sweeping powers conferred on him were criticized by the Commissioners of Legal Enquiry for Trinidad, but not his use of those powers. The Commissioners testified to

"the zeal, ability, and integrity with which he has discharged the various and important functions imposed on him under the present system".⁵⁹

According to Dr Williams, he was

"much superior to much with which the island was afflicted in the next hundred years".⁶⁰

Even before leaving England, Woodford was aware that he was not going to an easy situation. Bathurst had given him the "Memorials of the late Governor and the Judge", which only too plainly told him of the "distracted state of the Island of Trinidad", and of the need for great changes in the administration of justice. He was fearful, or modest, about his capacity:

"It will, I fear, far exceed my humble Abilities to take an

active part in so disturbed and undefined a Controul (sic), the more so, as I am told there is scarce an Individual in the Colony, whose report can be depended upon..."

Already - this was six weeks before he was due to leave - he was soliciting Bragge Bathurst's help in the Privy Council or Cabinet to have the powers of the Judge revised and the laws better established; and he had written to Lord Bathurst to ask that the new Judge should be allowed to sanction English in place of Spanish forms in the courts, and to use the English language as much as possible.⁶¹

What concerns us most in respect of Woodford's governorship is the question of the development of the land and the importing of labour to work it. His arrival in the colony coincided with a renewed interest in the use of Crown land. This was not a subject on which the government at home was very coherent. Indeed, government was "only vaguely aware that it had a policy" on land, and governors used their wide discretionary powers, not surprisingly, in ways open to much abuse. The device of "permissive occupancy", for instance, had taken hold in Trinidad; it was the cause of a good deal of the chaos and confusion in the colony's land administration. In the years after 1815, however, the distress of unemployment at home and the apparent over-population of Britain, together with the undue influence of powerful minority groups in the colonies, stimulated a revival of interest in the Crown lands.⁶² Nevertheless the bad harvests, unemployment, high food prices, burdensome poor rates, Irish immigration, and the wave of riots and machine-breaking in Britain, did not lead to the welcome that might have been expected for large-scale emigration. The government's severe financial crisis led to stringent economy in the administrative departments, and public assistance of emigrants to the colonies at the expense of the British tax-payer was not favoured. The only emigration favoured by Bathurst was that which involved no expense to the home government.⁶³ Bathurst wanted to grant land only to those who had the capital to develop it, the land granted to be in proportion to the capital possessed.

Woodford was wiser. He suggested that land grants should be laid out and granted expense free to settlers, and that provisions should be allowed them for between 18 and 24 months. This idea was not accepted. Bathurst wanted to make grants of 100 acres expense-free to each white person brought in, with additional grants after the first had been cultivated. Government would give no other assistance than free transportation. The grants were conditional on the land being cultivated, the cultivation being confined to cacao, coffee, cotton and ground provisions. Taxes were not to be levied on imports, and no military duty was to be imposed on settlers. The governor was allowed to grant savanna for pasturage to anyone able to develop cattle-breeding. Bathurst hoped to induce white people to settle in Trinidad, not by encouraging large-scale emigration - he was opposed to this - but by persuading lower-class people to emigrate with their masters to colonies where their labour would be useful, and to divert potential settlers from the United States.⁶⁴

This plan, however, was too speculative to attract capital, but the vast amount of cheap land tempted the poorest, even without capital, to settle. In practice, it was the free coloured portion of the population of Trinidad which benefited from this situation. While between 1817 and 1824 the white population had decreased from 3,793 to 3,386, the free coloured people increased by about 1,491 in the same period. The increase was due partly to refugees from the disturbed Spanish Main, partly to government schemes for the settlement of the American negroes and disbanded soldiers.⁶⁵ The former class were not very profitable to the colony; they were often temporary incomers, who returned home when the conflicts at home ceased, and grants made to them for relief and medical care were financially burdensome to Trinidad. Bathurst accordingly turned more and more to the settlement of free negroes to solve the problems of development of Trinidad.⁶⁶

Woodford had ideas of his own about the development of Trinidad. He wanted it to be a commercial entrepôt and (though he feared

this was out of the question), a free port to all nations. He looked forward to the coming of the peace to use the Gulph (sic) of Paria to exchange British manufactures for the products of South America, by means of small boats, and at little expense. But this was because he could see no way of developing the land:

"...it is a misfortune that so fine a colony will remain uncultivated - for a free population is hopeless. Nothing can exceed the laziness of the Spanish peons, but that of the Indians. Portuguese or Spaniards.. from Europe or European settlements would be the only resource - but who will come here, when the Continent of Sp(anish) America is opened?"⁶⁷

Woodford's Council of Advice gave him conflicting suggestions about the labour problem, the most significant contribution being that of W H Burnley, the Anglo-Virginian planter, who favoured the importation of labour from India. This, however, did not come about for another thirty years, being the solution adopted for the labour problem after emancipation.⁶⁸

All this, then, sets the context into which the discharged Colonial Marines came: a Trinidad in which there was ample land to be developed but insufficient labour with which to develop it. Not only had schemes to import white labour and Chinese workers failed, but even the most obvious answer, slavery, was not available. The Slave Trade having been abolished, the British government had set curbs even on the fraudulent inter-island slave trade by which the planters had attempted to evade the letter of the law. Slaves were valuable in Trinidad, costing £80-£90 as against £35-£40 in Barbados or Antigua. This was because in the older islands the soil was largely exhausted. Between 1813 and 1821 some 3,800 slaves were brought to Trinidad, of whom nearly 1,100 came from Dominica and nearly 1,200 from Grenada. They were introduced as domestic servants, two of which were allowed to owners travelling from one British colony to another. People who once travelled with no servant suddenly took to going to Trinidad and Guiana, where land was also available in quantity, with two domestic slaves for every member of the family, however numerous. The colonial authorities in Trinidad connived at this trade. They argued that

slaves in Trinidad were better off than elsewhere; that the availability of land enabled owners to give the slaves more land for cultivating their own provisions; and that in Trinidad, as a Crown Colony, slaves were directly protected by the Order in Council and not left to the mercy of any Colonial Assembly.⁶⁹

The Order in Council was that of March 1812, designed to check the fraudulent import of slaves in violation of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act of 1807. The Order, as we have seen, created the post of Registrar of Slaves, which had been offered to Woodford. All slaves were to be registered by name and description before a certain date. The registration, in January 1814, showed a total of 25,717 slaves, 17,084 being plantation slaves, and 8,633 being employed on domestic duties.⁷⁰ Though the registration was difficult, and the Registrar, Henry Murray, proved not very adequate to the task, the restrictions on slave importations did mean that the labour shortage could not be solved by the use of slave workers.⁷¹

The Colonial Marines were free blacks introduced into a slave society, which, as will be seen, caused apprehension among planters. The fact that slaves were relatively few in Trinidad, and that the economy of the islands was not as closely geared to sugar production as that of the older territories, should not be allowed to obscure the truth that this was still a slave colony, subject to the danger of slave revolt. The fear of such a revolt was always a reality, even if there is only one example of the slaves' conspiring against their lot, that of December 1805. This alleged conspiracy was put down by rapid action by the governor, and was followed by the usual executions and other punishments. But if E L Joseph is to be believed, many coloured people, and even whites, thought that the 'conspiracy' was an illusion, that the whole plot was got up by certain alarmists, and that the only purpose of the negroes was to have one of their African dances.⁷² Trinidad was in fact kept remarkably free of slave rebellion, which does not however prove that the local slave conditions were

'benign'; on the contrary, it appears that Trinidad slaves, because of the labour shortage, were worked harder than those elsewhere. Under the Spanish regime they had had 134 holidays per year; under the British, these were cut to 69, and they had the highest mortality rate in the Caribbean.⁷³ The large-scale plantation economy which elsewhere was conducive to slave resistance was rare in Trinidad; the number of slaves small; the free black population relatively large; the slaves of Trinidad had been divided from one another not only by tribalism but by immigration from other islands; the colony was garrisoned by British regular troops: for all these reasons successful rebellion was inhibited.⁷⁴

No doubt the planters would have preferred to have augmented their workforce by slaves; not only were they prevented from this by the Crown Colony system of government and the Order in Council, but they were denied preference in the distribution of the slave cargoes captured by British vessels and put under jurisdiction of the Prize Courts. In 1815, Woodford, acknowledging that the chief obstacle to the development of Trinidad was "the want of a labouring population", urged Bathurst to give the island such a preference. The suggestion was turned down, for government policy, though allowing Africans to be apprenticed for 14 years so as not to be a charge on the colonies, forbade any freed slave to be employed in agricultural labour "in any way whatsoever".⁷⁵

What the planters did not want was a population of peasant farmers who would grow food crops. The planters of the South Naparima area in South Trinidad, in which it was proposed to settle the ex-Marines, were opposed to the plan to give the fertile soil of that part of Trinidad to free blacks. They wanted any available blacks to be available as estate labour. It was the deliberate policy of the government to remove the settlers from the vicinity of the planters.⁷⁶ It was not merely a question of what crops should be grown. The villages, in Woodford's plan, were to be part of an extending line of communication, eventually reaching to the southern and eastern shores. They were to be "the furthest

point of a moving frontier", and it was envisaged that the settlements would necessitate the construction of roads that would serve as major lines of communication into the interior of the as yet undeveloped island.⁷⁷ The planters were not only resentful of free blacks being thus given their own lands a little distance away from the sugar plantations; they were also worried about security, a not surprising anxiety in a slave colony. Free negroes in the area might unsettle the 3,300 or so slaves in the district. Woodford so far yielded to their fears as to put a small garrison into San Fernando.⁷⁸

In the event the ex-Marines proved no trouble at all. Indeed, they were even supposed to be a bulwark of security against a slave rising because of the respect for authority allegedly instilled into them by military training.⁷⁹ In view of their notorious independence, it is just as well that it was never really necessary to call the villagers back to the colours to quell a slave rising. Right from the beginning this was characteristic of their attitude. They preferred to remain together rather than be apprenticed on the estates. They had a strong sense of group identity which grew out of alienation from the situation in which they found themselves on settlement. It was not easy for them to identify with the surrounding population, mainly French-speaking, and Catholic; the villages were an English-speaking and Protestant enclave, with a marked pride in their freedom and in their independent status, as the missionary Gamble was to note later. It was long before they integrated with the rest of society.⁸⁰

The actual operation of settling the Marines into their new homes was entrusted to a Naparima planter, Robert Mitchell, of whom Woodford had a high opinion. From his reports we can plot the early days of the new communities. Without Mitchell, the settlements might not have been established, and Woodford was concerned that his diligent services should be suitably rewarded. He wrote:

"Of Mr Mitchell's time as a planter he is good enough to give

a considerable portion to the Public as Commandant of a large and populous quarter inhabited by french (sic) colored (sic) rich Proprietors who require an active Superintendence. It was my Experience of him in those public Duties and his Success in a first detachment of 60 refugees, that I had learnt to appreciate his merits, and he has succeeded beyond my most sanguine hopes.

It is, however, impossible that those people can be left for some time to themselves. Mr Mitchell is their friend and their Protector - the administration of justice requires a considerable portion of his time every day in the week, and the day is lost to him on which he inspects the Settlements on either of the three lines on which they are placed. In Sickness his advice and the comforts of his own house are dealt out to them with equal liberality. It has been only by the warm Interest he has taken about the success of the Settlement that their Establishment was effected by so very small a loss. I therefore again beg to recommend to their Lordships (i.e., of the Treasury) that Mr Mitchell should from the 1st July next receive the Salary of five dollars proposed for him (here a marginal note, in pencil, reads, 'to be authorised'), as there is no person so properly qualified for the task on managing and controuling (sic) these people...".⁸¹

Mitchell died in 1827, and this marked the first stage in the decline of the settlements.⁸²

The initial idea of the settlements was apparently suggested by the successful settlement of American loyalist negroes in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In October 1814, Bathurst wrote to Woodford to say that the Officer Commanding H M Forces on the coast of America might send to Trinidad some of the black population of the Southern States to whom he had extended his protection, and the governor was instructed to "take charge and provide for their maintenance".⁸³ Next month, Woodford was authorized to grant small plots of land to any who were accustomed to agriculture and willing to support themselves in that occupation, and to encourage settlers to be useful members of the community. But when the first batch of arrivals landed in May 1815, no concrete plans had yet been worked out, and Woodford offered them a choice of being apprenticed on estates or settled on small plots of land. The group consisted of 86 persons, 61 men, 18 women and 7 children, who were disembarked from HMS Levant.⁸⁴ The rainy season delayed the settlement

of this group, and before they had been located a second wave, 58 persons including many aged and infirm, descended on the colony. These initial refugees were placed in the Caroni and Laventille districts, near Port of Spain, where the Chief of Police could supervise them.⁸⁵

The experience gained in dealing with these two groups led to the settlement of the third group, which came in November 1815, in the Naparima district, 40 miles from Port of Spain, under Mitchell's supervision. This contingent consisted of 32 men, 14 women, and 17 children.⁸⁶ The following year a larger body arrived, in August 1816, under Major Kinsman, who had commanded the 3rd Battalion Royal Marines at Cumberland Island. This numbered 404 men, 83 women, and 87 children, 574 persons in all.⁸⁷

Before the third group had arrived, in November 1815, Mitchell was ordered to report on unoccupied lands in his Naparima quarter. The muddled land situation was revealed by the fact that many plots had been permissive occupancies granted by Governor Hislop. Some had been cultivated and later abandoned, others had never been used. From November 1815 when the third group arrived Woodford was able to carry out his settlement plans at North Naparima, where a portion of land had been cleared, and four large sheds erected for accomodation. The success of this led Bathurst to extend the experiment, and in 1816 he agreed to settle the Colonial Marines in Trinidad.⁸⁸

In view of the success of the settlements, and the trouble he took over them, it is ironic that Woodford himself was dubious at first about their value:

"Our new population of American Blacks, enticed by Sir A Cochrane to desert their masters (and one I am sorry to say boasts of having shot his) behave themselves peaceably - but I do not think they will ever prove the possibility of replacing negro slaves by free labourers with any assurance of success".⁸⁹

Nevertheless, he pressed ahead with the settlements in the face, as we have seen, of planter opposition and the jealousy of the local free people of colour, who were afraid of competition from the newcomers in the market.⁹⁰ Woodford at least never seems to have considered the matter of security any very great problem, in the way the planters did. He took all proper precautions:

I presume that His Majesty's Government could not (if from motives of prudence alone) have intended the 500 slaves who had just obtained their freedom in the manner they had done, should be thrown abroad upon any Colony where Slavery existed, without considering itself bound to meet the expense of proper Controul (sic) and Inspection, as well as of mere subsistence.⁹¹

He never used the intemperate and inaccurate language of the planter James Cadett, who wrote to Bathurst that the introduction of one thousand American negroes was a most dangerous measure, as they were of the worst characters who would soon become as troublesome as the Maroons in Jamaica and the 'charaibs' (sic) in St Vincent.⁹² Woodford could even invite more American negroes:

"The act of the greatest kindness would be bestowed on these people, if His Majesty's Government would cause their relatives, who were, I am informed, sent to Halifax when they were embodied in a Corps of Marines, to be brought here..."⁹³

The villages were organised on semi-military lines, each under the command of a sergeant and a corporal, unpaid but with minor disciplinary powers,⁹⁴ but Woodford's real confidence was in the supervision of Mitchell, whose ability and character carried such weight with his fellow-planters, that Woodford was able to persuade the Council to agree to placing the newcomers on the Naparima lands, where the expenses of settlement would be less than anywhere else. The planters' fears of the ex-Marines were allayed by Mitchell's influence.⁹⁵

The governor's trust in his settlers' behaviour was on the whole justified. In May 1818, when considerable experience of the villages had been gained, Woodford was able to write home that

Mitchell had a good opinion of the conduct of the villagers. There were by then some 700 of them, but no serious crime had been committed, and no complaint lodged against any individual since Woodford's latest report.⁹⁶ But inevitably there were some lapses, especially as the men wandered away from the settlements in later years in search of wives, or work, or both. One Sunbury Cooper, described as an "American Refugee", was convicted of the murder of another refugee, George Shaw, and was imprisoned in the Royal Gaol for six months with hard labour on the treadmill.⁹⁷ In the same year, 1824, the refugee John Thompson was cut and maimed by a fellow-refugee, Benjamin Pennic; Pennic was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, and to be worked in the treadmill and the chain gang.⁹⁸ Thompson was not the only refugee to suffer from crime. Another, Isaac Grant, was murdered by one Roderick Norman McLeod, of whom nothing is known except that he suffered three years' imprisonment in the Royal Gaol and was then discharged, "the suit having been brought by the Attorney-General".⁹⁹ There may have been other cases of misconduct, but the religious lifestyle of the early villagers is said to have been so strict¹⁰⁰ that we should not expect to find many such examples.

The actual operation of founding the settlements was fraught with difficulty. Each refugee was allotted 16 acres, but as the survey and distribution took a considerable time they were allowed to cultivate as much as they chose. Eventually the grant was found to be too large for individual cultivators, and was made 8 acres for bachelors, and 16 for families. The grants were gratuitous, but the settlers were liable to a quit-rent of 6s 6d annually for each allotment.¹⁰¹ The survey was badly done, and the "too-precise nature of the demarcation lines on the Ordnance maps" expresses total ignorance of the local geography. Thus it was later found necessary to misappropriate certain positions of land for the construction of roads and to give access to freshwater springs for the use of the whole community. Those who lost land in this way had to be compensated.¹⁰² Something was lacking in the paperwork, for the first Baptist missionary, George Cowen,

discovered in 1848 that the settlers had never had the land conveyed to them in due form. The missionaries had made representations about this to Lord Harris, the governor, who was taking action in the matter.¹⁰³ Even this did not finally sort out the legal problem. By May 1848 Cowen reported that though the people had had their lands surveyed and many had received their titles, by far the greater number had not applied for their titles because they could not afford the fees (about £3 sterling each) demanded by the government.¹⁰⁴

Physical difficulties were as bad as legal and administrative obstacles. The land was covered with a thick growth of forest trees and underbrush. Dense foliage and lianes kept out the sunlight, so the ground was sodden. The soil, though fertile, was a rich loamy clay which retained water. Arrival during the wet season delayed the process of settlement. Woodford reckoned that provisions would be required for at least six months before the newcomers could harvest their crops. Many of the settlers were sick, and a hospital had to be included in the reception centre in the Mission (now known as Princes Town), in which the refugees were accommodated before going to the surrounding villages.¹⁰⁵ As late as July 1817 some of the disbanded Marines were still in poor physical shape. On the first of that month Mitchell's Report on the "State of Sick and Sore Marines in Savanna Grande Hospital, or attached thereto", still listed 44 men and 7 women expected to get out by 1st October, and 21 men and 2 women who were "not expected to get off the Rations List until return of the Dry Season". These were patients "whose cases appear of a more stubborn nature than the preceding".¹⁰⁶ There were also 7 patients, "all bad cases", who had not prepared their grounds, and would have to be maintained until the March crop of 1818. The Report summarized the hospital expenses thus:

| | |
|---|--|
| 47 cases for 92 days at 2/- each per day | £432- 8s |
| 23 cases for 184 days at 2/- each per day | £423- 4s |
| 7 cases for 243 days at 2/- each per day | £170- 2s |
| 77 Blankets and Clothing 60/- | £231- 0s |
| | <u>£Cy. £1,256-14s.</u> ¹⁰⁷ |

In forwarding this Report home, Woodford said that above 80 of the settlers were in hospital,

"afflicted with Illness of the most obstinate kind; most of whom will be for a long time unable to assist themselves, if even they recover".

They had to have Mitchell's constant attendance and supervision, but as Mitchell's responsibilities now extended only to rations for the sick, his salary should be reduced from 8 dollars per diem to five.¹⁰⁸ In August, Woodford added, on the information of a letter from Mitchell, that

"all are cases of ulcers from which these poor people suffer greatly, some indeed were landed in that condition".

The charges estimated by Mitchell as necessary for the hospital would not be the total needed for health care. Some of the settlers were working out of the villages, in Port of Spain. On occasion they were not

"sufficiently Provident to save their earnings, and therefore when they fall sick demand assistance, which in humanity cannot be denied them".

On the other hand, Woodford was able to report that the mortality rate among the settlers had scarcely exceeded 2½%, and that the births had exceeded losses. There had been 8 births since the governor had seen the settlements in June.¹⁰⁹

Mitchell's own report headed, "Deaths and Births of American Refugees Settled at North Naparima, to the 5th August, 1817", gives the following figures:

| | | | |
|---------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1815 | Nov 30th | Landed 54 | Died 1 (one child of Worms) |
| | | Born 2 | Remain 55 |
| 1816 | Aug st 15 | Landed 575 | Died 13 + |
| | | Born 14 | Remain 576 |
| 1817 | March 22nd | In 53 Young African Females | |
| | | | No Death or Sickness |
| + Viz., | 1 Child of Worms | 1 Man, suddenly | |
| | 2 Women of flux | 1 Man, from eating bitter Casada(sic) | |
| | | 8 Men, from Fever, followed by | |
| | | Bowel Complaint | 110 |

The record of births, and the note about the importation of "young African females", may serve as a reminder that the new villages had not only administrative and physical obstacles to overcome, but social ones too. One of these was the marked disproportion in the sexes, natural enough in a community of ex-soldiers. Of the batch of settlers who had come with Major Kinsman, 574 in all, there were 404 men, 87 women and 83 children, as we have seen. These women had already formed conjugal attachments, so that the other men had to seek partners outside the villages. The women on the sugar-plantations helped to make up the lack, but partnerships formed by the Americans with slave-women caused friction between the incomers and the male slaves. The government took note of the difficulty, and in 1817 a group of 53 African women liberated from a French slave-ship were sent to the villages.¹¹¹ It appears that by 1821 the disparity in numbers of men and women was still not adjusted. In that year, Acting Governor Young drew a bill on the Treasury for £205-13s Sterling for the expenses of 60 African females sent from Antigua for the settlers, to keep them until distribution had taken place. The move was apparently approved by the Council.¹¹² The females from the French slave-ship of 1817 evidently proved acceptable. Mitchell reported that of these 53, landed from Barbados, 42 had been married by the Revd. Mr Clapham - the Anglican clergyman in Port of Spain - and 7 others had "entered into engagements", and would go to Port of Spain to be married "as soon as the Corn is landed (or loaded?)". The four youngest, presumably too young to marry, were being returned to Port of Spain in obedience to the Order in Council of 20th March.¹¹³

A paternalistic government sought to solve even the family problems of the villagers, but the fact that among the original settlers men outnumbered women by four to one caused conflict and competition among the villages. Some men drifted away to find work on estates, or in town. By 1825 the number of single males had declined significantly, about one-third having departed to other parts of the island. The competition for females, despite the departures

of some men, was sufficiently intense to make inter-village courting unwelcome and sometimes dangerous, and led to charges (whether true or false) of incest against certain lineage-clusters. This was a challenge to the reputation of certain families, and by extension to the villages of those families.¹¹⁴

The relatively few women who came with the original settlers are said to have developed much ingenuity at coping with the jungle conditions in which the villages were established. To make up for the lack of containers, the calabash gourd, cut and dried, was used to make serving vessels, spoons, storage space, even a kind of tinderbox, durable, yet easily replaced. It was found possible to cook in a hole in the ground, lined with leaves, a method adopted even later, when conditions were better, by hunters in the forests. The saline content came from the distillation of water in which ashes had been soaked. Soap was also made from ashes. When no streams were available for laundering, washing was done in a "batelle", a tub made by burning and scooping out the inside of a log. The women also gained skill in the preparation of herbal remedies.¹¹⁵

It is thus not surprising that the early life of the 'Merikins' (Americans) "reads like a frontier epic", as Miss Vincent says. The settlements were placed where they were in order to extend the frontier of civilisation in Trinidad. The incomers made their first journey from Port of Spain on foot along roads no more than bridle tracks, winding through the bush to Naparima, as San Fernando was then called. The last part of the route, from San Fernando to the Mission, as the modern Princes Town was then known, was even worse. Rain here would turn the road into an impassible quagmire.¹¹⁶ Distances between the Mission, the villages around it, and even Port of Spain, were not great in terms of mileage; but with roads in the atrocious condition they were in at the time of settlement and for decades later, the area remained relatively isolated. Without good roads the development of the new communities was retarded. Marketable goods could not easily be carried for

sale to the towns, and so each settler continued to grow a variety of crops, duplicating his neighbours' produce, in order to supply his own need. Easier access to the markets would have stimulated a more specialized agricultural economy.¹¹⁷

With all the difficulties, the villages were successfully planted, without waiting for the completion of the surveying. Mitchell in later years had to resolve the friction caused by the rough and ready limits set to the men's plots, and have the property boundaries marked firmly. Tension on the point was understandable. To the settlers, their plots were "blood lands", that is, allotments earned by military service.¹¹⁸ Corn, potatoes, bananas, cassava, and rice, were the crops planted. Rice was especially valued for its durability; it could be stored all year round without losing its nutritive value or taste. It is said that the American settlers brought rice to Trinidad for the first time, thus adding to the diversification of the economy and giving the island a valuable staple crop.¹¹⁹ In the first year rudimentary shelters were put up to see the community through the rainy season. Men who had built shelters for themselves in the Chesapeake no doubt had skills in this work. Mitchell had to intervene to prevent the cutting of the best timber - cedar, mora, cyp - for the trees were Crown property.¹²⁰ The economic foundation was agriculture, supplemented by hunting for wild deer, lappe, tatoo, tiger-cat, and quenk. Hunting meant expeditions into the forests for days at a time, and those who were occupied in this pursuit were even more isolated than other villagers.¹²¹

Work on surrounding estates was also performed by the settlers as a way of supplementing their income. Mitchell's Report on the settlements in August 1817 shows that each village had made good progress. The men had returned home in June from the estates, to which they had hired themselves during the dry season. Their own allotments had been planted with Corn, Potatoes, Pumpkins, and so on, and the crops "were most luxuriant, promising an ample return for the labour expended". The "second allotments" were

being planted with plantains, and Mitchell anticipated that by September the whole of the cleared land would be planted with these. But the continued dry weather from February to the end of May had allowed the settlers' stock of Corn to run very low. It would be completely exhausted before the next crop came in. The pressure was felt by the whole community, but

as the Men can get employment on the neighbouring Estates when they are in want, this pressure is more particularly felt by the Women and Children, who cannot find employment".

Mitchell therefore recommended an issue of fish and flour from the first of August to the first of October. With the report, Mitchell also submitted the figures for expenditure on the American Refugees for the quarter up to 30 June, 1817, amounting to £4,031-7s-2d. Woodford forwarded the report to Bathurst, adding that he had sanctioned the issue of rations to the women and children for two months, with the advice of the Council, the distress in the villages having been caused by the lack of plantains, so far, as a resource for the dry season.¹²²

By the following year, Mitchell was able to report that 1,200 acres had been cleared and planted, and though the plantains were not doing well, due to the difficulty and expense of conveying plants so far, he was still endeavouring to plant these on the most extensive scale. No serious crime had been reported, so that security fears had evidently been exaggerated.¹²³ Already in 1818 the newcomers raised sufficient provisions for their own subsistence, and contributed pigs, poultry, and provisions for surrounding districts. In addition, their spare labour was of "incalculable" value to the small planter. This was the best argument against the original opposition of the planters to the settlements of free negroes on the Naparima lands.¹²⁴ The ten years between 1817 and 1827 were successful years for the villages. Woodford's view of the settlers as

"an intelligent People feeling themselves very superior in Intellect to the African and therefore not disposed to

associate with them, altho' they are not so industrious as these (Africans)",

reads a little strangely. The settlers must have been diligent to have come so far in so short a time, even allowing for the fact that they were cultivating fertile virgin soil.¹²⁵ By 1825 they were producing 2,000 barrels of corn, and over 400 barrels of rice, as well as working for the planters during the crop season from January to April. At this task they could earn an average of £18 per quarree for cane cutting. From September to November they worked at planting canes, earning £50-£60 per quarree. A small group of them were employed throughout the year in cutting timber and sawing firewood.¹²⁶

We may conclude that the money laid out on settling the refugees had been well spent. The initial expense seems to have been about £12-3s-9d. to £13-15s-0d. per head, which in Goodridge's judgement was reasonable.¹²⁷ Total costs are hard to calculate, but the following may serve as a sample:

| | | |
|------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| <u>Total Pay</u> , | Superintendent and his Assistants | £ 1,966- 6- 0 |
| <u>Provisions</u> | Meat, Fish, Flour, etc., Crops | 12,713- 6-11 |
| | Freight, Cartage of Stones, Pilotage, Boat Hire, Mule Hire, Porterage, Cooperage | 1,986-19- 3 |
| | Medical and Hospital Expenses | 1,724- 1- 7 |
| | Cutlasses, Hatchets, Agricultural Implements, Corn Mills, Household Utensils | 1,613- 7-11 |
| | Building, Repairing Houses, Store and Hospital Rent | 1,003- 8- 0 |
| | Jail Fees and Subsistence of Prisoners | 67-12- 0 |
| | Clothing | 58-18- 6 |
| | Copying, Accounts and Stationery | 28- 0- 0 |
| <u>Total Discharge</u> | | <u>£21,625- 7- 2</u> ¹²⁸ |

What the colony gained from the outlay of public money on the new settlements was a real contribution to the solution of its labour shortage, and to the opening up of the land. Much of the expense was due to the need of white supervision, and much to the need to provide costly medical care. The sickness which so many of them suffered from may have been due to the privations of military service. It may also account for Woodford's impression that they were idle. In apologising for the large bills for medical care, Woodford wrote:

"...having been accustomed to fresh meat, rice, etc., the salt and ground Provisions of the Colony disagree with their constitutions and renders the Medical Attendance upon them constant and very expensive...I am sorry to add that they are generally prone to idleness and I fear few of them will succeed, notwithstanding the encouragement they have received."¹²⁹

But it may well be that it was necessary for the settlers, after the upheaval of flight from slavery and military service, to have time to recover physically and psychologically, and to adjust to their new situation, before they could make a better impression. The rapid success of the settlements, and their growth to self-sufficiency, despite all the muddled administration and the lack of facilities, tell a different story. The missionary Gamble, 40 years later, presents a much more favourable picture:

"As far as physical strength and height of stature go, these American villagers will compare favourably with any set of men in the world. They are above the general height, robust and hardy. At this day, a man with his 'urre' (? presumably a kind of basket or container), containing a heavy load, will leave his home, fourteen or fifteen miles from San Fernando, walk to that town, buy what he has the means of purchasing, and return home again, without thinking anything of the walk. And when we remember that he does this under a tropical sun, and for half the distance over terribly bad roads, we may admit that they are capable of enduring fatigue".¹³⁰

It is to Woodford's credit that despite his scepticism about the efficacy of free labour and his belief that the settlers might not make good, he worked hard to secure for them the necessities of life without which they could hardly have become self-sufficient

so soon. In 1818 he was still battling with the Treasury over this:

"In addition to the Clothing (the selection of which if not embarked might be advantageously altered, by lessening the quantity of women's Clothing by increasing the number of trowsers (sic) and adding a good sized blanket for each) - I would suggest that any Tools, such as Pickaxes, Shovels, Saws, etc., which may be in store, would be well bestowed upon them".¹³¹

Someone, presumably Harrison of the Treasury, has marked the margin of the letter with a query partially illegible but clear as to its sense, to the effect : Could not the refugees purchase their own tools? But it is in the nature of the case that refugees arrive without means to pay for anything, especially when they had fled from slavery; and without tools it is scarcely possible to clear tropical forest. The same letter, incidentally, affords an example of the independent attitude of the community. Woodford reported that the people had fallen in willingly with a Treasury suggestion that they should contribute 18/6 each in currency per quarter for the support of the infirm. Whenever it was possible for them to pay their way, they were apparently willing to do so.

Woodford was properly concerned for the material wellbeing of the villages, but his interest extended to their spiritual and moral wellbeing too. Even as he wrote home about clothes and tools, he urged the Treasury to authorize payment of a clergyman for the communities. He thought he had found one at that time, who would have been suitable, and

"the Cost of erecting a House and Chapel would have added but little to the expenses incurred".¹³²

Again in November 1822 Woodford thought he had found the right man, the Rev. George Cumming, who had offered his services, and had been recommended by the Bishop of London. Woodford proposed a salary of £400 sterling, and asked for a schoolmaster at the same stipend as was paid to the Superintendent of the villages, together with money to build a church, a parsonage, and a school. There were now 750 people in the district, and planters were moving

in.¹³³ Seven months later no authorisation had been given, and Woodford asked Bathurst to urge on the Treasury the case for a clergyman; he was evidently put out that he could not tell Mr Cummings what he reasonably wanted to know, whether he could have a salary. The governor regretted that

"no Moral, or Religious Instruction is provided for these increasing Settlements whose numbers I have lately reported to consist of 395 men, 180 women, and 300 children, making a total of 876 persons".¹³⁴

By August 1823, Wilmot Horton of the Colonial Office was writing to George Harrison at the Treasury to request the latter to put Woodford's proposals for a clergyman to the Treasury Commissioners, with a reminder of a previous letter of November 1822. It was by now too late for Cummings. Due to the delay, he had accepted the post of Anglican clergyman in Port of Spain, a position recently vacated by Mr Clapham. Woodford was naturally disappointed, having formed a high opinion of Cummings, but was still much in earnest about the needs of the villagers:

"I hope...that in any case a Provision will be made for both Clergyman and Schoolmasters to the Americans - it is very much to be regretted that for the seven years they have now been settled in the Colony there has as yet been no Provision made for either. The number as I reported in No. 493 amount to 800".¹³⁵

We may suspect that the Treasury was dragging its feet over the matter of paying a clergyman. It is not clear whether Woodford ever did manage to get a clergyman for the district. Something, however, was managed by way of schoolteaching. It appears that a certain Reverend Tucker and his wife kept the first independent school in the island - as opposed to government aided school - in Savanna Grande. The school was opened in 1826, and was unique in Trinidad in being co-educational, having on its roll 37 boys and 13 girls. The popular 'Madras' system of teaching was used. It was founded for the specific purpose of educating those children who were the issue of the "American Black Settlers" who had "fled the turmoils of the American War of Independence (1775-1783)(sic)".¹³⁶ It is unclear whether Woodford had anything to

do with the founding of this school, or how long it lasted.

In all this one thing stands out. Woodford seems to have known most things about the settlers, but he apparently never realized that their religion was Baptist. There is nowhere in the correspondence about ecclesiastical matters any note that the villagers were founding churches of their own, and had brought their own version of Christianity with them.

There is, however, no doubt that they had done so. Probably the solution to the puzzle of Woodford's ignorance of the religion of the villagers was that the Baptists were a minority among settlers, who had to convert their fellows by vigorous evangelism. To the founding of the Company Village churches and the establishment of the dominant village religion, we must now turn.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. See end maps, noting Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Companies. Mount Elvin corresponds to First Company. Second Company has vanished.
2. File 2/9/3, Royal Marine Archives, Eastney, Portsmouth, Correspondence between Captain G H Hennessy and Major S Hylton Edwards; K O Lawrence, The Settlement of Free Negroes in Trinidad Before Emancipation, in CQ Vol.9, No. 1 (1964), pp. 26-52.
3. Wesley M Gewehr, The Great Awakening in Virginia, (Durham, North Carolina 1930), provides a sketchmap opposite p.106; see also pp. 173-174 and 185-186.
4. G Auchinleck, A History of the War Between Great Britain and the United States of America During The Years 1812, 1813, and 1814 (London, Toronto, and Redwood City, California, 1972; first published 1855), pp. 356-357.
5. William James, A Full and Correct Account of the Military Occurrences of the Late War Between Great Britain and the United States of America, (2 volumes, London 1818, printed for the author), II, pp. 268-271.
6. Lt. Gleig, A Narrative of the Campaigns of the British Army at Washington and New Orleans, Under Generals Ross, Pakenham, and Lambert, In the Years 1814 and 1815 (2nd edn., John Murray, London 1816), p.144
7. General Sir H E Blumberg, A Record of the Royal Marines From 1793 to 1836 (n.d., typescript, Royal Marines Archives, Eastney, Portsmouth), p.226.
8. The Journal of Captain John Robyns, Ms. in Royal Marines Archives, Eastney, Portsmouth, p.134 (May 11, 1814), and p.136 (May 30, 1814).
9. Captain H B Eaton, Bladensburg, in The Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol. 55 (1977), pp. 8-9.
10. Paul Harris Nicolas, Historical Record of the Royal Marine Forces (2 volumes, T and W Boone, London 1845),II., p.282.
11. The Journal of Captain John Robyns, Ms. in Royal Marine Archives, Eastney, Portsmouth, p.134.
12. Captain H B Eaton, Bladensburg, in The Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol. 55 (1977), p.9 ; for a commendation of this company's conduct, see William James, A Full and Correct Account...,Vol II, p.493, Appendix, Document 62, Rear Admiral Cockburn to Vice Admiral Cochrane,

HM Sloop Manly, off Nottingham, Patuxent, 27 August 1814; for the casualties, Ibid., Document 64, p.499, Returns of Killed, Wounded, and Missing, from Washington, 25 August 1814.

13. Nicolas, Historical Record...II, pp. 274-277, for the original 3rd Battalion; Ibid., pp. 277-282 for its part in the campaign up to Bladensburg; Ibid., p. 282, for the reorganization with black companies. See also Col. C Field, Britain's Sea-Soldiers: A History of the Royal Marines and Their Predecessors, and of Their Services in Action Ashore and Afloat, and Upon Sundry Other Matters of Moment, (Lyceum Press, Liverpool 1924), Vol I, pp. 298-302. Field cites in full a contemporary, but anonymous, account by an officer of the 3rd Battalion, preserved in Ms. at Portsmouth, entitled A Journal of the Operations of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Marines, under the respective commands of Major George Lewis and Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Jas. Malcolm KCB, within the Chesapeake, etc., 1814-1815.
14. Field, Britain's Sea-Soldiers...I, p. 303. His source for this statement is not given, but is, in fact, taken verbatim from Nicolas, Historical Record...II, p. 288.
15. Nicolas, Historical Record...II, pp. 266 and 268; James, A Full and Correct Account...II, Appendix, p. 510, Document No. 71, Colonel Broke to Earl Bathurst, Tonnant, Chesapeake, 17 September 1814; Ibid., p. 513, Document No. 72 (Casualties); Naval Chronicle, Vol. 33, Jan-June 1815, pp. 160-162, copied verbatim from London Gazette, Cochrane's Despatch from Tonnant, to Crocker, 17 September 1814. The Despatch (p. 162) contains the news that Captain Robbins (sic - but Robyns, author of the Journal, is meant) had been severely wounded, and warmly commends him "to their Lordships' favour and protection" for his "gallant services" on the Chesapeake.
16. Nicholas, Historical Record...II, pp. 286-287
17. Ibid., II, p. 287
18. For all this, see Nicolas, op. cit., II, pp. 266-269, followed by Field, Britain's Sea-Soldiers...I, pp. 302-303
19. Nicolas, op. cit., II, p. 288
20. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Harrison, 5 May 1818; Ibid., Extract of Woodford to Bathurst 31 July 1817, enclosed in Goulburn to Harrison 31 October 1817.
21. Nicolas, Historical Record... II, p. 270
22. General Sir H E Blumberg, A Record of the Royal Marines from 1793 to 1836 (n.d., typescript, Royal Marines Archives, Eastney, Portsmouth), p. 226.

23. A B Ellis, History of the 1st West India Regiment (Chapman and Hall, London 1885), page number omitted; the same account is given in Col. A R Loscombe, The First West India Regiment (The West India Committee, London 1900), p. 13
24. So I understand from information given by the archivist at the R M Archives, Eastney.
25. R N Buckley, Slaves in Red Coats: The British West India Regiments 1795-1815 (Yale University Press, New Haven 1979) p. 23
26. C A Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration in Trinidad 1783-1833 (Ph.D., Cambridge 1970-1), to which the brief summary given here is much in debt.
27. Ibid., pp. 7-9
28. A J Synott, Slave Revolts in the Caribbean (Ph.D., London 1976) pp. 184-185
29. Terms of the cedula summarized in E E Williams, History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago (Deutsch, London, 1964), pp. 41-42
30. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration...p. 39
31. This apt phrase is the title of Ch.5 of Williams, History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago, pp. 40-50
32. Synott, Slave Revolts... pp. 284-287
33. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration... p. 82
34. Ibid., pp. 40-41
35. E B Rosabelle Seesaran, Church and State in Education in Trinidad, (M.A., University of the West Indies 1974), p. 9
36. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration...p. 40
37. Ibid., p. 55
38. Bridget Brereton, Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870-1900, (C U P 1979), pp. 7-8
39. For the republican sympathies of this class, which made governor Picton think himself in an armed camp in 1797, see Synott, Slave Revolts... pp. 75-76
40. Synott, Slave Revolts... p. 73, pp. 77-78
41. Williams, History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago... pp. 69-72, has almost the complete text of Liverpool's despatch to Trinidad, giving his decisions and the reasons for it.

The phrase "gubernatorial autocracy" to describe the system is from J K Chapman, The Career of Arthur Hamilton Gordon, 1st Lord Stanmore, To 1875 (Ph.D., London 1954) p.85

42. Chapman, Career of Arthur Hamilton Gordon... pp. 83-84
43. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration... pp. 105-106
44. Goodridge, op.cit., pp. 103-104 for details; the quotation is from George Rose to General Cuyler, 8 July 1797, W O 1/86
45. Goodridge, op.cit., pp. 107, and Introduction, pp. iv-v
46. Goodridge, op.cit., pp. 140-141
47. Goodridge, op.cit., pp. 131-133; 135-136; 145-148; 152-153
48. Goodridge, op.cit., pp. 142-144; 151-152
49. Goodridge, op.cit., pp. 168-170
50. Goodridge, op.cit., pp. 170-174; 184-186; 188-191
51. Bragge Bathurst Papers D421 X 13/10, Woodford to Bragge Bathurst 9 October 1811. For the Tobago property, see Goodridge, op.cit., pp. 202 n.11. Woodford had asked Hobart for land in Trinidad. Woodford's father had been Resident in the Hanse Towns, and later Minister at the Court of Denmark: see Introduction to the Bragge Bathurst Papers, Gloucestershire Record Office.
52. Bragge Bathurst Papers, Introduction, Gloucestershire Record Office Catalogue D327-600. For Woodford at the War Office, see Goodridge, op.cit., p. 202 n.11
53. Bragge Bathurst Papers D421 X 13/11, Woodford to Bragge Bathurst, 21 June 1812
54. Bragge Bathurst Papers D421 X 13/16, Woodford to Bragge Bathurst, 16 July 1812
55. Bragge Bathurst Papers D421 X 13/13, Woodford to Bragge Bathurst, 22 July 1812
56. Bragge Bathurst Papers D421 X 13/14, Woodford to Bragge Bathurst, 23 July 1812; and Ibid., 13/15, no date but obviously after 23 July 1812
57. Bragge Bathurst Papers D421 X 13/16, Woodford to Bragge Bathurst, 20 August 1812
58. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration... p. 204
59. PP 1826-7 (551) XXIII, 285, Report of the Commissioners of Legal Enquiry on Trinidad, p. 262 (on the Judicial Functions of the Governor).

60. Williams, History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago, p. 81; Chapman, Career of Arthur Hamilton Gordon... pp. 85-86
61. Bragge Bathurst Papers D421 X 13/17, Woodford to Bragge Bathurst, 4 September 1812
62. Goodridge, Land, Labour and Immigration... Introduction, pp. ii-iv
63. Ibid., pp. 216-217
64. Ibid., pp. 222-223; p. 212
65. Ibid., pp. 224-227
66. Ibid., pp. 227-229
67. Bragge Bathurst Papers D421 X 13/19, Woodford to Bragge Bathurst, 25 March 1814
68. Goodridge, Land, Labour and Immigration... pp. 214-215
69. Williams, History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago pp. 75-76; Sir Alan Burns, History of the British West Indies (Allen and Unwin, London, 2nd edn., 1965), p. 590
70. Williams, op.cit., p. 78
71. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration... pp 203-204
72. Synott, Slave Revolts... pp. 287-290, for an account of the alleged plot.
73. Ibid., pp. 63-64; p. 312
74. Ibid., pp. 297-298
75. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration... p. 230
76. Dolores Vincent, The Origin and Development of the Company Villages in South Trinidad, (undergraduate dissertation, University of the West Indies, Department of History, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 1976), p. 9, citing Trinidad Duplicate Despatches No. 189, Woodford to Bathurst, 28 August 1816
77. Vincent, op.cit., citing Trinidad Duplicate Despatches, No. 189, Woodford to Bathurst, 28 August 1816
78. Ibid., p. 8; K O Lawrence, The Settlement of Free Negroes in Trinidad Before Emancipation, CQ Vol. 9 (1963), No. 1 p. 31

79. Lawrence, art.cit., p. 31; Donald Wood, Trinidad in Transition (OUP, London, 1968) p. 38; PP 1839 XXXIV, Negro Education, British Guiana and Trinidad, p. 35
80. Vincent, Origin and Development... p. 10
81. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Harrison, 5 May 1818
82. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration... p. 241
83. T1/4323, Part 1, Goulburn to Harrison, 15 March 1816, enclosed J C Sherbrooke (Nova Scotia) to Bathurst, 21 November 1815, for the Nova Scotia experiment; Bathurst to Woodford, 24 October 1814, CO 296/5, quoted in Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration... pp. 230-231
84. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration... pp. 231-232; Lawrence, Settlement of Free Negroes,...in CQ Vol. 9 (1963), No. 1, p. 26
85. Goodridge, op.cit., pp. 231-232; Lawrence, art.cit., p. 26
86. Lawrence, art.cit., p. 26; Goodridge, op.cit., p. 232, says that the group consisted of 34 men, 15 women, and 17 children.
87. Goodridge, op.cit., p. 232; for Kinsman, see P H Nicolas, Historical Record... II, pp. 287-288; List of R M Officers 1813-1814, in Royal Marine Archives, Eastney, Portsmouth; Naval Chronicle, Vol. 31, (January-June 1814), p. 509
88. Goodridge, op.cit., p. 232
89. Bragge Bathurst Papers, D421 X 13/25, Woodford to Bragge Bathurst, 4 March 1816, cited also in Goodridge, op.cit., p. 233
90. Goodridge, op.cit., pp. 238-240
91. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Harrison, 5 May 1818
92. James Cadett to Bathurst, quoted in Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration... p. 243
93. T1/4323, Part 1, Woodford to Harrison, 5 May 1818. A pencil note in the margin reads, "This is a (?) recommendation, but Lord Bathurst must be the best judge of its expediency".
94. PP 1826-7, XXIII, 479: Evidence of R Mitchell, quoted in Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration... pp. 240-241
95. T1/4324 Part 1, Woodford to Harrison, 5 May 1818
96. Ibid.

97. PP 1826-7 (551) XXIII. 285, Report of the Commissioners of Legal Enquiry on Trinidad, Appendix G, Return of Criminal Causes 1821-1824, No.22 of 1824.
98. PP 1826-7 (551) XXIII. 285, Report of the Commissioners of Legal Enquiry on Trinidad, Appendix G, Return of Criminal Causes 1821-1824, No. 37 of 1824. The name Thompson is borne by a Baptist family from the area today, though naturally this is not proof of ancestry.
99. Ibid., No. 13 of 1823
100. See, e.g., John Stewart, Mission and Leadership Among the 'Merikin' Baptists of Trinidad, a paper presented to the 74th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, December 5th, 1975, San Francisco, California, p. 9
101. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration... p. 240
102. Vincent, Origin and Development... p. 12
103. BM/MH, Vol. XXXIX, March 1848, p. 185, Cowen to BMS Secretary, n.d., but before his departure from England on 17 February 1848.
104. BM/MH, Vol. XXXIX, September 1848, p. 577, Cowen to BMS Secretary, 20 May, 1848
105. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Bathurst, 9 November 1815
106. T1/4323 Part 1, Mitchell to Woodford, 1 July 1817: Hospital Report on the Naparima Settlers at Savanna Grande.
107. Ibid.
108. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Bathurst (Extract) 31 July 1817, enclosed in Goulburn to Harrison, 31 October 1817.
109. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Bathurst, 13 August 1817
110. T1/4323 Part 1, List No. 1, from Robert Mitchell, regarding the Health of the Settlements (to August 5, 1817).
111. K O Lawrence, The Settlement of Free Negroes..., in CQ Vol. 9 (1963), No. 1, p. 27
112. T1/4323 Part 1, Young to Harrison, 19 April 1821, enclosed in Goulburn to Harrison, 18 July 1821
113. T1/4323 Part 1, Report of Mitchell to Woodford, 5 August 1817
114. John Stewart, Mission and Leadership... p. 13
115. Vincent, Origin and Development... pp. 16-17

116. Ibid., p. 11
117. Ibid., p. 22
118. Ibid., p. 12. The writer has never heard the phrase "blood lands" and Miss Vincent says that it comes from "oral sources", not further specified. As a native of the area, Miss Vincent is well placed to know.
119. Ibid., pp. 13-14; W H Gamble, Trinidad, Historical and Descriptive (San Fernando 1865), p. 80
120. Vincent, op.cit., pp. 13, 15.
121. Ibid., p. 15
122. T1/4323 Part 1, Report of Mitchell to Woodford, 5 August 1817; Ibid., Woodford to Bathurst, 13 August 1817
123. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Harrison, 5 May 1818
124. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration... pp. 256-257
125. Ibid., p.242; T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Harrison, 5 May 1818
126. Goodridge, op.cit., pp. 243-244
127. Ibid., p. 249
128. T1/4323 Part 1, State of Account of Sir Ralph Woodford for Monies Rec'd and Expended for American Refugees, 17 October 1815 - 30 June 1817.
129. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Bathurst, 8 February 1816
130. Gamble, Trinidad Historical and Descriptive... p. 108
131. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Harrison, 5 May 1818
132. Ibid.
133. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Horton, 16 November 1822, enclosed with Horton to Harrison, 28 November 1822.
134. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Bathurst, 8 June 1823
135. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Bathurst, 3 December 1823, enclosed in Horton to Harrison, 16 December 1823.
136. J A R K Samarasingh, The History of Education in Trinidad and Tobago From The Earliest Times to 1900, (Ph.D., London 1963-4). This is one example of the persistent confusion over the origin of the Company Villages, placing the date of the settlements to the War of Independence rather than to the War of 1812-1814.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CHARACTER OF THE BAPTIST CHURCHES

In this chapter we propose to give an account of the life of the Baptist Churches in the Company Villages. The difficulties of this are considerable. For the first twenty-eight years of their life, the village churches were cut off from the rest of the Baptist world, and since most of the villagers were illiterate, they could not give any account of themselves in documentary form. It is therefore inevitable that the historian must rely very heavily on the accounts of the later missionaries, assisted by anthropological studies such as Stewart's, and the reminiscences of local observers such as Inniss.¹ The danger is that the churches may be interpreted as they appear through foreign eyes, even though every effort has been made to be fair.

The principal leader of the settlers in religious matters was one William Hamilton, who died in 1860. His long life thus overlapped with the missionary era, and the missionary W H Gamble, who knew him, described him in this way:

"(he)...had come with the old soldiers in 1816. From then to the year of his death he guided and instructed the people to the best of his ability and knowledge"... "He was one of the few who in those days could read; hence, possessed of this amount of education, and being a good speaker, and a lover of maintaining such disciplines as he was acquainted with, he became the pastor of the Fifth Company villagers. It must, however, be observed, that he allowed some things to be done in, and some persons to be members of, the church, which he ought not to have done. Still, considering the times of slavery, and the little knowledge he had, we would deal gently with Brother Hamilton. We trust and believe he has gone where there is no darkness, and no lack of spiritual knowledge and heavenly light".²

Hamilton is credited with having founded the Baptist Churches in the villages, gathering the people for worship and instruction at first in their houses, then under the shelter of a tent on the very site where Fifth Company now stands; and with 'calling and sending forth' preachers to the other Company Villages.³ It is fairly

certain that he was one of the "five Anabaptist preachers" active in the villages in 1825. These men were followed by most of the community, though there were also 200 Methodists and 20 Muslims. Hamilton was probably the religious leader mentioned by Governor Hill as one "who had a call from heaven"; the governor stated that this preacher was doing what Hill had been unable to get a clergyman of the Church of England to do, namely, minister in the Company Villages. Hill also testified that this man's followers were the most industrious and dependable of the settlers.⁴ Probably, too, Hamilton was one of the leaders who welcomed J M Phillippo, the Jamaica missionary who made a tour of Trinidad in 1843-4 on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society. He may, indeed, have been the man who remarked to Phillippo that the churches in the district had

"been holding on and looking up to God for a minister for twenty eight years".⁵

In 1845 Hamilton was listed as working at the Savanna Grande Church along with Mr Silverthorne; in 1848, he was pastor of the Indian Walk Church (probably another name for Fifth Company).⁶ John Law, the second Baptist missionary in Trinidad, adds the information that Hamilton was:

"...one of three 'coloured brethren' engaged every sabbath in making known to their fellow men the salvation there is in Christ Jesus",

and that:

"(he)...was flogged in America thirty years since, for conducting a prayer meeting with his fellow slaves!"

Despite these experiences, Law reported, he was preaching every sabbath at the Mission (Princes Town), to "a good attendance", assisted in this service by one Proctor.⁷

Another strand of folk memory ascribes the original foundation of the Company Village churches to a certain Richardson, assisted by preachers called Loney and McCloud (sic), working at Third Company.⁸ In such a case it is virtually impossible to decide

between the two traditions, there being no confirmatory evidence either way. The point is not important. It is, however, possible that the claim of Third Company to be the original Baptist Church reflects the fact that a pastor by the name of David Richardson was there when Underhill, the BMS secretary, visited Trinidad in 1859. The name Richardson is continuous to the present day in Trinidad Baptist circles; the Richardson of 1859 was reported to be "a man of strong sense though very uncultivated".⁹

What is clear is that:

"tenting did not develop in each of the six villages simultaneously but diffused from one or perhaps two centers throughout the rest of the Company settlements".¹⁰

The religion thus disseminated followed the pattern of the rural Baptist meeting in the Southern United States. Tent meetings were occasions for social gathering, and attracted visitors and participants from neighbouring villages. The people might well meet nightly for periods ranging up to a month or longer. Evangelists and others so moved preached and led ecstatic congregational prayers, and there was revivalist singing, rhythmic group shouting, hand-clapping, and 'spiritual seizures'.¹¹ The number of the original Baptists may have been so small as to have gone unnoticed by the Marines, their Chaplains, Mitchell the superintendent, or Woodford the governor, but:

"with the evangelical enthusiasm of the worshippers, regular house meetings, and tents, were effective contexts within which sufficient new members could be recruited for the establishment of new churches".¹²

These first evangelists were remembered as in the line of successful Black preachers everywhere - "good poetic vision, a command of infectious metaphor, strong oratorical powers", and a crusading faith.¹³ Village churches were formed and a leadership structure set up, including pastors, preachers, deacons, and elders.¹⁴

Thus:

"... a defiantly puritanical lifestyle predicated upon an exuberant Baptist form of worship became formalized as the significant expression of their (i.e., the villagers') special character. Religion in the Baptist mode ultimately emerged as a distinguishing Merikin ethnic marker".¹⁵

The villages had no rival religious or political institution; the Baptist Churches came to dominate the spiritual and social life of the settlements, providing them with metaphors, ideas, and examples by which to organise their lives. In their own restricted locality, with their own Baptist religion, and their 'Calvinistic' (if this is the appropriate term) lifestyle, as markers, the Merikins became consciously identified as an unique enclave among the ethnic groups in Trinidad. Most other Blacks in the early 19th century in Trinidad were either Catholics or non-Christians.¹⁶

We are now back to the same question as that posed in Chapter One: was the religion introduced into Trinidad purely Christian of the revivalist kind, or was African religion an ingredient in it? In Wood's view, there was fusion:

"Two streams met in their worship, a West African one of rhythm and the dance, and the Puritanism of sixteenth century Münster and East Anglia; their fusion brought about 'shouting', and jumping and shaking by those who felt themselves the chosen of the Lord of Hosts. They started a fashion in the religious life of Trinidad that has persisted, in spite of official disapproval, until this present day".¹⁷

As a definition, this is open to criticism. The allusion to Münster has no real relevance; the apocalyptic violence of that Anabaptist disturbance of the 16th century was never reproduced by revivalism. 'Puritanism' is likewise a slippery word, with historical associations perhaps better avoided here. Maybe a better word would be 'asceticism', for Stewart has described the lifestyle of the early villagers thus:

"In daily life 'the cross' translated into a moral and behavioural code so strict, that strong spiritual justification was needed to make it acceptable. This code

required total abstinence from extra-marital sex, unswerving execution of domestic duties, no consumption of alcohol, no self-adornment or secular entertainments. Modesty in dress, respect for elders, economic self-sufficiency, intense piety, and total participation in rituals of worship, were the required standards".¹⁸

If this was the pattern of the churches during their early days, it probably had broken down by the time the missionaries appeared in the 1840's, as their evidence consistently indicates. Yet, if there is any truth in this picture, it would explain why Governor Hill found Hamilton's followers the most dependable and industrious of the settlers.¹⁹ Our hypothesis to explain the contradiction between Stewart's disciplined villagers and the less flattering evidence of the missionaries would be that the intense revivalism of the early years gradually broke down. It would be no matter for surprise if this were so. A discipline so relentless would be hard to keep up. Moreover, the villagers were subjected increasingly to outside pressures. We have seen that there was an influx of African women, presumably pagan; other Africans increasingly squatted on the lands as the area was opened up; villagers left the district for outside employment; and internal teaching and leadership was never adequate. The remark of a local leader to Phillippo, quoted above, itself suggests that things were not going well: "We have been holding on and looking up to God for a minister to twenty-eight years".²⁰

Even so, it was noticed by Wood that their "highly emotional Baptist worship".."proved to be more hardy than the superficial Christianity taught to recruits in the depot of the West India Regiment", though "their services were apocalyptic and noisy, and caused concern to the staid English ministers who visited them",²¹ It likewise caused comment in the newspapers, which remarked on the Baptists' "thunderous preaching and singing"; but the Trinidadian for 6 May 1849 (cited by Wood), at least acknowledged that the village religion was "less of a threat to the dissemination of more orthodox religion than the introduction of heathen (that is, Indian) immigrants". It was observed, even then, that "the great festival

of these Baptists was the 'camp meeting' which could last a whole week, and which had been borrowed from the Southern States".²²

To what extent the revivalist religion of the villagers was, or became, permeated with African paganism is not an easy question to answer, but the following may have a bearing on it:

"Tenting..was only one of the elements in the fundamentalist tradition which the Merikins retained in the new settlement. Among others were an intense evangelism, baptism by total immersion in running water, spirit possession, the spiritual interpretation of dreams, and a firm belief that repentance and spiritual regeneration were totally an individual responsibility."²³

Some elements in this could conceivably have been borrowed from African paganism, as we have seen in Chapter One. Spirit possession was central to African religion; yet it can refer, as Raboteau explains, not to possession by African gods but by the Holy Spirit. The evangelism, the demand for regeneration, the baptism in running water, are all of undoubtedly Christian origin. But it must be conceded that the neat separation of Christian and African elements is difficult, even unreal. The hold of certain African elements over the people may well have been quite unconscious. The matter of dream-interpretation has remained a pastoral problem right down to the present. The custom of requiring that persons must have dream to tell them when to be baptized has been discovered by the present writer. This has not normally been the motive among Christians, even Baptists, for baptism. But, to the Company Villagers,

"the spirit world was an immediate and powerful world, and those who did not 'carry the cross' would be victimized by the forces of damnation".²⁴

Even this statement demonstrates the difficulty. The spirit world is immediate and powerful; yet the answer to this apparently African concept is to 'carry the cross', which is indubitably a central Christian idea.

On the whole, the 'Merikin' Baptists brought evangelical religion with them into Trinidad. It is significant that they are to be carefully differentiated from other groups bearing the Baptist name, such as the Spiritual Baptists. These latter practice 'mourning' and 'speaking in tongues', unlike the Company Villagers.²⁵ Spiritual Baptists are said to be 'midway between the Shango cult, and main-line Christians', but must be counted among the "Afro-Caribbean cults", even though some of them have moved in the direction of the Protestant Church as they have become more institutionalized.²⁶ The dividing line between the Afro-Caribbean cults and orthodox Christianity is sometimes hard to discern, but the Company Village Baptists are normally, if not invariably, on the orthodox side of the line.

If the "Merikins" brought evangelical religion with them, however, it may be that this religion had become attenuated quite seriously before the missionaries arrived. The missionaries' evidence shows clearly that they were constantly unhappy about the state of the churches. This unhappiness can perhaps be encapsulated in the verdict of J.H. Poole, minister of the Port of Spain church, who served in Trinidad from 1907 to his death in the 1970's, with only two short breaks. Poole, an outstandingly able minister who knew most things about Trinidad, wrote in a paper for the BMS about 1944:

"From the first Mr. Cowen (the first BMS missionary), had to contend with the hostility of many of the people in the villages on account of his efforts to put down undesirable heathen practices which had become completely identified with their religion during the years of neglect".²⁷

Even more bluntly, Poole described the churches encountered by Cowen in these terms:

"The older immigrants were Baptists, and their children remained loyal to the Baptist profession. They elected their own pastors, and maintained some sort of Church life. But gradually old African practices and beliefs crept back, so when these villages were discovered by Mr. Cowen, there was

probably little more than the practice of adult immersion to mark them as Christian communities".²⁸

This may have been an extreme view; it is hard to think that there was no substance in it. To the end of the century the missionaries found it hard to deal with certain practices in the church, notably the all-night "shouting meeting", which, as will be seen, was open to abuse. There are, in fact, reasons to believe that in the thirty-odd years which elapsed between the settlement and the beginning of work in the villages by the BMS, the churches declined. The decline was caused, at bottom, by isolation, ignorance, and infiltration.

We have seen that the settlements were designed to open up communications between San Fernando and the south and east coasts, but Woodford's imaginative project was never completed. The governor had worked hard to assist and encourage the settlements, pressing the Treasury, through Bathurst, for shoes (to which they had become accustomed in America and in the army), for domestic animals, fowling pieces, garden seeds, beads(?) and clothes (of which Woodford thought they were fond), and had offered incentives for the greatest amount of produce brought to market.²⁹ He had battled with the Treasury, which from 1818 wanted to stop all further government funding of the settlements, to obtain the necessary tools, and to secure the superintendent in his salary.³⁰ Mitchell, as we have seen, had supervised the settlement efficiently. But the successors of both governor and superintendent were lesser men. Official interest in the villages slackened, and the development which might have made the area even more prosperous never came about. No specific policy of growth and development emerged.³¹ Sir Lewis Grant, Woodford's successor, was said to have little energy, and his government of the colony to have been barren of measures to cause it to progress.³² Grant certainly appears as a weak man. He discovered that Mitchell's successor as the superintendent of the settlements, who was also Mitchell's son, had exercised "a great degree of oppression" over the villagers, which "had considerably disgusted them". Mitchell junior

had called on the settlers to work on his own plantation, and "if they received wages at all, they were paid at a low rate and in 'Truck', charged at an exorbitant price." Other planters used the same practice, and every obstacle was placed in the way of the refugees improving their lot by other means. Instead of dealing with this abuse of power, Grant merely brought it to the attention of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Goderich, with the suggestion that the Superintendent should be dismissed with one year's salary as a gratuity, or about £365. Goderich rightly took a sterner view, approving Mitchell's dismissal but without the gratuity, unless he could vindicate himself, which he was to be given a chance to do.³³

Without proper supervision by government, it appears that from 1831 onwards the lands tended to fall out of use.³⁴ The isolation was made the more complete by a failure to build roads linking the villages to the rest of the island. The militant independence of the villages was expressed in their early refusal to pay taxes and donate labour for a road building scheme.³⁵ Before 1839 the Commandant of the area was responsible for road building and maintenance, and the duty was performed by the free inhabitants from whom a specified number of days' labour was exacted on a quota basis. The Americans could not be prevailed upon to assist in this; they could not see the advantage of the plan for the development of the area. Not until 1854, when the road system was taken over by the Public Works Department, and the men were able to get remunerative employment on road-making, was the difficulty removed.³⁶ Without roads to get produce to market there was no incentive to produce a surplus.³⁷ To the end of the period the area remained a rather isolated backwater in Trinidad, the lack of roads being reinforced by the cultural barriers between the English-speaking Protestant villages and the French-speaking Catholic or non-Christian island.

If isolation did not help the churches, neither did ignorance. The communities were largely illiterate, and this included the

pastors of the churches for the most part. These pastors were elected by the villagers. They were untutored men, but "it was generally believed that the highest knowledge was achieved through spiritual enlightenment, or 'education at the cross'."³⁸ That the formation of a pastor is more than a merely intellectual or technical matter is a truth few would deny, and the notion of 'education at the cross' shows a certain insight. There was also merit in the practice of drawing pastors from among the local congregations where they were known, and among whom they continued to work in ordinary secular tasks while serving their churches. This is still the usual, though not quite invariable, practice in Trinidad. A major difficulty, however, was the fact that most pastors were unable to read the source book of their religion, the Bible. Their teaching was thus limited. It would not be surprising if the pastors, and the churches, found it hard to distinguish the authentically Christian from the undoubtedly pagan. The danger of a syncretistic form of religion must have been real under those conditions.

Pastors were not chosen for their knowledge of Christian religion, or their skills in applying it. They were chosen in the following way:

"As the tradition surrounding the selection of pastors developed, when a pastor was to be chosen, meetings were held nightly, during which potential candidates were given the opportunity to 'set the church to pray'. Simultaneously members of the congregation submitted their dreams for and against the candidate to the elders. On the basis of the interpretation of submitted dreams, and the performances of the candidates, one was determined to have been 'called by the Lord', and was in turn called by the congregation. The male heir selected by the pastor invariably had the training and reputation desired by the congregation, and as a rule received the call."³⁹

The prominence of dreams here cannot be missed. It is not the normal method of electing a pastor in Baptist churches and probably represents an African survival. The method of preparation for office, if Stewart is right, must have been a sort of

apprenticeship, a man being elected to office in the place of the previous pastor who had trained him. No doubt this tended to perpetuate a certain tradition from generation to generation. At Third Company the first pastor gave the land upon which his church was built, and eventually his son inherited his position. It was not of course necessary for a pastor of the later generation to have donated land for his church in order to succeed. The inheritance of a church by a son or close male offspring came to be accepted practice, though such inheritance had to be ratified by the congregation.⁴⁰ It is not, however, a practice one can commend as most conducive to a healthy church life.

Infiltration was the third factor in bringing the village churches to a low level in the generation before the missionaries found them. The African women who had been sent to the area by government⁴¹ from slave ships to marry the settlers must have brought in pagan influences. As the area was increasingly opened up, squatter communities of runaway slaves or liberated Africans mixed with the original communities. In Fifth Company a group of Mandingo Africans settled; they are still remembered locally in the name Mandingo Road. These incomers must have diluted the culture of the villages. Miss Vincent specifically says that such was the impact of the Mandingoes on Fifth Company. Elements of African life began to predominate among the ex-slaves, and to interact with what she rather oddly calls "the already established Episcopalian (sic) Baptist religion".⁴²

The first occasion on which we have a missionary's report on the settlements comes from late 1842 or early 1843. That report tells of the first personal contact by George Cowen, the pioneer Baptist missionary in Trinidad, with the area:

"A week or two since, I made a tour through a part of the colony I had not before visited, in company with a minister from America, and stayed some time with a few settlements of individuals from that country, imported here during the American War, whom we found in a state of great spiritual destitution. I was pleased, however, to find not a few of them favourably disposed to our communion, from their previous connection with churches or congregations in their native

land; and a few I met, who continue to unite in public worship, such as reading the scriptures and prayer. When I stated it as probable that a missionary would shortly be located in the colony, they seemed rejoiced and took courage.

Since my arrival in the colony, I have been assisting them a little, though at a distance, by counselling them through deputations sent to me from time to time, but never before had the pleasure of visiting them in their own homes, till the occasion referred to.

At my suggestion, some months since, they commenced a small chapel, which I found somewhat advanced, and which I encouraged them to complete as soon as possible."⁴³

Cowen was then the Mico Trust schoolmaster in Trinidad, and was about to be appointed a missionary. He had apparently made contact with some of the villagers who had come up to Port of Spain for work, and had been advising them informally on church life. He did not seem to think they had organized churches at all, and indeed, a few months later Cowen referred to the body he had formed in Port of Spain from a "few members of Baptist churches from America, and one from Sierra Leone", as "the first Baptist church in Trinidad".⁴⁴ He could scarcely have reported the event in this way unless he had believed that the Company Villages still lacked organized churches. The note that he had met only a few who met for reading and prayer - no mention of preaching - suggests a state of disarray among the settlement churches. So, too, does the fact that Cowen had had to advise the villagers, after nearly 30 years in the island, to begin the building of a chapel. Cowen's view, on his first visit to the area, was that the churches were suffering "great spiritual destitution". There seems no reason to dispute that impression.

On the other hand, we must remember that leaders like William Hamilton were still alive and working in the villages. There is evidence that even in decline the fires of revivalism had not gone out entirely.

J.M. Phillippo, the Jamaica Baptist Missionary who inspected the island on behalf of the BMS, found a welcome among the people, many

of whom "were prepossessed in favour of our denomination" and implored that missionaries of "their own society" might be sent among them. They were too poor to support a minister at that time, but Phillippo thought that a missionary presence would encourage them to support their own pastors and so diminish the need for BMS support. Some had already given land for the erection of places of worship and other necessary buildings for a missionary establishment; others had pledged labour and materials for such buildings. Phillippo reported:

We (Cowen and himself) held several meetings in the neighbourhood during our stay, and I was peculiarly gratified with the neat appearance and orderly deportment of all who attended them, nor less so, with the simple enthusiasm which these services soon began to awaken in their bosoms, proving that, like their brethren in Jamaica, there was a chord of their hearts which, if once struck, would vibrate with equal facility and animation".⁴⁵

It is at least suggestive that an experienced missionary from Jamaica could see parallels between the black Baptists of Trinidad, and those he had worked with in Jamaica. If, as we have argued, the Baptist movement in these islands came from a common source in the American revivals, the comparison is natural.

It was a question, however, whether the churches under missionary influence could recover their original zeal and effectiveness, or would remain in the retarded state in which Cowen had discovered them. In the following chapters, we must explore the effect of the partnership which from 1843 grew up between the churches and the Baptist Missionary Society.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Two missionaries, W H Gamble and William Williams, wrote books on Trinidad, and the Baptist Missionary Society Secretary, E B Underhill, wrote an account of the island following his tour of the West Indies in 1859. Surviving missionary letters are few, but many more are printed, at least in part, in BM/MH. The two pamphlets of L O Inniss, whose father had been a catechist and schoolmaster in the Company Villages, are invaluable: they are the nearest it is possible to come to contemporary local sources. Even these reflect the missionary viewpoint. The paper by John Stewart, a native of the area as well as a professional anthropologist, comes nearer to a local understanding, but while illuminating on many matters is neither contemporary or a work of history. All these sources are listed appropriately in the Bibliography.
2. W H Gamble, Trinidad Historical and Descriptive (San Fernando 1865), p.113. There is nothing on William Hamilton in the Marines' archives.
3. John Stewart, Mission and Leadership Among the 'Merikin' Baptists of Trinidad, (Paper presented to the 74th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, December 5th, 1975, San Francisco),p.21
4. K O Lawrence, The Settlement of Free Negroes in Trinidad Before Emancipation, CQ Vol.9.(1963) No.1.,pp.36-37
5. BM/MH Vol.XXXV, November 1844,p.586 (Extract from Phillippo's Report).
6. BM/MH Vol.XXXVI, May 1845,p.74; Ibid., Vol.XXXIX,May 1848, p.319. Silverthorne may also have been a Marine, or related to one: the name Joseph Silverthorne appears on the List of Marines in Hospital at Savanna Grande, submitted by Mitchell: see T1/4323Part 1, List No.1,1 July 1817. The name still exists among Trinidad Baptists.
7. BM/MH Vol. XXXIX, , March 1848,p.185, Cowen to BMS Secretary, n.d., but before his departure for Trinidad, 17 February 1848. The information comes from a letter to Cowen from his colleague John Law, and was passed on to the Society by Cowen.
8. Stewart, Mission and Leadership... p.9
9. E B Underhill, The West Indies:Their Social and Religious Condition (London 1862; also Connecticut, Negro Universities' Press 1970). p.59.
10. Stewart, Mission and Leadership...p.9
11. Ibid.,pp.9-10

12. Ibid.,p.9
13. Ibid.,p.10
14. Ibid.,p.10
15. Ibid.,p.8
16. Ibid.,p.12
17. Donald Wood, Trinidad in Transition(OUP, London 1968),pp.38-39.
18. Stewart, Mission and Leadership...pp.11-12.
19. K O Lawrence, The Settlement of Free Negroes...CQ Vol.9 (1963) No.1.,pp.36-37
20. BM/MH Vol.XXXV, November 1844,p.586 (Extract from Phillippo's Report).
21. Wood, Trinidad in Transition...p.38
22. Ibid.,p.38. I regret that it has not been possible to use newspaper sources for this study.
23. Stewart, Mission and Leadership...p.9.
24. Ibid.,p.11
25. Ibid.,p.21, n.1.
26. A R Salthouse, Indigenous Worship: A Cultural Approach To Worship, Applied To The Commonwealth Caribbean (Ph.D., Birmingham 1972-3), pp. 252-253.
27. J H Poole, The Baptist Church In Trinidad: An Historical Sketch(in BMS archives, typescript), p.2.
28. Ibid.,p.1
29. T1/4323 Part 1, Woodford to Bathurst, 31 July 1817, Extract enclosed in Goulburn to Harrison, 31 October 1817.
30. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration in Trinidad 1783-1833 (Ph.D., Cambridge 1970-1),pp. 248-249, sums up the financial aspect of the settlements. The chief source is T1/4323 Parts 1 and 2, which I have used extensively but not exhaustively.
31. D Vincent, Origin and Development of the Company Villages in South Trinidad (undergraduate dissertation, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad, 1976),p.25.
32. J K Chapman, Career of Arthur Hamilton Gordon, 1st Lord Stanmore, To 1875 (Ph.D.,London 1954),pp. 86-87.

33. For Grant's handling of the affair, and Goderich's decision, T1/4323, Part 2, Grant to Howick, 26 August 1831; Goderich to Sir Charles Smith, 1 October 1831; Howick to Grant, 6 September 1831, enclosed in Goderich to Grant, 1 October 1831.
34. Goodridge, Land, Labour, and Immigration...p.242, citing CO 295/152, Harris to Grey 18 November 1846/94.
35. Stewart, Mission and Leadership...p8.
36. Vincent, Origin and Development...p.21
37. Ibid.,pp.28-30.
38. Stewart, Mission and Leadership...p.11.
39. Ibid.,p.11.
40. Ibid.,p.11.
41. T1/4323, Part 2, Young to Harrison, 19 April 1821; Mitchell to Woodford, 5 August 1817; and Chapter Two above.
42. Vincent, Origin and Development...pp.26-27.
43. BM/MH Vol. XXXIV, March 1843, p.173, Cowen's letter, n.d.
44. BM/MH Vol. XXXIV, June 1843, p.498, Cowen to BMS Secretary, 15 June 1843.
45. BM/MH Vol. XXXV, November 1844, pp.586-587 (Phillippo's Report).

CHAPTER FOUR

PIONEER MISSIONARY: GEORGE COWEN

At this low point, a new influence entered the life of the Company Village churches. The Baptist Missionary Society began work in Trinidad, not as the result of any overall missionary strategy but because of the urging of concerned individuals who perceived the need.

One of these concerned people was a certain Mrs Revell, who had been baptized in London by Dr John Rippon and then emigrated, with her husband, first to Nova Scotia, and later (about 1825), to Port of Spain. Mrs Revell, even when widowed, remained in business, and made many trips to London. There she used to visit the headquarters of the BMS in Moorgate Street to plead that missionary personnel be sent to Trinidad.¹

Another who saw the need of Trinidad was George Sherman Cowen, an English Baptist who was in Trinidad as the agent of the Mico Charity Schools. The Mico Charity was one of a number of bodies which received government money for the then briefly popular cause of negro education. Between 1835 and 1845 the British Parliament gave a grant from public funds as the Negro Education Grant, to be spent on erecting schoolhouses in the colonies and settlements, and to set up Normal Schools for the instruction of teachers. The object was to prepare the recently-emancipated slaves for freedom, giving them the skills, qualities, and virtues for emancipation, and to turn them into a "grateful peasantry".² The amount was not large, £25,000 for all the colonies in the first year, 1835; but then this was only one year after the first grant from public money for education in Britain.³ The grant was distributed among various missionary societies and other charities, which were the only bodies already providing education for the negroes. This seemed sensible; as Grey observed, there was no point in beginning an entirely new school system without obtaining assistance from the missionaries. An inspectorate was to oversee the use made by the societies of the grant.⁴ Among the recipients were the Society for the

Propagation of the Gospel (SPG); the Church Missionary Society (CMS); the Wesleyan Missionary Society; the Moravians; the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS); the Ladies' Negro Society; the London Missionary Society (LMS); the Scottish Missionary Society; the Mico Charity; and the Governors of the Bahamas, Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad. The grant covered two-thirds of the cost of the schools, the remaining one-third being borne by the Society concerned. In 1835 the Mico Charity was given £4,580; in 1836 it received £4,000.⁵

The complications which arose from this method of administration need not detain us here. It is enough to say that it led to an outbreak of sectarian spirit among the missionary societies, which found their budgets severely strained by the effort of providing their share of the costs, and their conscience in some cases equally strained by the fear of government interference in their internal affairs. In any case the money was at no stage administered efficiently - the government was not really interested in negro education - and there was never nearly enough money to provide a realistic education for all the colonies.⁶

It is the Mico Charity in Trinidad which is our concern. The Mico Charity originated in 1670 with the will of a certain Lady Jane Mico, who left a bequest by which (other conditions not being fulfilled), Christian slaves might be ransomed from the Barbary pirates. When there were no longer such slaves to ransom, the money was invested for over 150 years, and by 1835 had accumulated to £115,290.15.8. The Trustees then applied to Chancery for power to apply the dividends, rents, and profits to the objects set out in the will of Lady Mico. On the suggestion of Thomas Buxton, the Master of the Rolls made the charity applicable to the "Religious and Moral Instruction of the Negro and Coloured Population of the British Colonies" in the West Indies. Though the Secretary of the Trustees wished the money to be used specifically for the children of the apprentices, the Mico Schools in Trinidad were so popular, as being religious but with no specific denominational tenets, that children of free parents were in a large majority over apprentices.⁷

The Mico Trust had the special value in the West Indies that it was able to reach those Catholic children who would not have been allowed to attend the Anglican or other schools established by the Negro Education Fund. Due to its non-denominational character it received, between 1838 and 1841, more than 50% of the Fund. It operated first in Jamaica (1835), then Trinidad (1837), St. Vincent, St. Lucia, and Grenada (1839), and Dominica (1839). It was not accidental that all these islands, except Jamaica, were Catholic. The Mico Trust had its own textbooks, but used the Bible as its basic reference. Its method was to correlate the teaching of reading with Bible learning: hence such sentences as, "A high look, and a proud heart, is sin".⁸

The denominations represented in Trinidad were all warmly in favour of the Mico Schools, of which there were three in Port of Spain, and one in Canaan.⁹ The Governor, Grant, conveyed the popular approval to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg. David Evans, Chaplain to the Forces, thought that no better system could have been devised for the colony. Mr Kennedy of the Scotch Church, who was headmaster of the Cabildo School, was reported to "hail with joy the establishment of schools on the broad basis of Christianity, without reference to religious creed". The senior Wesleyan minister, the Rev George Beard, commended the system for excluding the particular tenets of the denominations, while giving "a decided preference to the Holy Scriptures"; this, he thought, was "especially suited to the strongly mixed population of this island".¹⁰

It is noteworthy that all the Dissenting groups favoured non-denominational schools, with no sectarian leanings, just as later they supported the essentially secular Harris schools, run by government but unpopular with the Catholic majority for that reason. The special contribution of the Mico Schools was their demonstration that schools could be run without the involvement of the churches as such. The Mico Trust was flexible: it operated Day Schools, Sunday Schools, Evening Schools, and an Infants'

School, often using the same teachers.

In addition, there was a Normal School, a Training College in embryo, and since the quality of the teaching depends on the skill of the teacher, this was a useful pointer to the future.¹¹

The impetus to education given by the Negro Education Grant did not last, and the Parliamentary funds ceased in 1845. The colonies were left to fill the financial gap. In Trinidad, the Church and School Committee considered all requests for grants. It accepted churches, but the Mico Charity application was turned down. British West Indian Governments were no longer interested in non-denominational educational agencies, and the home government, when applied to, was firm in its decision not to aid negro education. The Mico Trust had no choice but to close down all its West Indian schools, except a Training College in Jamaica; its buildings were put up for sale.¹² Colonial government had trouble with raising money for schools. It had equal trouble with deciding between a state-based system or a dual system of state and church schools. The Colonial Office favoured the dual system; but Trinidad experience revealed that inter-church rivalry neutralized attempts to provide an efficient school service. In the long run the dual system was the only one which could be made to work in multiracial, multilingual, and multiconfessional Trinidad. The success of the Mico Schools was an encouragement to Lord Harris when, in 1851, he sought to adopt a government-run system; but Catholic power in the island was too strong for him in the end.¹³

The closure of the Mico Schools may have been a misfortune for Trinidad, but it put Cowen out of a job and made him available to the BMS as a missionary schoolmaster. He was also able to secure the Mico premises in Trinidad for BMS use at a low cost. It so happened, too, that 1842 was the Jubilee Year of the Society, and a series of special meetings and special collections marked the event. This money was available for the extension of the mission; and a Resolution of the Society's Central Committee directed that

the Jubilee Fund thus created should be used "to relieve the embarrassments" of the BMS, and to be applied to its direct objects "in such a manner as shall not augment its annual expenditure", that is, in the purchase or erection of chapels and other premises for preaching the gospel, conducting schools, preparing native converts for evangelical labour, and in the temporary and extraordinary expenses of exploring and occupying new fields of labour. The Fund was also to be used for new mission premises in London. The Resolution pointed out that objects appropriate to this plan were pressing both in the East, and in the West Indies, and in Africa.¹⁴ In fact the Jubilee Fund provided mission premises for Trinidad at a cost of £1,220.¹⁵

Cowen has a place in the history of the BMS as the pioneer missionary in Trinidad but he also has a context in secular history, as being related to the "Humanitarian Movement", which "aimed at reforms in all spheres of life".¹⁶ The Negro Education Grant was a part of this movement, though a short-lived part; and Cowen had come to Trinidad in 1836 as a Supervisor of Schools and Principal of the Training College for Teachers.¹⁷

As a missionary he continued to be "a great believer in educational work in his mission", and he "founded a good many schools which today are among the best schools of the colony".¹⁸ Cowen, in fact, was in the tradition of the great Jamaica missionaries who had fought against slavery, provided schools, and involved themselves after Emancipation in the Free Villages movement.¹⁹ This seems to have been quite conscious on his part. On hearing of the death of the best-known of the Jamaica missionaries, William Knibb, in November 1845, Cowen wrote:

"...May we here have grace to pursue a like independent course as circumstances shall require, till our work be done, and we be called home as faithful servants of the trust committed to us"²⁰

In view of the frequent temptation to sunder the evangelical elements from the social and radical, it is worth noting that in

the tradition of mission as understood in the West Indies, the two went together. Cowen's career exemplifies the fact.

About 1841, Cowen, "anxious to preach the gospel to those who were ready to perish", as well as teach them, communicated with the BMS on the need of a mission in Trinidad. The Committee of the Society, having made all necessary enquiries, accepted Cowen himself as a missionary, to be located in Port of Spain.²¹ It appears that Cowen's pleas had for a while gone unheeded because of "certain agreements entered into with the Wesleyan Missionary Society"; but his "persistence in presenting the claims of these people (the Company Villagers) upon English Baptists at length induced the Committee to appoint him as missionary to Trinidad".²² The nature of these agreements is unclear, but presumably some kind of arrangement was in view whereby the two Societies avoided encroachment on each others' territories. Since relationships between the evangelical missions in Trinidad were uniformly cordial, the agreements must have been mutually cancelled, probably because Cowen had been able to show that there were Baptist groups in the island who would not have accepted help from Methodist missionaries.

The Methodists had begun their mission in Trinidad as long ago as 1809, but from the beginning faced opposition from the authorities, stimulated by ill-will from the overwhelmingly strong Catholic Church. Most of their converts were immigrants from other islands.²³ Woodford considered Methodism subversive and tried to get the missionaries removed from the island. He thought the pastoral needs of planters and negroes adequately met by the old-established Catholic Church, which had the allegiance of the vast majority of the people. In 1818 Woodford forbade allusion to the tenets of "the established Churches of England and Rome", and sought to get two Methodist missionaries, who had already made such allusions, to sign a declaration that they would not do so. One refused, and at this Woodford asked Bathurst to take action.²⁴

The London Missionary Society, mainly Congregationalist, had also attempted to establish a mission in Trinidad from 1809, with the arrival of Mr Adam, who had been welcomed by both white and coloured people, and was planning to build a large chapel in Port of Spain.²⁵ By 1825 "the antagonism of the local authorities to Nonconformists led...to the discontinuance of the enterprise".²⁶ There was, however, a mission of Presbyterians (Scotch Secession Church) to form a third mission along with the Methodists and Baptists when Cowen was appointed. These small Dissenting groups were close to one another doubtless in part because of a feeling of being outsiders in an island dominated by Catholicism and Anglicanism.

These two churches were effectively an establishment. Their clergy were paid by the colony. Woodford had inherited from his Spanish predecessors the title of Vice-Patron of the Holy Roman Church in Trinidad, and this was no empty honour. Roman clergy were paid by the colony, and the Governor confirmed all appointments. Anglican clergy also received pay from the state. Thus in 1826, for instance, the Ecclesiastical Establishment, salaries to clergy of the Protestant and Catholic churches, amounted to £1,346-11-8d.²⁷ The bonds between the Dissenting groups who were excluded from the system were therefore understandably strong. Cowen was welcomed as an ally by the small evangelical missionary force, which amounted to three agents of the Wesleyan Society, and two connected with the 'Scotch Secession Church'; apart from these, Cowen reported, "the most awful destitution and spiritual ignorance prevail".²⁸ But Phillippo, the Jamaica Baptist missionary who made an inspection for the Society of the new field, made a special point of "the brotherly feeling expressed by the three or four missionaries of other societies already in the island". At a farewell meeting held for him the Rev Mr Kennedy of the 'Scotch Secession Church' publicly hoped that many Baptist labourers might be sent from Jamaica "to diffuse their spirit into the dormant mass of the island". Kennedy even thought that "this will be the most effectual means of evangelizing the West India islands, as

well as South America".²⁹

Thus, within the first year of the new mission, the Society's representative, Phillippo, had perceived the possibility of using Jamaica as a mission base for the West Indies, and using Trinidad as a base for mission on the South American mainland, both strategies which made good sense. Cowen certainly did not forget the latter possibility. In 1846 he was writing to London about using English emigrants, on their way to settle in Venezuela, to spread the gospel. These people came sponsored by the Tropical Emigration Society, the object of which was to settle several areas in Venezuela with Europeans and others. About 60 had arrived in Trinidad on their way there, to take possession of lands already purchased, and to make preparation for a still larger number ready to leave Britain for ever. About 3,000 such were enrolled with the Emigration Society for this purpose, most of whom would come out to the New World. Cowen and his wife had helped some of them, and they were duly grateful, even though some of them were indifferent, even hostile, to religion. Cowen thought them a mission in themselves, but the chance they might carry the message into South America made them a possible 'stepping stone' to 'future and greater advances on that continent'.³⁰ Cowen had the eye of a mission strategist; but what the BMS thought of the plan is not known.

When Cowen looked to his immediate task, he showed that he was under no illusions. In his first letter after appointment he sent a map showing localities in which 'the gospel was not purely preached'; remarked that there were no facilities on the island; and that 'no encouragement can be offered'. His immediate concern was to provide a place for preaching, for which he asked BMS help: "the people here are so superstitious as to conceive worship cannot be properly carried on except in a place devoted entirely to that purpose". He then planned to visit the French inhabitants, to read "the word of life to them in their own tongue as well as he can", for "as yet he does not speak French well enough to preach in it". Finally, he proposed to begin a school, which he considered "of

vast importance to this community".³¹

Cowen, however, was in a succession of missionaries who acknowledged other resources than finance, linguistic skills, and educational facilities. As he took stock of his new commission, he wrote:

"...I earnestly trust the arrangement entered into has, and may continue to have, the special blessing of the God of missions, without whose approbation nothing that we may do can prove successful. When I reflect upon the magnitude of the work before me, I feel almost constrained to exclaim that I am altogether unequal to the right performance of it. While I remain unmoved in my original purpose of devoting all my remaining energies to Him who has called me to be His soldier, yea, and of consecrating every member of my offspring, as far as I can, to His service - yet I have experienced a greater sense of my own entire weakness, and unfitness, for the duties to which you have been pleased to call me, since the receipt of your communication, than I ever before remember. But I would not forget the ample supplies treasured up for the weak, in the great Captain of our salvation...When I reflect upon the all sufficiency of rich grace and love when influencing the heart, for the most arduous and trying undertaking, I cannot but take courage and go forward. The basest vessels are fit for the Master's service when they contain his heavenly treasure.....Allow me to entreat your special remembrance of our cause in Trinidad at the throne of grace..."³²

It must be said that Cowen lived up to his promise, in this same letter, to 'endure hardness'. He was also capable of taking a long-term view of his task, and of not expecting immediate results. He anticipated that his labours "may be like bread upon the waters, producing no fruit for many days", and spoke of his "faithful, untiring, humble labours" as just "sowing the seed of the kingdom".³³ In this anticipation he was prophetic; but if the mission in Trinidad never produced the results of that in Jamaica the fault was certainly not Cowen's.

His first move was the foundation of a church in Port of Spain, but the story of the Port of Spain Church lies outside our scope. Cowen did not stay long in the capital. When John Law came out in 1845 to take charge in Port of Spain, Cowen was released for

work in the Company Villages, which "he regarded as his special call".³⁴ We have seen how Cowen had been advising the villagers for a while, and how Phillippo had thought they would be amenable to receiving a missionary. It does seem that with all the obstacles he encountered, Cowen did gain a certain co-operation from the people. He seems to have won support for a simple chapel-building programme. His successor tells us that he got the land and assisted with what money was necessary. The people cheerfully gave labour to fell the trees and saw them into boards. The chapels were normally about 40 feet by 20 feet, built of soft but durable cedar, thatched with leaves of the carat-palm.

"The woods furnished everything but nails and labour, the people gave the latter, and the missionary provided the former."³⁵

Chapels were erected at Sherring Ville (1846) and Mount Elvin (1849), and in 1850 Cowen was soliciting funds for a third in a place unnamed, where he had a few Baptist members but no building. He had struggled to find finance for the first two, but could not manage this one without borrowing money. Cowen therefore asked for gifts of £100 towards the establishment of yet another bare, unadorned room. The giver of such a sum "shall have the place as a monument to his name and noble nature". Wherever it was, the new chapel was said to be more thickly populated and more important than the first areas, and a dozen members on the spot had promised all the help they could give in the way of labour. To go ahead with building now would save £50 on the projected cost of the work in two or three years' time.³⁶

But the building programme was the easy side of the task. Cowen found the lack of local pastoral leadership a serious handicap. Like the BMS in general, he was aware of the need of 'native agency', knowing that it was impossible for Britain to supply enough pastors to serve all the overseas churches. The Society, wrote Cowen, wanted 'native agency' wherever possible, and so did he - "if of the right stamp". Cowen here was pleading with the Society

to give the necessary support to a young man who had come over from Demerara as a teacher, at his request, so that he could bring his family over and stay as an assistant missionary. The man had revived the little school at Montserrat, and even improved it; and had preached every Sunday at one or other of the stations. Cowen thought him

"a man of considerable mind and practical turn, sound in the truth",

and one who had respectable preaching abilities. He was

"the first native I have met since my residence in Trinidad for whom I would venture to say so much",

and

"altogether superior to any I have met in point of general intelligence, good sound Christian knowledge and experience, common practical sense, and deep humility"

- a virtue Cowen thought was rare in the natives. The young man wanted to be permanently identified with the Society and felt his services could be of use. Cowen thought him as efficient as any missionary the BMS could send out, and said that £50-£60 a year would be enough to secure his services, about £30 more from the Society on top of what the local mission could find him from the Friends' grant. Without such support the man would not be able to bring over his wife and children from Demerara. Yet Cowen was urgent for help: he needed an assistant to help "counteract the ignorant black men" of the area who were "scripturally ignorant". This indicates pretty clearly that Cowen was not impressed with the Company Village pastors and preachers. Unfortunately the Society was unable to supply any funds; they put Cowen's letter of appeal in print in the hope that the need would attract private gifts to help maintain the teacher.³⁷

The pastor of the Company Villages did not change much throughout the century. We have seen that such pastors were local men, chosen by their churches, with no training or educational advantages. In 1904, L O Inniss, a local man himself, brought up in the Villages,

whose father had been a catechist and schoolmaster under Cowen, described the system in this way:

"The different churches choose their pastors by the majority of votes, and generally consider a powerful voice as the chief requisite in such an official. A fountain can never rise above its source, and those pastors, though no doubt earnest after their own lights, were like the great bulk of people, illiterate and uneducated, so it is no wonder that the moral and religious life of the people was not of a very high order".³⁸

Inniss may here have been echoing, consciously or unconsciously, the words of W H Gamble, Cowen's successor in the South:

"...religion was attended to under the guidance of some of their own number who had been preachers in America. The stream cannot rise above the level of its source; nor could the people be much benefited by those who knew no different from themselves; hence, matters remained as at first, though years were rolling on, and the children were growing up and taking the places of their fathers".³⁹

It was a constant problem to the missionary, but by no means all the pastors were bad. William Hamilton was still alive, as has been seen, and Gamble had approved of him, with some qualifications.⁴⁰ The outstanding native leader, whose long life virtually spanned the whole missionary era in the 19th century, was Charles Webb. Of him Inniss wrote:

"Good old Pastor Webb celebrated his jubilee of the pastorate of that church (Fourth Company) on 12th October 1902. He was converted under the ministry of Mr Cowen, and was appointed to the pastorate of Fourth Company Church by Rev John Law, in 1852. The membership was then only three, but at the time of his jubilee it was 133. During the illness of Mr Gammon in 1901 Mr Chas. Webb was appointed Acting Superintendent of the Southern Churches, a position he filled with honour to himself, and to the great satisfaction of his brethen. He died, much regretted by all who knew him, on August 12th, 1903, at the ripe age of 78 years. 'He died as he lived, simply, triumphantly, invoking the Divine blessing upon his family and the few friends who were with him to bid him goodbye, as he set out hastily to meet his Friend'".⁴¹

This account shows that there was nothing inherently impossible about recruiting and training a native pastorate which was both

effective and acceptable. If Cowen had done nothing else he had set in motion a long ministry which built up the Fourth Company Church to a very respectable size and stability. When the BMS Secretary, E B Underhill, visited the area in 1859, he reported that Webb was "a most worthy man", better educated than most of his class; and that "his people appear to love and esteem him". He had better support than most pastors; the Sunday collection in 1859 amounted to about two dollars, or 8s.4d., a month, to which was added a small amount from the Society, and the produce of a plot of land.⁴² Webb was also the village schoolmaster, and in the Baptist School taught the Bible every day, "thus supporting the Sabbath-school". The fee for this was only 5 cents per child per week, but the salary was made up by gifts from friends in the Quarter and in Port of Spain.⁴³ The missionaries from Cowen onward trusted and respected Webb, as did his congregation, and in 1894 the BMS Western Committee felt able to recommend that he should take over the tasks until then reserved for the missionary, such as baptizing and marrying in the villages.⁴⁴ John Bailey, representing the BMS in Trinidad in 1892, was obviously much disappointed in what he saw but could say of Fourth Company that he found "more intelligence and earnestness here than anywhere else", and of Charles Webb that he was "the most dignified and worthy man of all"⁴⁵. This description exactly fits the impression made by Webb's photograph, which still hangs in the vestry of Fourth Company Church; and it is perhaps worth mentioning that Charles Webb's grandson, the late Mr W F Webb, also a teacher, was likewise much esteemed by missionaries and local people. He served as secretary of the Baptist Union of Trinidad and Tobago. Thus the work done by Cowen was passed on through three generations. Nor was Webb the only useful native worker whom Cowen helped. Mr Proctor, who preached to a 'good attendance' at the Mission (Princes Town), along with William Hamilton and another not named, was another. Cowen wrote that he was "an intelligent and valuable man, whom I baptized a little before I left Trinidad".⁴⁶ When Underhill visited San Fernando in 1859 he found this 'old servant of the Society' living there, and listened to his arguments for

starting a Baptist church in the town.⁴⁷

Cowen therefore did have moments of encouragement. He found that his chapel at Sherring Ville began to prosper, in contrast to "the gloomy prospects at the commencement and for many a day afterwards"; but he warned that the slightest hint of instability in the mission would be

"a sad blow to us at this critical time, just as we are recovering from a feeling bordering on something like despair, at all events of great anxiety of heart".⁴⁸

His work was extremely arduous, involving long hours of travel "through" rather than "over" the deep mud of the wet season;

"the gospel made slow progress, and many customs and practices were rife among the people, which needed to be changed into others more consistent with the religion of Jesus".⁴⁹

From his Mission House in the Manahambre Road just west of the Mission (Princes Town), he ceaselessly visited the villages⁵⁰ and supervised the establishment of schools. Preaching stations were set up at Mount Elvin, Woodlands, Sherring Ville, Indian Walk, and Mount Hopeful, the name of Cowen's own residence.⁵¹

The level of village life was not high. It is recorded that

"camp meetings were very popular at that time, but Mr Cowen found that they were often an occasion for much disorder and drunkenness, and he was much against them".⁵²

The camp meeting, invention of the American revival, had, it seems, degenerated into mere frenzy. The same was true of the funeral customs which Cowen encountered:

"The quiet of the whole neighbourhood is sure to be disturbed where a death takes place. The people flock from all quarters to wake the corpse that most likely died from the most cruel and barbarous indifference and neglect when suffering from sickness. They seize upon such occasions with savage joy, in order to have a night of drinking and debauchery. On such occasions it is no uncommon thing to see the parents drunk while the child lies dead, and the same with the other relations of life".⁵³

That neglect of the sick and dying was not unknown is illustrated in Cowen's account of the death of an aged former slave, a member of the church at Mount Hopeful, named 'Old Daniel'. Wholly dependent on others in old age, he received little enough from his fellow-villagers, to Cowen's great indignation:

"I must say... that neither his own colour or his own country manifested much desire to sympathize with, or help this poor destitute creature".

Daniel, in his last illness, was forced to live in a 'poor miserable hut' near Cowen's own home. Each day he called at the missionary's home and was supplied by his wife with food and spiritual help; when he could no longer come, Cowen's children would visit him 'on errands of kindness'. Inevitably the day came when Cowen found old Daniel totally unable to move from the board on which he had been laid at the door of the hut, with swarms of flies on him which he was unable to remove. There were scores of 'lazy, worthless idlers' around, possessed of insufficient humanity to sit by him; but, said Cowen, they 'would flock to his wake if he were dead'. Cowen paid a small boy a 'bit', or 5d., to keep the flies off Daniel, but, going back later, found the old man deserted, and the whole household, including the boy, laughing with 'total indifference to the sufferings of poor Daniel, who lay dying under the same roof, like a dog, on the earth floor'. When Cowen asked for their help, in the name of religion and humanity, they 'plainly declared, one and all, especially the elder ones, that they would do nothing, that he might lie there and die, as he was fit for nothing'. Cowen was disgusted, but did manage to find some men to carry Daniel in a hammock to the Mission House. No one could be persuaded to sit up at night with the old man - "though if they expected a wake, and rum to drink, any number might be obtained". Cowen and his wife sat up with him for the first part of the night, and were relieved by Mr Bath, the schoolmaster, for the rest of the night. Daniel died the next day, and Cowen wished that his own end (in a sense) might be like his.⁵⁴

We must be careful in reading such accounts not to draw exaggerated

conclusions about the nature of society in the Company Villages. People were not necessarily lacking in compassion. The household in which Daniel lived was clearly not admirable, but they were plainly not church members. Had they been, Cowen would have said so, and we should have heard of church discipline being applied. The area was gradually filling up with squatters and casual settlers, and among these we should expect to find some disreputable people. Cowen was probably right to call attention to the evils attending wakes. The custom of wakes is part of the Afro-Caribbean culture described by Salthouse. It is a general custom of the lower-class Trinidad family, not especially connected to the groups like the Spiritual Baptists. The wake consists of prayers, preaching, reading of Psalms and the Bible generally, and singing. Lighted candles are essential to the ceremony. The offering of food for the spirit of the dead is a special feature. Some believe that the spirit may come back later unless dismissed, and so the spirit is sent away at 12 o'clock, or this may be done at the funeral. The words of dismissal are said by Salthouse to run roughly as follows:

"You are committed to the earth. Dust to dust, ashes to ashes. We need you no more. Keep away. We have given you all we have to give. May you make peace with the lord of your soul".

Sometimes other ceremonies follow the wake, on the third night, the ninth night, the fortieth night, or the anniversary of death. At a ninth night, rum, tea, bread, and so on, are served shortly after midnight. Those who wish to continue hymn singing do so in the house. Outside, some dance the Bongo to the accompaniment of Qua-Quas, pieces of wood beaten together, or engage in 'fine play' (ring play). These are mainly the younger people.⁵⁵ It may be added that the present writer, taking his first funeral in Trinidad, was asked to dismiss the spirit of the dead, and, on the advice of senior members of the church, organized a night of continual preaching and singing in the home of the deceased member to avoid the night becoming a orgy of drinking and other unseemly behaviour. Cowen was perhaps not exaggerating his concern about wakes; such

events were quite possibly more strongly rooted and nearer to paganism than they are today, when a more modern and secular spirit has begun to permeate the West Indies.

The incident of 'old Daniel' is a reminder of another side of Cowen's labour. Inniss tells us that:

"(he) made a study of medicine, so as to be able to treat the sick around him, who had no means of getting medical advice, and was the means of saving many lives by his medical knowledge. He would even sometimes take sick persons to his house, where his dear wife would nurse them. He sometimes sat up all night with a patient until he was out of danger, and was always ready to mount his horse to succour some sick person".⁵⁶

Cowen's first interest remained, probably, his schools. These were at the heart of his missionary strategy. In a letter of 1851 he wrote:

"I am happy to state, that our schools are in a tolerably healthy condition, which is the most cheering prospect in connection with this branch of your mission. I much fear the adult portion of the population are in a hopeless state".,

though he went on to report that he had just immersed a true believer, whose wife and daughter were already received into the church, and, for once, "there was nothing doubtful about the character to be immersed".⁵⁷ One reason for the emphasis on education emerges in an earlier letter:

"Tract distribution is among the best means we have of sowing the seeds of truth among the people. When the power to read becomes more universal, it will be a mighty means of sapping superstition".⁵⁸

The BMS Report for 1845 recorded that "Mr. Cowen confidently hopes for the most important spiritual results from the increase of scriptural education among this benighted people".⁵⁹

It is not therefore a surprise to discover how distressed Cowen was when the poverty of the BMS in the 1840's threatened his

schools. In reply to a 'circular' of December 1845, Cowen acknowledged instructions to discontinue the schools in so far as the Society supported them:

"..I did not do so..without a struggle; most reluctantly did I dismiss our fine collection of children, for whom I am sorry to say there are few educational advantages provided in the town".⁶⁰

This particular crisis appears to have been overcome by the generosity of the Society of Friends, whose Education Committee granted £50 a year for two years to re-open the school closed,⁶¹ but financial difficulties were never far away. The 1840's were years of recession at home, and this showed in the difficulties missionary societies had in raising support. The provision of £30,000 for the Jubilee Fund of 1843 was no mean feat under the circumstances. The fact was, though, that

"humble contributors were incapable of sustaining extraordinary levels of contribution in time of severe hardship".⁶²

The economic background was unavoidably a factor in Cowen's difficulties.

Cowen had some encouragement from the schoolmasters he employed. The most prominent of these appears to have been Augustus Inniss, father of the pamphlet-writer L O Inniss. Inniss senior was in charge of the school at Mount Elvin. Though the American refugees showed an "utter disregard" for the education of their offspring, and this village had to contend with the active opposition of the Anglican rector, Cowen thought that, for a school which had only just started, an attendance of 20 out of 40 children was "not so very discouraging". Inniss also ran a class for grown-up youths. The church in this village had a congregation of 60, though membership was only 10. Cowen thought the situation only had to be cultivated to give good results.⁶³ Inniss, an "intelligent and loyal native schoolmaster and catechist",⁶⁴ was also a preacher. He helped Cowen and another preacher unnamed to take a mission on

the Woodlands estate, which the missionary believed and hoped had much edified the people.⁶⁵

Eventually, Inniss went into the employ of the Government and served in Ward Schools set up by Governor Harris. His son reckoned among his earliest memories the recollection of helping his bigger brothers pull off their father's long boots, which were "always coated with mud and pretty well filled with water" when he came home during the rainy season.⁶⁶ Augustus Inniss' half-brother Mr Day was in charge of school and sabbath school at Sherring Ville.⁶⁷ Not all Cowen's lieutenants gave him such satisfaction. The Mount Hopeful schoolmaster, where 20-30 children were under instruction in a "rude schoolhouse", was one Mr Woodhouse, "a creole of the island". Cowen had to dismiss him for 'intemperate and other evil habits'.⁶⁸

In the year before his death, Cowen was able to write that "the effects of education are gradually developing themselves among the people". He was encouraged at government plans to establish "a most liberal scheme of secular instruction for the rural districts, with which the clergy are to have nothing to do". He meant the Harris Ward School plan. Cowen thought it was:

"chiefly owing to the presence of dissenters in the island, otherwise education would have remained wholly under the power of the Romish or established clergy. It is, however, more than probable that our mission schools must still be maintained".⁶⁹

His glee at the prospect of an educational system which excluded the clergy requires a brief explanation. Under the Ecclesiastical Ordinance, No.16, of 1844, the Roman and Anglican Churches dominated the church life of Trinidad at the expense of all other bodies. Officially, the measure was simply a law for the better regulating of the duties of the clergy of the United Church of England and Ireland. Practically, it imposed on Trinidad the administrative framework of the Church of England. The ecclesiastical laws of England were applied to this largely Catholic colony. All clergy,

including curates authorized by the governor in council, were to be paid by the colonial treasury. Trinidad was divided into 16 parishes, each provided with a clerk or sexton at £20 p.a. from public funds, with a church house erected at the common charge and a sum of £20 p.a. each for upkeep. All this was part of the policy, backed by the Colonial Office, of 'anglicising' the island. The impulse had come from Bishop Thomas Parry of Barbados, in whose diocese Trinidad lay. With no direct experience of Trinidad, Parry thought it his duty to put it in the same happy position as Barbados in respect of Anglican establishment. He was able to persuade Sir Henry McLeod, the governor, that without such a law he could not attract suitable clergy to Trinidad, and McLeod, though anticipating the storm which the measure would arouse, gave way reluctantly.⁷⁰

In Trinidad the Anglican establishment was a nonsense. Its supporters might argue, and did, that it was simply designed to put the Church of England on a sound footing, and that it took no liberty away from other churches. Its opponents, with more logic, countered that it reproduced the Irish situation, in which an established church had covered an island with churches that had no congregations and pastors who had no flocks. It was wrong, they said, that a minority church should have the right to expand throughout the colony with government money drawn from the taxes of all the people, when most of them did not belong to that church and could not benefit from it. Cowen was among those who joined in the agitation against the proposed Ordinance. At a meeting against the plan, held in the Greyfriars (Scotch) Church in Port of Spain, "the tactless George Cowen, minister of the Baptist Chapel, abused Anglicans and Catholics equally".⁷¹ Yet the meeting was memorable, not only for its stormy nature, but because for once Roman Catholics and Dissenters were gathered in a common cause.⁷²

The reason for this was that the Catholics were equally dissatisfied with the Ordinance. Though under its terms they received extra help from the state, and their priests were to be paid by the treasury, they got no other help. They had to pay from

their own resources for houses and housekeepers; and the stipends offered to them were only £100 p.a., the same as for assistant curates in the Church of England. Even these concessions were not safeguarded by ordinance, and could be withdrawn by simple resolution. The Anglicans would get far more than the Catholics, though the latter was the majority church, with vastly greater pastoral commitments. Unsurprisingly, religious resentment was added to the existing strains between French and English in Trinidad. When McLeod's successor, Lord Harris, took over in 1846, he found sectarianism rife, and the Church of England put in an entirely false position, enjoying a purely "fictitious display of strength".⁷³ Thus, even the beneficiaries of the new system were fierce rivals.⁷⁴ The Roman Church felt it had the right to be sole establishment, as the original and majority church; the Baptists would not take government money on principle; so the system was assailed both from within and without. The sectarian bitterness affected the educational programme of church and state. Lord Harris saw the need to break down these barriers. He proposed therefore to teach only secular subjects in his government-run schools, and leave religious teaching to the churches and the home. Such a system would, he thought, promote goodwill, unite the society, remove divisions between rich and poor, Christian and heathen, Protestant and Catholic.⁷⁵ Lord Harris was a well-meaning man, sincerely devoted to educational ideals; but in Trinidad they did not work. In the end, the colony returned to a system of dual control of education, in which the churches had a major part.⁷⁶

Meanwhile, Cowen was seeking to build up churches in the south, and achieving as much as anyone could be expected to do, considering the problems. He pleaded for more missionaries, but the BMS editor responded: "Would that his wishes, as well as those of our missionaries in other quarters, could be gratified". Cowen wanted either European missionaries, or "practically educated natives", such he presumed were sent from the "Jamaica Institution" (Calabar College). He was distressed by the state of the plantation labourers; he had just been preaching on the Williamsville estate

to 20 such, when there might easily have been 100 if so many had not been indifferent. The matter could be dealt with if there were more mission workers to get among them. Though the planters, with a few exceptions were indifferent to the "vice and wretchedness" of the workers, he believed that missionaries would be welcomed on many estates, and one itinerant could hold meetings on 5 or 6 estates every sabbath, besides during the week. "But it seems useless to plead further for Trinidad, save with the Lord of the harvest". The indifference of the planters, the poverty of the workers, and (as usual) the opposition of the Romish priest, all made progress very slow.⁷⁷

In fact, Cowen did plead with people at home, as well as with the Lord of the harvest, for Trinidad. During a year at home, he used the time, otherwise frustrating by its delays, to raise interest:

"...I trust that some little interest in favour of dark Trinidad, which did not exist before, had been created, and will appear in the future to aid and encourage us in our labours here".⁷⁸

To carry out the projects which Cowen thought necessary would have taken considerable reinforcements. In the year that Indian immigration began in Trinidad, Cowen suggested that "a brother acquainted with the Cooly(sic) language would be well received by them, and by the planters generally, as an interpreter of their strange tongue. Our governor proposes importing one or two persons of respectability to act as magistrates for the Coolies, or between them and their employers, and to be salaried by the Colony".⁷⁹ Cowen personally made an attempt at evangelization among the Indians, but with no apparent success.⁸⁰ The serious work among Indians only began when the Canadian Presbyterian John Morton appeared on holiday in Trinidad in 1868, saw the need, and persuaded his church to organize a mission. Like Cowen, he used schools to establish his mission, and employed sound teaching methods to gain the attention of this children, his work being in fact very near Cowen's near the modern Princes Town.⁸¹ One unfortunate side-effect of the failure of the Baptists to follow Cowen's suggestion

was that to this day the racial and denominational boundaries between Baptist and Presbyterian coincide, the former being negro, the latter Indian, which does not help interchurch relationships.

Cowen thus acted in many roles: preacher, teacher, doctor, builder, evangelist. It must be added that he stood in the radical tradition of the BMS in the West Indies. When he returned after furlough in April 1848, he discovered widespread business failure. Merchants of standing had closed down, the West India Bank had stopped payment, ruining thousands, the planters complained loudly, the government was insolvent. Cowen hoped that the economic situation would end in "severing from our treasury the expensive and ruinous ecclesiastical establishments hitherto sustained". He also trusted that it would "bring to a close the ruinous and immoral scheme of immigration which has up to the present proved such a fearful source of misery to so many thousands, without one redeeming feature in its character". That referred to Indian immigration, whereby labourers were imported at the expense of the colony on indentures. The system practically meant cheap labour for the planters at the expense of the negro population, who paid by their taxes to import rivals for employment, and thus kept down wages.⁸² A little later Cowen was indignant because sugar workers had been paid off with worthless notes of the failed West India Bank - "a direct fraud practiced on the poor labourers, for which they have no redress". The estates were dispensing with the services of the emancipated negroes wherever possible, and using instead the coolies, "who, for a season at least, are more easily duped than those they have succeeded". Cowen wished the government would open up the Crown lands to the public at a moderate price, so that the labourers could fall back upon this instead of leading a vagrant life, but "from this they are shut out most unjustly, to gratify the planters". The move would ease the current shortage of provisions, for the merchants were not importing enough to satisfy the basic food needs of the island, and disturbances on the Spanish Main were making the situation worse. Cowen's sympathies were clear:

"all things seem to conspire to thicken the gloom but we can look through it, believing that all shall work together for good in God's own good time. He has a quarrel with many in this land who strengthened and hardened themselves in wickedness against him and his cause, and is visiting them for these things. Their haughty spirits are greatly humbled, and their power to persecute and annoy those who would instruct and elevate their down-trodden labourers greatly limited".⁸³

Nonconformist missionaries in the West Indies were almost always on the side of the labourers against the planter interest; it was one of the secrets of their success, most notably in Jamaica.

When Cowen died, on Sunday 17 October 1852, at the age of 42, he was warmly commended in these terms:

"His labours in Savanna Grande and the neighbouring quarters have been most unwearied and energetic, so that four places of worship have been erected under his supervision, and he seldom, let weather or roads be what they might, failed to meet his numerous engagements, even in the most remote villages. His honesty of character and the real kindness of his heart, has caused deep and universal lamentation at his death. The loss of such men as Mr. Cowen is a public loss".⁸⁴

The newspaper tribute was supported by the esteem of his colleagues in ministry. Lennox the Wesleyan minister made an oil painting of him from memory after his death, assisted by a 'Daguerrotype'. A photo of this was sent to Inniss by Cowen's daughter to illustrate his 'Diamond Jubilee' pamphlet. His Presbyterian brother in San Fernando, Mr Church, evidently possessed poetic rather than artistic gifts, and wrote an acrostic on George Cowen's name:

"Go! soldier of the Cross, thy work is done,
"Eternal bliss thee waits: receive thy crown!
"On angel pinions let thy spirit soar,
"Regions of endless joys, now to explore,
"Go from thy labour to the great reward
"Emmanuel hath on high for saints prepared.

"Called by His grace, while here on earth to tell
"Of riches great, and love unsearchable
"Which Christ hath purchased by his dying love,
"Even peace on earth, and endless bliss above;
"Now go, thyself, celestial joys to prove".⁸⁵

A modern Baptist tribute to Cowen comes from one of his successors:

"The name of the Rev. George Cowen thus deserves an honoured place in the roll of Baptist pioneers. His resting place has recently been discovered in Princes Town, and we hope at some future date to mark this place with a more permanent memorial; at St. John's (the Baptist church in Port of Spain), a marble plaque has been placed above the pulpit to his memory. This valiant warrior truly fought the good fight, and today we thank God for his noble life".⁸⁶

Cowen, however, saw little visible result from his work. Not until after his death did some sign of harvest appear. His colleague in the north, John Law, visited the southern churches, and reported:

"I have just returned from visiting our stations at Savanna Grande. At all those where there is a church the work of God seems to prosper. At the Third Company, New Grant, and Montserrat, there are interesting little churches and every appearance of an abundant harvest. The precious seed which our dear brother Cowen has sown and watered with many tears is springing up and bearing fruit to the praise and glory of God. On my first visit I baptized six individuals, who had been waiting for some time to receive the sacred ordinance. On my last visit I met with a good many enquirers, all of whom seemed to be under deep religious impressions. These are the fruits of brother Cowen's labours..."⁸⁷

Similarly, W.H.Gamble, who succeeded Cowen in 1856, noted that "while Mr. Cowen laboured on untiringly...it was not till after his death that any great change for the better was apparent".⁸⁸

E.B. Underhill, the BMS secretary, formed the same impression. He thought there had been a leap forward in the years between Cowen's death and the arrival of his successor, Gamble:

"...the progress of the work was slow; and it was not until after the death of Mr. Cowen that the fruit of his self-denying labours began abundantly to appear. In 1854 the Spirit of God was poured out on the people, and at all the stations numerous converts were baptized".⁸⁹

But this revival, if that is what it was, does not appear to have been sustained. Underhill, in his official report of his visit to the area, admitted that many of the pastors and elders chosen

by the churches in the interval between Cowen's death and Gamble's arrival were not helpful. Some had even put themselves forward for office. Though some distant supervision was exercised over them by John Law, the missionary in Port of Spain, it was found when Gamble came in 1856 that immoralities had in some cases been 'winked at', and that in one or two of the congregations "the most unseemly conduct prevailed in public worship". Gamble, who tried to check this, had found himself rather unpopular as a result.⁹⁰

On the face of it, then, Cowen, the pioneer missionary of Trinidad, had done no more than to open up the way for others. In reality he had probably achieved as much as any one man could do by himself, and under the circumstances which prevailed in the Villages. It was regrettable that it took a full four years to replace him, years in which the work could have been consolidated, but which were left void for the old ways to re-assert themselves.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHURCHES AND THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY : GAMBLE AND UNDERHILL

During the period covered by this chapter we have a clearer and more detailed picture of the southern churches than at any other time in their history. This is because W H Gamble wrote a book about Trinidad, and E B Underhill, secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, visited all West Indian fields in 1859-60, and not only submitted an official report which was published in the Missionary Herald, in December 1860, but wrote a book about his journey. Gamble's Trinidad, Historical and Descriptive (1865), and Underhill's The West Indies: Their Social and Religious Condition (1862) give a useful composite picture of the churches and their relationships with the BMS. These works, details of which are in the Bibliography, supplemented by the invaluable Inniss pamphlet of 1904 on the Diamond Jubilee of the Baptists of Trinidad, and other lesser sources, enable us to survey the churches as they were in the 1860's. Essentially, then, this chapter is a survey, which enables us to get as close as we can to the churches. Our witnesses are still not the local people directly, unless we count Inniss, who had been brought up among the villages; but an observant missionary, W H Gamble, who had spent his youth in Trinidad, and an intelligent visitor, Underhill, who was also a wise missionary statesman, are not bad substitutes.

William Hamilton Gamble served in south Trinidad from 1856 to 1870. When, in 1870, John Law, the missionary in Port of Spain, died, Gamble moved north to succeed him. It would have been hard for the BMS to find anyone better qualified than Gamble for work in Trinidad. He was the adopted son of a well known white lady of Port of Spain, who sent him to England for education. Gamble trained for the ministry at Stepney College (now Regent's Park),¹ and of the beginning of his missionary service it was said:

"He (Gamble) is entering on his work in right good earnest. He has gone back to the place where he received his first religious impressions, to labour with the missionary (Law) whose preaching first led him to seek for pardon through the

cross of Christ. Inured to the climate, knowing the manners and habits of the people, accustomed to their modes of thought, yet having some experience of men and things in this country, and the advantage of two years' training at Stepney College, we may reasonably hope for a long career of devoted, useful missionary life. Mrs Gamble is of like mind with her husband, and we hope both will be long spared to co-operate with their friends as well as associates, Mr and Mrs Law, in promoting the good of the people".²

This hope was fulfilled, for Gamble served in Trinidad until his death in 1888, his ministry in Port of Spain being especially fruitful, though it lies outside the scope of this study.

Following a brief tour of the Company Villages with John Law, Gamble began work in November 1856. He was based in Cowen's old Mission House just outside Savanna Grande (modern Princes Town). This village was the centre-point of the area, and he began by preaching there every week, though, as we shall see, without any lasting success. The other stations, six in all, he visited in rotation. Some of them required more help than others, and these he planned to visit more often.³ Presumably this was as a result of advice and briefing received from John Law, who had been keeping an eye on the southern churches for the past four years from his station in the capital, forty miles away. Gamble's position cannot have been an easy one for a new minister, in the isolation and confusion of the village churches. He soon had to face the challenges of a renewed revivalism. J E Orr, who has studied the phenomena of revivals, noted on a visit in 1951 that the area contained several negro Baptist Churches still "using the quasi-military designations of the war of 1812, and the noisy worship of their Old South homes, and added that:

"...the Revival of 1859 rekindled the zeal of Negro Christians descended from the rebel slaves who were removed from the Carolinas (sic) by the British in the War of 1812".⁴

The effects of this, however, had not been beneficial. Underhill recorded that:

"A short time before my arrival, there had however been a withdrawal of many from the missionary's charge. An American

negro introduced the wild and fanatical notions and practices so frequent in the camp-meetings of the Southern States... Jumpings were mingled with prayers, and the songs of the sanctuary degenerated into discordant shouts. The natural result followed: the congregations were broken up, and for a time the labours of years seemed destroyed".⁵

Revivals may well produce excitement, but hardly the breaking-up of churches. With all proper allowance being made for British prejudice, and for British failure to understand the local culture, it would appear that the detailed pastoral analyses of Gamble, Underhill, Inniss and, in 1892, the BMS representative John Bailey, all indicate that the churches, despite revival phenomena, were not in good spiritual shape. While it is clear that there were at all times good, devout people in the churches, the overall position, to the end of the century, was not encouraging. The revival, if that is what it was, did little lasting good to the churches.

Some of the trouble derived from the continued narrowness and isolation of the Company Villages, even after the missionaries had started work. There was "a stagnation of ideas and practices" in which the contribution of the missionaries was largely rejected in favour of "the old time religion". Partly this was the understandable desire for independence, but it "negated the potential beneficial effects that contact between the systems (the local and the missionary) could have generated".⁶ Those are not the words of English missionaries but of a local, modern student of the area. But the missionary Gamble agreed. In the early days of the settlements there was, he said, little or no legal supervision, no taxes were paid, any amenities such as roads and bridges had to be provided by the villagers themselves, they were a small imperium in imperio. By his time the woods were being cleared and roads being made right through the villages to the far side of the island.⁷ Even so, the villagers were still in the backwoods, and this could be made an excuse for their attitudes:

"Every allowance must be made for them, seeing that they are a people dwelling by themselves, and having no better example than their own to copy".⁸

The position of the missionary was thus not an easy one. He acted as a kind of superintendent, but he had no real power, and no financial leverage to secure compliance with his wishes. The notion that the BMS exercised a tyranny over the churches is simply untrue; the Society had no intention of doing any such thing, and no means to do so. The churches were governed by themselves, through a Baptist Union which probably Gamble set up. The workings of this body are explained by Gamble as follows:

"In all...there are six churches professing our principles, and in connection with the London Baptist Missionary Society. These six churches are within a radius of ten miles; and were the rains less heavy and continuous and roads less impassible, no doubt the six churches might become three. But at present, there is very little expectation of any such amalgamation. We have formed them into a union, and once a quarter the pastors, preachers, and deacons, and principal members, meet together at the central chapel to speak of those things which concern the purity, the progress, and prosperity of the churches. The Union can better discharge some duties than individual churches can; while we are careful to maintain the separate and uncontrolled action of each church. Any matter that is found too hard for the wisdom and power of a single church is discussed and decided upon by the Union. There are sometimes some unruly spirits who will not submit themselves to the pastor and deacons of their own church; but there are few, if any, who refuse to abide by the decision of all the pastors, deacons, principal members, and missionary combined".⁹

This is a significant paragraph. The Union did apparently succeed in giving at least a precarious stability to the work. In true Baptist fashion, Gamble was careful to protect the autonomy of each church, and the power of the Union was in general moral rather than legal. If even the combined authority of the Union could not actually compel any church to do anything, it is most unlikely that the missionary could have done so on his own account, supposing he wanted to. Gamble was to all appearances a sensible man, guiding the church by force of character, and using the quarterly meetings as a platform for such influence as he had.

To this there was one exception. Gamble says that the Union alone,

"has the power of placing on the preacher's list the name of any brother who is considered competent by the church whom he desires to serve; and once a brother is licensed to preach, he is eligible, if required, to occupy the pulpit of any of the churches in the Union. In this matter some attempt is being made at order and discipline; but, as yet, not much in these respects has been accomplished; but having made a beginning, we hope to go on to a higher standard".¹⁰

This suggests, once more, that the nub of the matter was the efficiency of the pastors and preachers. If they could teach the people, then in the end all would be well. Gamble could not be everywhere, and there were six churches to oversee. A pastorate had to be provided from the locality. Gamble, however, could not himself control the pastors; it was the Union which did that. He may have been influential, but was hardly in a position to command. It is possible that he was considered to have a right of veto. When "brother Will" - that is, Hamilton - died, the church called brother Robert Andrews to occupy his place, "the missionary consenting to and approving their choice". Andrews had served under the "old father" as Hamilton was known, and "was hence, in some measure at least, fitted and prepared to occupy his place".¹¹ We have seen in Chapter III how pastors were chosen. Gamble was conscious that the system was not adequate. Pastors were "so entirely one with the people in position and education, that they were not respected and esteemed as they should be". They had little time for study, so as to be prepared for "instructing their people on the Sabbath-day". The churches had no sense of duty in the matter of supporting the pastor, and this subject had "not been laid before them and insisted on from the first as it should have been", though their thoughts had been directed towards the idea of pastoral support as frequently and as forcibly as possible¹² - obviously by Gamble himself. It is likely that Gamble did what he could to improve the efficiency of the ministry. Not long before his removal to the north he asked the BMS for a grant to purchase a few books for his native preachers, and the sum of £5 was voted for this.¹³

But the local people did not think in quite the same terms of the

ministry as the missionaries did. The missionaries thought of a Bible-teaching ministry, not necessarily very intellectual in content, but requiring a degree of biblical competence and comprehension. The villagers thought more in terms of a pastor who could serve both the spiritual and secular needs of his followers and integrate both these domains. Apart from officiating at services, the local pastor must "interpret dreams and be able to offer effective prayers against obeah and other environmental dangers"; he must also read the signs by which the weather was forecast, and have a good knowledge of medicines and herbs. He must sit up with the dead and dying, and although he received no stipend for his work, he was expected to provide aid when members of the congregation suffered misfortune. "He led in both the rituals of worship and in the donation of the services".¹⁴ In short, the concept of pastoral ministry was charismatic rather than biblical. The pattern of ministry customary in the villages did not require training of the type common in Europe. Study of books, even the Bible, had little place in the local scheme of things. But it is understandable that Africanism could creep in unnoticed under these conditions. Moreover, the modern world would inevitably catch up with the villages in the end, and the old folk religion could not stand against it.

The church which always retained the strongest feelings of independence was that at Third Company. This one alone, according to Stewart, refused affiliation to the BMS; but under Gamble it was in membership with the Union, so presumably Stewart means that it did not co-operate with Cowen.¹⁵ For Gamble it was a church of "special interest". Relations between this church and the mission had not always been happy. The chapel belonged to the people themselves. The land on which it was built had belonged to the BMS, but in 1857 it had been found advisable to sell the land at a nominal price, a move "deemed best for the peace and prosperity of the cause".¹⁶ There were about 60 members here in Gamble's time, under Pastor David Richardson and several other preachers. Attendance was good, and the cause made progress, but Gamble complained of the lack of discipline; not only were they

jealous of the missionary's control, but were "equally unwilling to be guided by those they had chosen as pastors".¹⁷

Underhill had visited the place in 1859. He recorded his opinion that their aloofness from the missionary was the result of "fanatical excesses" among them; perhaps referring to the revivalist movement a few years' before. As the excesses subsided, "better feeling prevailed".¹⁸ There was an apprehension at the time of Underhill's visit that "the missionary would set aside the leaders and assume entire direction of the Church".¹⁹ Perhaps the chief gain of the visit was that this central issue was discussed at the great meeting at Third Company, attended by some 150 people, and discussed very frankly. Underhill allayed the fears of the people about BMS takeover, assuring them it was not the intention:

"to substitute for their own exertions the labour of a missionary, but rather, to help them in their endeavours to attain a higher degree of instruction and piety"-

words which may stand as a classic statement of missionary policy. The Society neither wanted or aimed at the control of the church, but merely sought to assist its development in any way considered appropriate. The people cordially responded to Underhill's three suggestions: that the church should receive occasional visits from the missionary, that the young men should visit the missionary for instruction; and that a school should be opened.²⁰ The secretary apparently got on well at Third Company, and felt it had good prospects. The village itself impressed him as well cultivated, the chapel itself was neat, and the pastor, though "possessed of the smallest possible amount of knowledge", had "considerable force of mind".²¹ But Third Company continued to be the most independent of the churches, and is today "predominantly folk in its belief system and style of worship", not under BMS control but a member of the Union.²²

Sixth Company was less prosperous. Its pastor, Samuel Cooper, was an able leader, having "rather more than ordinary strength

and stability of character", and a man whose exertions had been rewarded by a measure of success. His people were fond of him, and obedient to him. There had once been serious problems here with marriage; previous pastors had baptized and admitted into membership persons living in concubinage. This habit had been discontinued, not without difficulty, and those involved were obliged either to marry or quit the church. At length,

"all have come to understand that concubinage is a disreputable and sinful state to live in, and one which absolutely precludes the possibility of their having a name and place in a Christian church".

But progress was slow among the 45 members, and there was no attempt to teach the young. Prayer-meetings were well-attended and prized, and marriages entered into more than formerly. This was Gamble's account.²³ If this was the situation in 1865, it was a reversal of the state of the church in 1859. Underhill found it that year broken up by the exercise of discipline on a leader, and said that for some weeks the chapel had been closed. Nevertheless, Underhill seems to have been impressed by the leaders, who, though illiterate, had great influence on the people, very few of whom could read. They exhibited an independence of mind and a manly good sense,

"which fits them to conduct their own affairs, and to a considerable extent provide for their own spiritual wants".

Underhill had a story to illustrate his point, of one old man, "a fine, tall negro", who "repeated very accurately the third chapter of Matthew, to shew me that although unable to read, he held fast in memory portions of the Word of God". Underhill did good in Sixth Company by calling a meeting of the people and arranging that services should begin again under the guidance of a leader chosen by them. This was done; and Underhill heard, after his return home, that peace and prosperity had returned to the church.²⁴

The little church at Matilda Boundary was unknown before Gamble's time. In a report of June 1859 he wrote that it was a small place in which services were held each sabbath, but some had withdrawn

to attend elsewhere and there was not much more to say about it.²⁵ Visiting later in 1859, Underhill said much the same, adding only that Matilda Boundary could scarcely be said to exist as a congregation, and that the cause of the trouble was the exercise of discipline.²⁶ Six years later when Gamble wrote his book, things were better. The church was composed then of Africans who were obedient, industrious, liberal, and simple-minded people, under the leadership of one William Carr, whose parents had come from the Bahamas. There were only 20 members, but they had built themselves a little chapel. The pastor's mother was still alive, though paralysed, and was a woman much loved and respected, and of exemplary conduct. She was a great influence on the younger members. For once, then, the picture is a happy one.²⁷ Maybe the injection of new blood from the Bahamas had helped. It is probable that Matilda Boundary is to be identified with Second Company. G Carmichael wrote flatly that Second Company had never arrived in Trinidad, having been lost at sea en route from America.²⁸ But she states that this was a rumour, and cites no source for it. Miss Vincent, however, noting that the fate of Second Company had been the subject of much speculation (for which she offers no sources), says that lands allocated to Second Company had been occupied at the same time as those set aside for the other groups. The piecemeal arrival of the refugees, both military and civilian, makes the whole situation most confused, but Miss Vincent clearly identifies Matilda Boundary with Second Company, and puts the burden of proof on those who deny this.²⁹ Carmichael's account cannot be trusted; she is clearly confused about the churches, and actually identifies Matilda Boundary with Mount Kelvin (sic - for Elvin), which is undoubtedly First Company.³⁰

The First Company Church went under the name of Mount Elvin or New Grant. These changes of name were due to the fact that the soldiers assigned lands at Fourth Company found some of the soil unproductive. They labelled the area Hardbargain, which is a more common name for Fourth Company, but their protests led to their

being issued with new grants of land in the First Company district, hence the name New Grant.³¹ Mount Elvin presumably comes from the name of a Baptist leader; Elvin is a name known to exist among Baptists to this day, and there was a pastor Antoine Elvin who signed a Baptist Union Resolution in 1894, to request a continued missionary presence in the South.³² The church appears never to have been strong in its early days, and Cowen once reported that though there had been some additions to the church, the people would make little response in the way of giving. He hoped they would come to see the need to do so.³³ It was, however, one of the first churches visited by Gamble when he toured the area with Law on his first arrival. Gamble's evidence confirms the identification of First Company with New Grant.³⁴ As the name First Company has dropped out of use, we shall use New Grant for clarity.

New Grant in Gamble's day was a struggling cause. In June 1859 the few members there, led by pastor Jackson, were reported to be steadfast, but many others were cold and indifferent, and had withdrawn themselves from the church; though not, Gamble hoped, from the Church of Christ, that only "ark of safety". With so few, less than 20 members, it was impossible for them to do much for the pastor. The sabbath school had dwindled down to nothing.³⁵ Underhill, visiting them in 1859, wrote bluntly:

"New Grant...can scarcely be considered to exist...Mr Jackson, the pastor of New Grant, is an old man and a devout one; but his congregation has dwindled down to his own family. It was here that the jumping mania assumed its most vigorous form, and about sixty persons went off with their leader. I learn, however, that they are disposed to return, and are beginning to see the folly and impropriety of their course."³⁶

The pastor bears a name common from the earliest days among Trinidad Baptists, and still known today. One of Cowen's earliest acquaintances among the Baptists was one Solomon Jackson, of the Savanna Grande church, who used to guide him through the forests. This Jackson had two ambitions, to visit the 'fine lot of Baptists' in Jamaica, and to go to England and thank those who had set the

slaves free - even though he himself had been no slave since leaving America, which indicates he had been among the original settlers.³⁷

The New Grant church does not seem to have recovered. Though Gamble said it had once been prosperous, he was writing gloomily in 1865:

"Christianity seems to have lost its influence over the minds and hearts of the people of this village; still, the good work of preaching Christ, and Him crucified, is not intermitted, and we therefore labour on and trust, that in God's time a change may come..."³⁸

From this depressing picture it is a relief to turn a consideration of the Fourth Company Church. In Gamble's book the village seems to be known by this name, but the chapel as Montserrat or Sherring Ville. The name Montserrat comes from the local government ward in which the village was situated, and seems to have been applied to another Baptist church by 1892.³⁹ The name Sherring Ville evidently was given by Cowen to the chapel in honour of his friend R B Sherring of Bristol. Sherring was one the friends who showed Cowen great kindness during his year in England in 1847-8. He was a complete stranger, and his kindness, Cowen wrote, could only have come from "the deep and hearty interest he takes in missionary work". The name is used by Gamble but seems to have died out.⁴⁰ The normal modern name for both chapel and village is Fourth Company, which will accordingly be used here.

At every point in the history of the Baptists of south Trinidad, this church appears as the strongest in stability, if not in size. Poole, minister of the Port of Spain church, wrote in 1944 that Fourth Company had "been throughout the years the real centre of the BMS work in the Southern District".⁴¹ This was almost certainly due to the work of Charles Webb, whom we have already met as the one pastor of ability and education, the village schoolmaster, and the convert under Cowen's ministry. Webb maintained a strict discipline. Underhill records a membership of only 43; with 14 others under discipline. Charles Webb would not allow the excesses of revivalism to be introduced. In the

turmoils introduced by an American negro revivalist who visited the area about 1858, Fourth Company, "under the watchful care of the native pastor, Mr Webb", stayed clear of "these follies". Yet when Underhill preached there (on Luke xv. 10,.. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"), he aroused the traditional revivalist reactions. Towards the close of the service,

"some symptoms of excitement betrayed the emotional character of the people, and I rather hastily concluded. One woman swayed her body from side to side, and was scarcely held on her seat by her neighbours."

Underhill's account suggests that he was a little rattled.⁴² But all evidence shows the church was solidly based. The missionaries were always welcome here, and there was practically no difficulty with the revivalist phenomena. Here, if anywhere, is the evidence that sober living and a puritan lifestyle can co-exist with the more exotic ways of revivals, and with no suggestion of paganism.

Gamble thought that perhaps the markedly different nature of Fourth Company was due to the presence of a number of people brought in during the time of slavery from the Bahamas. These were "more peaceable and teachable than the descendants of the American soldiers generally are", and so the work of education and religion had made more progress here than at the other Companies. The church here in Gamble's time had about 50 members and a congregation of about 100. There was large sabbath school, with 50 children, and the village had the only Baptist day school, with an average of 20 children. This, Gamble thought, was a fair number under the circumstances. The people were more alive to the uses of education here than elsewhere; but they were poor, and needed the labour of the children to pick rice or maize. The chapel was a temporary building, the original one built by Cowen having burned down in 1863, and the new one being not yet complete. Subscriptions towards this had been given from Port of Spain and San Fernando, and from the BMS. Pastor Webb had suffered grievous loss in the

death of his wife and several children and relatives, but the church was marked out "by a good degree of pious devotion", and by the real generosity of the poor widows. The sabbath school had led many "into the fold of Christ", and the day school, though small, was a good influence on the community".⁴³

Gamble took note also of the Fifth Company Church. Its pastor was Robert Andrews, who had succeeded Hamilton; he was assisted, as was customary in Trinidad churches, by a preacher, one Daniel Johnson, described by Gamble as "a good brother". What little the missionary says implies that the church was not in a flourishing condition, and that Andrews' task was not much less difficult than Hamilton's. The people were prone to immorality, and it was

"no easy task to teach and to train in holiness of life those whose position had been so unfavourable for the cultivation of the moral powers".

The background of slavery, military service, and settlement in the interior of Trinidad was not conducive to civilisation, and the old habits had not been eradicated. There was life among the people, but also evils in their midst; but, as Gamble remarked, "this was true of all men and all churches".⁴⁴

The centre point of the villages was Savanna Grande. There had been a church there, led by Hamilton himself, perhaps from the beginning of the settlement.⁴⁵ Cowen had built the Mission House there, and had gathered a congregation of about 20 on Sunday afternoons.⁴⁶ But the place had not been a success, and after Cowen's death the chapel was closed. When Gamble had arrived in 1856 he had re-opened it, and gathered a congregation, but the people had only come for a few weeks. Neither Cowen nor Gamble had been able to gain a foothold in the place, and in 1859 the chapel had been sold. Thereafter the Baptists had no place of worship in this village of one thousand people, three-fifths of them Romanists, one-fifth Wesleyans, and the rest Anglicans. The Mission House was away from the village, and not accessible in the rainy season. During that season, Gamble's family had no chance of

worship at all; in the dry season they had to attend the Anglican Church.⁴⁷ The reason for the failure was essentially that "the Roman Catholics and the Church of England were too strong", and Underhill therefore recommended that for this and other reasons the missionary should move into San Fernando where he could do more good.⁴⁸ This suggestion was acted upon. San Fernando was the central town of the area, and growing. Three-fourths of the sugar estates of the island shipped their produce from it, and it therefore had many visitors on business. The population was 4,000 to 5,000 in number, many of them unconnected to any religious body. The Anglicans were not a mission to the people, and Catholics Underhill "would not speak of at all". There was a flourishing Wesleyan church of perhaps 200 people. A few had recently broken away, and would be willing to join the Baptist missionary if he moved. The Presbyterian minister limited his attentions to the English colonists. There was therefore, Underhill concluded, room for the mission in San Fernando. He was surprised at the out-of-the-way situation of the present Mission House, and he reckoned that every part of the present mission field could be reached just as easily from San Fernando as from the house currently occupied. Even the cost of the move would only be about £100, and the only objection to the sale of the current Mission House was that Cowen was buried in the grounds of it; but that could be overcome. The secretary strongly urged such a move on the committee, on the supposition that the BMS would not increase the number of its missionaries in Trinidad, a step he was not prepared to recommend.⁴⁹

The argument seemed compelling, but time would reveal its weakness. Gamble moved to San Fernando by 1861, but in 1868 wrote, possibly in a moment of depression:

"The work here in San Fernando is intensely hard and most trying to faith and patience, and makes me ask myself sometimes, should I not be more useful in some other portion of the Lord's vineyard?"⁵⁰

There are odd glimpses in the minute books of the Society and the

Missionary Herald, of Gamble's work, but the one success story which appears at length is one about the conversion of a policeman's wife, who was to be baptized. She, however, had for years been a consistent member of the Episcopal church, so in reality this was rather a shift of denominational allegiance than a true conversion. That news comes in the very same letter that tells of Gamble's despair over the situation.⁵¹ There were personal problems too. He needed help towards the education of his children, and received an increase of £40 p.a. on the £200 salary he had been getting.⁵² It is true that there were odd moments of success, such as the report of three baptisms in 1864,⁵³ but in general the move proved unwise. Inniss wrote of it, though of course with the advantage of hindsight:

"In the year 1865 (sic - for 1861), Mr Gamble removed his headquarters from the Mission(Princes Town/Savanna Grande) to San Fernando, and a Chapel and Mission House were built on Harris Promenade, where he strove to gather a congregation, but with very little success, and I think it was a very great mistake for the Missionary to reside so far from the villages where the bulk of the Baptist people lived, and where active supervision by the missionary was urgently needed".⁵⁴

The truth may have been that Gamble was trying both to supervise the Company Villages from a base some 10 miles away in San Fernando, and to establish a new church in that town, and finding it too much for him. Certainly at one point he wrote home to request reinforcements, and was refused.⁵⁵ At no time was the Society prepared to send more missionaries. Underhill was not prepared to recommend any such thing in 1859. The reason is not stated at this time, but it is probable that already the BMS was thinking in terms of shifting personnel from the West to East. In the year before Underhill's visit, the Society had committed itself for the first time to China, in the midst of the "eschatological excitement" which followed the Treaty of Tientsin.⁵⁶ Interest in the West Indies was correspondingly diminished. But the refusal to reinforce was a cause of the relative failure of mission in Trinidad; the task of bringing the churches to full self-sufficiency was never completed, and the ultimate result was that the Society,

which withdrew in 1892, had to return in 1946 to do the work all over again. The fact was that the south needed a man in San Fernando, and another in the villages.

Gamble himself, however, obtained his wish for a new post; in 1870 he succeeded his colleague John Law in Port of Spain, and although he had not had an easy time in the south, he was to have a most successful ministry in the capital.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

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3. Ibid.
4. J E Orr. The Light of the Nations (Paternoster Church History, Vol. VIII, Exeter 1965), p.177.
5. E B Underhill, The West Indies: Their Social and Religious Condition, (London 1862; Connecticut, Negro Universities Press 1970). pp. 47-48.
6. D Vincent, Origin and Development of the Company Villages in South Trinidad (undergraduate dissertation, University of the West Indies, St Augustine, Trinidad, 1976), P.25.
7. W H Gamble, Trinidad Historical and Descriptive (San Fernando, Trinidad), p.107.
8. Ibid., p.104.
9. Ibid., p.117.
10. Ibid., p.117.
11. Ibid., p. 113-114.
12. Ibid., pp. 110-111.
13. Minute Book, Africa and West Indies Committee of BMS, in BMS archives, Minutes of 8 December 1868.
14. J Stewart, Mission and Leadership Among the 'Merikin' Baptists of Trinidad (Paper presented to the American Anthropological Association, December 5, 1975), pp. 10-11.
15. Ibid., p.16
16. Gamble, Trinidad Historical and Descriptive..p.106.
17. Ibid., p.110.
18. Underhill, West Indies...p.58.
19. Ibid., p.58.
20. Ibid., p.59.

21. Ibid., p.59; also BM/MH, Vol. LI, December 1860, p.799, Underhill's Deputation Report.
22. Stewart, Mission and Leadership... p.17. In fact no church in the Union is controlled by missionaries; if there is a missionary pastor, he is invited by the local church through the Union.
23. Gamble, Trinidad Historical and Descriptive...pp. 115-116.
24. Underhill, The West Indies...pp. 56-57.
25. BM/MH, Vol. LI, January 1860, p.53, Gamble's Report, June 22, 1859.
26. BM/MH, Vol. LI, December 1860, p.799, Underhill's Deputation Report.
27. Gamble, Trinidad Historical and Descriptive...pp. 116-117.
28. G Carmichael, A History of the West Indian Islands of Trinidad and Tobago 1498-1900 (London 1961), p.271.
29. Vincent, Origin and Development...p.7.
30. Carmichael, op.cit., p.271.
31. Vincent, Origin and Development...p.7.
32. Minute Book (9) Western Committee, p.256, minutes of 18 December 1894, recording a letter and resolution from the Trinidad Baptist Union 11 September 1894.
33. BM/MH, Vol. XL, February 1849, p.122, Cowen's letter 20 November 1848.
34. Gamble's letter 21 November (1856), in MH extract in Cuttings Book Shelf VI/2, BMS archives.
35. BM/MH, Vol, LI, January 1860, p.53, Report from Gamble, 22 June 1859.
36. BM/MH, Vol, LI, December 1860, p.799, Underhill's Deputation Report.
37. BM/MH, Vol. XXXVI, December 1845, p.680, Cowen's letter 18 September 1845. There was a Tom Jackson among the Marines in Hospital in the early days of the settlement: T1/4323, Part 1, Hospital Report, Mitchell to Woodford 1 July 1817. But the name is too common to allow proof of relationship.
38. Gamble, Trinidad Historical and Descriptive...p.101.
39. See Sketch Map provided by John Bailey in 1892, end paper.

40. Gamble, Trinidad Historical and Descriptive...pp. 102-103, for the identification of Fourth Company, Montserrat, and Sherring Ville; BM/MH, Vol. XXXIX, August 1848, p.510, Cowen's letter, n.d., for R B Sherring of Bristol and his support of Cowen.
41. Poole, Baptist Church in Trinidad...p.2.
42. Underhill, West Indies...pp. 86-90.
43. Gamble, Trinidad Historical and Descriptive...pp. 102-103.
44. Ibid., pp.113-115.
45. BM/MH., Vol. XXXIX, May 1848, p.319.
46. BM/MH., Vol. XL, October 1849, pp.661. Cowen's letter 27 July 1849.
47. BM/MH., Vol. LI, December 1860, p.798, Underhill's Deputation Report.
48. Underhill, The West Indies...p.53.
49. BM/MH., Vol. LI, December 1860, pp. 800-801, Underhill's Deputation Report; see also Underhill, The West Indies... pp. 59-60.
50. MH, September 1868, p.416, letter from Gamble, n.d.
51. Ibid.
52. Minute Book, Africa and West Indies Committee of BMS, Minutes of September 11, 1866.
53. Minute Book, Africa and West Indies Committee of BMS, Minutes of May 17, 1864.
54. L O Inniss, Diamond Jubilee of Baptist Missions in Trinidad 1843-1904 (Port of Spain 1904), p.10.
55. Minute Book, Africa and West Indies Committee of BMS, 24 March 1868.
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CHAPTER SIX

RETREAT, RETROSPECT, AND RETURN

In retrospect, it appears that Underhill's visit may have been the last chance for the BMS to form practical plans for the development of the Trinidad churches. But even such plans as were proposed by the secretary, such as more outreach in Port of Spain, and work among the Indians, were not followed through. All that happened was the removal of Gamble into San Fernando. In 1870, when Gamble moved again, to the capital, the southern churches were once more left without cover for four years, as they had been after Cowen's death, until William Williams came out in 1874. The weak and struggling church in San Fernando, and the isolated ones in the villages, cannot have gained by such neglect.¹ Not surprisingly, little progress was made between the deputation of 1859 and that of 1892, which heralded the departure of the Society from Trinidad, and indeed, from all the West Indies.

The genesis of the West Indian deputation of 1892 may be traced to a minute of the Western Committee of the BMS in June 1888. It was the idea of Daniel Wilshere, the Bahamas missionary, who urged most strongly that before moves were made to transfer the West Indian missions to the Jamaica Baptist Missionary Society, there ought to be a full official visit to the islands. There had not, he said, been such a tour for more than twenty-five years, and the whole situation of the missions had changed in that time. Before definite or final action was taken, an accurate knowledge of the missions as they were today was needed. On this point, the Committee concurred.² But the Society was still determined, as it had been for some years, to be rid of its responsibilities in the West in order to concentrate resources on the Congo, in China, and in India. In the same year as this minute, 1888, the Western Committee had rejected an offer of financial support from Robert Arthington to begin a mission on the Amazon, on the grounds that the BMS already had an expenditure of at least £5,000 in excess

of its annual income, and the growing demands of the three territories named above were considerably beyond this sum.³ Thus the deputation to the West Indies was the outcome of a policy of shifting resources from the area. How far it could have been an objective inspection of the work is open to question at least.

It is not surprising that Williams, the new missionary in the south, should have been turned down when, in 1883, he asked for help in his district. The committee gave their careful attention to his "very earnest appeal" for another missionary,

"especially in view of the importance of his (Williams') devoting a considerable portion of his time to the preparation and training of suitable young men for Evangelistic and Pastoral work in the Island.

The proposal was not taken up, however, in spite of a clear acknowledgement of its value, as

"in their judgement, and in view of the present financial position of the Society, the Mission is not in a position to increase its liabilities in connection with their stations in the West Indies, where for more than half a century the Gospel has been preached by their Missionaries, and Missionary operations have been carried on".

But the Trinidad missionaries could send any suitable men to Calabar College, in Jamaica, for training, with Society help. The Minute ends with an expression of thankfulness for Williams' news of the steady progress of the churches, and of fervent

"trust that the various Churches and Stations in the Island connected with the Mission will exhibit a growing independence of external support, while at the same time developing in largely increased measure a spirit of individual zeal and liberality".⁴

The train of thought here needs little comment. The Society was doing everything possible, already, to shed the burden of West Indian mission, long before the deputation had been proposed, let alone taken place. In this train of thought, however, there were three fallacies.

The first was the idea that, since the Gospel had been preached in Trinidad for half a century, it must now be time to move to other fields. But judgements of that kind depend upon circumstances; with only two missionaries at any one time in the whole island, and only one in the south, the preaching had necessarily been limited. The argument was dubious as applied to Trinidad, where the mission had never been larger than a handful of little rural churches, of which only one had consistently shown real maturity.

The second fallacy was that the centralized training facility at Calabar would provide what Trinidad needed to educate its pastors. The college had already justified itself in Jamaica, but it is unlikely that many Company Village young men would have been qualified to take advantage of it; and virtually certain that any who were would have had much difficulty on their return in being supported by a church in the villages. In the light of more recent experience, sending away students for training in a distant country is suspected of being counter-productive. Perhaps the BMS should not be blamed for not realizing this in the 1890's, but it is interesting that the missionary in Port of Spain, R E Gammon, took the point. Promising, after the BMS withdrawal, that he would give what oversight he could to the southern churches, he said roundly that work in the south must decline in efficiency and discipline without a resident missionary, and then went on:

"I most decidedly think that the appointment of a missionary to reside in Princes Town (formerly the Mission), say, for ten, or at least, five years, to give the native preachers simple instruction in grammar, reading and writing, Bible and Church history, and outlines of theology, would be far more practical and effective help to the mission than to pay the expenses of one or two students at Calabar College, who, I am confident, would look out for churches in other fields who are able to support them better than our Trinidad native village churches. Our people do still need the direct oversight of such a missionary as I suggested in my report of March last. It is impossible for me to undertake such a task, in view of the difficult work before me in connection with Port of Spain".⁵

So, it was already being recognized that expensive overseas training of a professional seminary type was not necessarily the best way to equip the village pastors; and that it was unlikely that the area could maintain them full-time even if they came back. A resident missionary teaching the basic essentials on the job was both more efficient and more realistic.

The third fallacy implied or stated in the BMS minute of 19 June 1883 refusing Williams' request was that the churches should aim at independence of external support. Ideally, this was no doubt good; but what if the churches could not manage it? Port of Spain, with its larger and wealthier congregation, did succeed in maintaining its own pastor when the Society left; but the village churches had no chance of doing so, and Williams had no choice but to leave when the BMS pulled out.

This, however, is anticipating. It is clear that during the final period of BMS involvement, the churches were carrying on much as they had always done. Williams in his twenty years service did not effect much change. Inniss writes:

"(he)... did his best to supervise and guide the churches, opening several new stations and doing his best to bring them into a higher Christian life, and also to improve the moral tone of the native pastors, but he, as those before him, did not find it an easy task, and I am sure he was not satisfied with the results. They would promise very readily to give up the objectionable practice of all-night meetings and shouting, but as soon as his back was turned they would go back like the dog to his vomit".⁶

The problems of the southern churches had by now become almost traditional. The practices brought in by the villagers' ancestors from America were still prevalent. Inniss, the local man brought up in the area, wrote that the peculiar practices of the churches "savoured somewhat" of paganism, were not conducive either to intellectual development or growth in grace, and had been opposed by every missionary who had had charge of the district, that is, in succession, Cowen, Gamble, and Williams. On the all-night shouting meeting, Inniss said:

"... although perhaps they originally had good results, (they) had gradually resolved themselves into orgies, owing principally to the presence of unsympathetic visitors, who made a practice of attending those meetings to have a lark and laugh at the antics of the 'shouters', and the presence of numerous sellers of strong drink who attended as if it were a theatrical performance, and plied a busy trade".⁷

The origin of the practice in the American revival is brought out in the following passage, and a theological interpretation is offered, which is probably the right one:

"The shouting consisted of singing in a loud voice and clapping of the hands of the whole congregation, while now and then some one worked up by the excitement would begin to jump up violently, and shout until they had worked themselves into a kind of cataleptic fit, when they fall down unconscious and remain so for some time. They are supposed to be then under conviction of sin and after coming out of the fit are expected to make a profession of faith. It has been, however, conceded by every honest Pastor, that members gained under those conditions, generally prove very unsatisfactory, as far as christian living is concerned, and very difficult to control".⁸

Here the connection with conversion, in the evangelical sense, has been made explicit. Yet the evidence is that by this time, whatever may have been the case earlier (and Inniss conceded that these meetings may 'originally have had good results'), there was little connection between the conversion and christian living. It may well be that what we have here is not a revival of christianity but a reversion to paganism. So Inniss took it:

"This kind of thing savours very much of the Dancing Dervishes, and is not like any christian practice that I have ever heard of. The churches have always clung tenaciously to this degrading practice, and have been ready to rebel against any attempt to put it down".⁹

Williams still had to contend with the other obstacle to missionaries in Trinidad, the opposition of the Catholics. He reported, for example, the abuse he suffered when he baptized three converts at Monkeytown, the first to be baptized there. The event caused some stir among the people, but the "Romish priest" strongly denounced Williams among his flock. In sending home news

of this, Williams asked the secretary of the BMS, Baynes, to forward to him a parcel of tracts - "anti-Romanist and also for baptismal services", as these would be of use in advancing the truth.¹⁰ In his book - Williams, like Gamble, wrote a book of his experiences in Trinidad - Williams said that the country was a stronghold of papacy. It had an Archbishop and about 35 priests, and all the Catholic churches, in town and country alike, were "devotedly and numerously attended".¹¹ There was nothing new in this observation, but it pinpoints what was undoubtedly one of the greatest hindrances to the Free Church missions. The complete dominance of the Catholics forced, or tempted, the missionaries to spend much time and effort on polemics.¹² John Law, who worked in Port of Spain from 1845 to 1870, called 'popery' the 'great curse of this land',¹³ and issued many of his tracts against it. Law and Cowen had together mounted a joint demonstration in 1851 against the erection of a 'Calvary' on a hill near Port of Spain, and had been mobbed while they gave out tracts to the volunteer workers who were preparing the land for its putting up. A few days later, it appears, lightning struck the 'Calvary' and destroyed it. Cowen, in reporting the incident, says that some Catholics thought this was due to the prayers of Law, "in whom they find a determined enemy to their mummery and nonsense". Cowen added:

"God grant that all his prayers, and the prayers of all true Christians for the downfall and destruction of popery itself, may prove equally efficacious as in the case of its symbol".¹⁴

But the Catholics remained a stumbling-block to the development of the Baptist and all other churches, and one reason why the mission was so relatively limited in Trinidad.

The days of missionaries in Trinidad were now definitely numbered. The long-awaited deputation finally came in 1892. It was more than a fact-finding exercise. The visit was designed to carry out a plan already formulated, and set out thus in a Minute of the Western and Centenary Committee of the BMS:

"... after careful consideration of the objects of the

Deputation, and especially of the importance of establishing such arrangements in connection with the West Indian Stations as shall result in the future in their becoming quite independent of help from the Society, and of establishing also, as far as may be practicable, a West Indian Union of Baptist Churches, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Committee passed three years ago in connection with the severance of the Haitian Mission from the Parent Society, it was unanimously resolved ..." (to ask certain named individuals to undertake the deputation).¹⁵

It proved not easy to find men able and willing to go. By 15th December, the Committee had only secured the services of J G Greenhough,¹⁶ and had to refer the choice of the second to the Officers, the Chairman of the Western Committee (John Marnham), and the Rev J T Brown of Northampton.¹⁷ Their choice fell on John Bailey,¹⁸ who in the event visited Trinidad without his colleague. The pair received their letter of instruction on 18th January 1892, and sailed on the 'Majestic' from Liverpool to New York, on 20 January 1892. Here they were to meet Daniel Wilshere of the Bahamas Mission, before travelling to those islands.¹⁹

Greenhough had to return home to meet other engagements, and so, after joint visits to the Bahamas and Jamaica, Bailey alone came to Trinidad. His findings, lucidly and ably set out, can be summarized here in brief.

Bailey noted peculiar difficulties in south Trinidad. The missionary, Williams, worked almost entirely in the "American Settlements", formed from what Bailey called a "disbanded West Indian regiment of Africans" settled in about 1816. The children and grandchildren of the settlers were still there, and the churches were among them. Where new stations had been opened, it was because some of them had moved into new districts. Most were still very ignorant, being unable to read or write:

"We have not succeeded in getting hold of any other part of the population, and it is a serious question how much good we have really done by the kind of hold we have had of these".²⁰

The churches he found governed by native pastors chosen by their members, but this choice was subject to the sanction of the missionary. If this sanction were ever withheld, they were very obstinate in having their own way, and "in all things they seem to be very tenacious in managing their own affairs and maintaining their practical independence". Bailey was at a loss to find out what was the position of the missionary among them, and found it even

"more difficult to find any satisfactory and clearly marked traces of the Missionary's influence in their personal characters or in their church life".²¹

Native pastors operated under limited powers. They administered the Lord's Supper but not baptism. They conducted funerals but not marriages. The missionary made special visits when baptism or marriage was required.²² It appears, then, that in the years since Underhill's visit the powers of the native pastors had declined, for some reason which is inexplicable. Underhill had laid it down that the congregations should choose their own pastor; that the missionary should travel among the churches to exercise a "due moral and spiritual influence for their growth in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ", and that "every ecclesiastical right" should be left in the hands of the native pastors and churches. He had desired the local pastors to visit the missionary for encouragement, and the young men to be trained by the missionary. He wanted schools to be formed in the villages. By such arrangements, he aimed that the churches should retain

"what is so desirable to encourage-their independence. Self-reliance would be strengthened and the missionary would be free to extend his evangelistic labours in other directions."²³

He had certainly made no mention of not baptizing or marrying. The policy of the Society was not to limit but to enhance the independence of the churches.

The power of the missionary, then, had technically increased since 1859, but only technically. He alone baptized, but he baptized those who were presented to him, without any personal knowledge or examination. The responsibility of preparing candidates and deciding their fitness rested with the native pastors and church officers.²⁴ Thus there was not much point in the new arrangements. Indeed, Bailey found the system counter-productive, for the church, by custom, paid the cost of the missionary's trip to baptize, and some churches imposed the charge upon the parties baptized. The sum was trifling, about 3 or 4 dollars, the price of a cab hire, but Bailey thought it must seem considerable to the people, and led them to believe they paid for all they got, and were under no obligation at all to the Society. This had been implied or expressed to him more than once. The same charge was made for marriages.²⁵

The only bond between the churches was that which Gamble described in 1865, the quarterly meeting of the Baptist Union, consisting of the pastors, young preachers, and one representative of each church. The missionary presided over this, and it seemed to Bailey that this was the only chance he had of influencing the life of the churches. He was sometimes called in when there was any difficulty or difference, but never presided over a church meeting or had any normal part in the life of the church. "Altogether his relation seems to me to be official, almost sacerdotal, rather than pastoral and ministerial".²⁶

When he came to describe the individual churches, which he had either visited or compiled information about, Bailey found little to admire. In San Fernando, "a beautiful town of 6,600 inhabitants" he found a chapel seating about 150, and a mission house, in the best thoroughfare. It was near the Wesleyan Chapel, the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, and the Presbyterian Church, all of which were more attractive than the Baptist Chapel. Membership was just 11. Williams was pastor here, and had lived in the town since he came out, in 1874. He preached here every Sunday except

the last of each month. There was no Sunday School or weeknight service. On Thursday night, Williams had a singing class, "which he considers essential to the psalmody of the Sunday services". A gentleman who joined the church the previous year took a prayer meeting at five o'clock on Wednesday morning, which Williams judged it best (for reasons Bailey did not disclose), not to attend. The gentleman's wife had a meeting for women on Saturday afternoons; Williams hoped that in time these efforts would improve the congregation. Bailey had not seen the congregation, but heard from reliable sources that it was lamentably small. The church had raised £18.11s.11d. the past year, and spent £17.10s. In 1889-90, Williams had been away for twenty months, and the chapel had been closed. Formerly when Williams was away visiting the other churches on the last Sunday of the month it was closed, but the same gentleman who took the prayer meeting now took the Sunday service on the last Sunday of each month.²⁷

Thus, the hopes of Underhill in moving the missionary into San Fernando in 1861 had come to nothing. This merely ensured the worst of all possible worlds. Bailey listed 16 churches in south Trinidad which the missionary must oversee. They ranged from Third Company with 179 members to Moruga on the south coast with just 5 members.²⁸ The missionary was able to visit each station on Sundays, on average, once in 16 months.²⁹ Whatever the theory of missionary supervision, the reality must have been that the missionary was little more than a figure-head. Moreover, there was no relationship of trust on either side. On the last Sunday of the month, Williams would go without notice to the churches, that he may "catch them unawares", and "see what is really going on". On these occasions he would listen to the native pastor, and speak afterwards, sometimes preaching another sermon when the native pastor had finished.³⁰

Distrust was perhaps not surprising. R Andrews, pastor of First Company and Fifth Company Churches, was 68, illiterate, and, Bailey feared, unworthy. Some years before he had been suspended for drunkenness. While Williams had been on furlough in 1889-90, Andrews

and Duncan Fraser, pastor of Sixth Company and Fort George Churches, had run up a large bill for intoxicants which the missionary had to pay, to avoid a scandal, as the coolie publican had appealed to him, and threatened legal proceedings. Fraser was 73, very incapable, and not respected, if Bailey is to be believed. Pompey Floyd of Matilda Boundary, whom Bailey had met, was an old man, whose sight was failing; "nothing much can be expected of him".³¹

The situation at the largest church of all, Third Company, was especially bad. The old pastor here had died in 1887, and there was a preacher in charge, McLeod, whom the church wanted to elect pastor in his place. Williams had refused to sanction this, alleging that the young man was incompetent. A very angry state of feeling existed about this, and the deacons had appealed to the BMS Committee at home against Williams. Bailey was in an awkward situation over this. Some of the people imagined he had been sent out to investigate the question, and a letter had been placed in his hand before the meeting he had come to take at Third Company. He had ignored this at the meeting, but had spoken privately to the leaders and male members afterwards, in the absence of Williams. He thought he had achieved nothing, and that serious trouble was in store because of the inflamed feeling among the people. Williams' solution was to have another missionary sent out to be pastor of Third Company; but this was not to the liking of the church. This dispute seems to have rumbled on until September 1893, when the Western Committee, after the formal decision to withdraw from Trinidad had been made, read a letter from "certain members" of Third Company Church, and having given the matter due consideration, recommended the Society to "cordially approve the election by the church of their own pastor".³²

Not all were bad men, or incompetent. We have seen how Bailey had been impressed with Charles Webb, and the church at Fourth Company.³³ James Saunders of Princes Town was regarded by Williams as the most active and successful of his helpers. Bailey described him as like the other preachers

"very illiterate, but he is earnest and active and noisy, and he seems to have been very successful in gathering together a number of the poorest class in the town".

This was at a place, once known as Savanna Grande or the Mission, where both Cowen and Gamble had failed to get a church established at all. Bailey says that the church was begun in 1887, that the membership stood at 148, and that there was a Sunday School of 37. There was need of a new chapel; the people met in a shabby old converted house, holding about 100. James Saunders asked for help to rebuild, and Bailey agreed that help was needed, as the people were all very poor. At Princes Town Williams held a week-night meeting every Wednesday, and a preachers' class on Tuesday.³⁴

Bailey found that some of the new small churches, under young preachers, seemed to have good prospects. Among those he mentioned were the churches in Elswick Village, formed in February 1892, and led by one 'Bounter' (actually Bontour), and that at St Juliens, under Butler.³⁵ Altogether Bailey managed to visit 10 out of the 15 stations in the south, many of which had apparently been opened simply because members of an older church had moved away to settle elsewhere. Among the main churches, other than the ones already mentioned, Bailey remarked on First Company and Fifth Company, both under pastor Andrews. At First Company there were 49 members but no Sunday School. The chapel was very old, and they were preparing to build a new one; most of the money raised the previous year, £37.10s., was for this purpose. Fifth Company was one of the largest churches, with 161 members, but no Sunday School was reported. It had raised £35 the previous year and spent £15, the balance being given to the pastor, who also received 10 dollars from the Society. Williams had baptized 20 people here in January 1891, and 14 of them had been excluded before the end of the year. There was a good chapel here, holding about 200. Bailey had been with Williams to this church for two weddings, and had spoken to the company afterwards.³⁶ At Fourth Company there were 116 members and a Sunday School of 45. Webb was clearly the best of the pastors. The church had raised £15.10s. and spent £1.10s, according to the returns, but Webb told Bailey that they had also raised

£30 for a new roof on the chapel. The pastor received the balance of the giving, £14, and 60 dollars from the Society. Bailey had preached there on Sunday morning, May 1st, but heavy rain had kept the Sunday School from meeting at all, and had thinned the congregation. There had been 44 present at the Lord's Supper. Bailey found more to commend about this church than any of the others.³⁷ Sixth Company, under the 'incapable' Duncan Fraser, had 101 members and no Sunday School. It had raised £27 last year, and spent £10, the balance going to the pastor, who also had 10 dollars from the Society.³⁸

Bailey drew no conclusions in his written report, simply listing four points which the Society was invited to consider. First, he mentioned the place of residence of the missionary, which he clearly thought was too far away in San Fernando to be of any use to the villages, so that there was time and money wasted in unnecessary travel. Secondly, Bailey was critical of the plan on which the mission was worked, implying that the visits of the missionary were too few, that the payments made by the people, especially for baptisms, ought to be questioned, and that it was unwise to take up new and distant stations, when the base of operations was so weak. Thirdly, he directed attention to the need for financial help for building at Princes Town. Finally, he mentioned the appeal of Williams for another missionary from England.³⁹

Nowhere is there any suggestion about withdrawing from the country, but the implication was there, the unspoken premise of the argument. At the very beginning Bailey stated that he would simply report what he saw and heard, "leaving the members of the committee to form their own conclusions".⁴⁰ Nowhere is there any mention of camp meetings, or shouting meetings, or disorder, though it is hard to believe Bailey had not been told of such things. The Report simply offers a picture of some rather dull rural churches, with one or two rather disreputable pastors, and one or two quite good pastors. There is a fairly comprehensive list of statistics and

facts about the churches, presently competently, but little attempt at analysis, and no hint of the obvious question: could the mission have been more successful if handled in a different way? Bailey, for instance, recorded that Williams had a regular preachers' class from 6 to 11 pm on Tuesday evenings at Princes Town, begun in January 1892.⁴¹ Despite the late hour, and the miles of journey home afterwards, it was well attended. Bailey never paused to think that this in itself might justify the second missionary Williams had asked for, and might in the end provide the churches with the pastoral care they needed.

The report on Trinidad was discussed by the Western Committee on 20 December 1892, in joint session with the Finance Committee. Among those present were Greenhough and Bailey, whose account of the work was described as

"far from encouraging, indicating ... a sad lack of spiritual force and aggressive activity on the part of the Native Christian Church in the island".

It was felt that, as in the case of the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands, and San Domingo, Trinidad had enjoyed the services of missionaries for more than half a century, and should now be thrown on their own resources, "with a view to their becoming self-supporting, reliant, and aggressive". The Society might continue to support missionaries on the present scale without evoking in any measure the self-support of the churches. The gospel having been given to these people for so many years, they should now be left to develop their own resources and undertake their own responsibilities "in connection with the ordinances of religion". Trinidad therefore was to follow the same pattern as the Turks and Caicos Islands some months before. The decision was as follows.

First, the financial support for Trinidad would be gradually withdrawn. For the year ended December 31st, 1893, full allowances would be paid, but these would be decreased by one third during the three succeeding years, and at the end of four years, that is on 31 December 1896, all the Society's liability would cease.

Secondly, with regard to the training of ministers, the BMS offered the same terms as they had done for the Bahamas: that is, suitable ministerial candidates would be supported at Calabar College, with a view to returning to Trinidad to undertake a pastorate there.

The Committee hoped that this arrangement would cause the church in Trinidad to become "active and aggressive", and that it would evoke "a spirit of generous self-denial" so as secure, at the end of four years, the maintenance of their own Pastors and the expenses of the churches.⁴²

In all this, the sole issues seem to have been finance, and (in the background) the desire to shift resources elsewhere. Neither the Bailey Report nor the Committee discussions seem to have taken account of the spiritual state of the churches. No one seems to have asked just why the churches were in so low a state, still less how they could be helped out of it. No one wondered whether reorganization and reinforcement might produce better results. The urge to pull out of the West Indies was now so strong that it overcame all other considerations. While the desire to open up new work was quite understandable, and the aim of getting the old churches to a state of independence entirely laudable, the assumption that these things could be achieved simply by cutting off funds was surely unrealistic. If proof of this is needed, it is provided by the sequel.

News of the decision was not accepted without protest. Even the relatively prosperous Port of Spain church doubted whether it could manage self-sufficiency, in view of the current commercial situation of Trinidad, and its pastor, Gammon, managed to win a slight concession on the timing of the withdrawal of financial help.⁴³ In practice, St John's did manage to become financially independent within three years.⁴⁴

The southern churches could win no concession. On several occasions Gammon represented the needs of the south to the BMS, but "they had made up their minds to withdraw from the West Indies, and would

not change it".⁴⁵ William Williams in San Fernando had no congregation to whom he could look for support. He returned home in January 1894.⁴⁶ It is plain that he too disagreed, like Gammon, with the decision, and had written a letter of protest. A Minute of September 1893 quotes his letter as saying

"I intend finally to withdraw on the 31st of next December and return to Wales, if the Committee intend to adhere to their decisions as expressed in the letters of the Secretary of 10th January and 30th May".

The Committee affirmed that they were sticking to their decision, and instructed Williams to hand over all BMS property, books and papers, to Gammon.⁴⁷

A more surprising protest came from the Baptist Union. It came late, after William's departure; but was an eloquent and sensible plea for a replacement missionary. At a meeting of the Baptist Union, held on 11 September, 1894, at Third Company, most independent of churches, a resolution was moved by the most able of the pastors, Charles Webb, seconded by William's most active helper, James Saunders of Princes Town. It began with an expression of thanks to the BMS for its help over many years, and continued with regret that the BMS should have now declined to send a missionary to be stationed in Princes Town, "a central point for most of the Churches", as recommended by Gammon. The Union felt that this refusal would "sadly cripple" the work of past years, and even cause them to be "largely wasted". The reason given for this is significant:

"We were hoping to have a missionary located in our midst at least for a few years, that he might help by instruction two or three days a week to better fit our young preachers for the work".

After the usual complaint that until very recently the roads in the area had been so bad that communication between the villages had been almost impossible during the rainy season, the resolution went on:

"During the last two years the Rev W Williams, although away in San Fernando, eight miles from the nearest station, had a class of the kind on Tuesday evenings, and from the progress made, we feel confident that with a Missionary in the more central position at Princes Town, with more time at his disposal, might accomplish much good among the young preachers, besides stirring up more life and energy in several of the churches".

This echoed Gammon's view, quoted earlier, that it would be better to have a missionary on the spot than to send one or two men to Calabar, "who, after a four years' training there, would probably not care to return to our poor villages to labour". It would be "an utter impossibility" for the Port of Spain missionary, nearly 50 miles away, to carry on the whole work properly as the BMS had suggested. There was "more than enough toil" for one missionary in the district. The resolution continued:

"We, therefore, beg the Committee to reconsider their decision of June last, and give a missionary for, say 5 years at least, who may devote his chief time to giving elementary instruction, religious and secular, to the young preachers.

"For while fully aware of the pressing needs of other lands, we feel the time and labour of former missionary (sic), not to mention money spent, will be rendered fruitless to a large extent, and will probably wreck all promise of future success, thus bringing disgrace upon the Society's labours, which have been so honourably blessed in the past".⁴⁸

Some small discount may be made for this document. It may have been inspired by Gammon, who, as we have seen, held a similar view. It may also be that some of the village pastors had their eye on the small allowances which the Society had paid them, and which they would lose on the withdrawal, rather than on the benefits of training. The list of signatories includes people whom we know from Bailey's Report to have been not of the highest calibre, like Andrews and Fraser. But the fact that Charles Webb and James Saunders were the leaders in preparing this petition indicates that some, at least, of the local pastors saw the need of simple training, that they had gained from Williams's class, and that they recognized the stimulus that could come from a missionary's presence. The letter itself is articulate and sensible. It was probably drafted by Charles Webb, and it is interesting that Webb,

so different from the majority of the other pastors, was able to carry the Union with him. Though the issues involved may well have been discussed with Gammon, it is not likely that the northern missionary was present at the meeting which passed the resolution.

We shall not discuss here the wisdom or otherwise of the BMS departure from the Caribbean as a whole, which lay behind the Trinidad withdrawal. Poole, the most able British minister to have served in Trinidad during the present century, mainly in Port of Spain, had no doubt. He wrote that "the policy of the BMS in the West Indies has often proved to be inept and short-sighted".⁴⁹ In south Trinidad the effects were certainly disastrous. The small church in San Fernando collapsed after Williams left. The chapel was taken down and put up again at Mount Elvin,⁵⁰ thus causing the loss of what small foothold had been gained in south Trinidad's largest town, and leaving only the unstable churches of the country.

The logic of the BMS position in withdrawing is open to question, as is shown by the Society's suggestion that Gammon should superintend the south as well as continue as pastor of St John's in the capital. The plan was that Gammon should preside at the Union's quarterly meetings and make periodical visits whenever necessary; for this the BMS was prepared to make financial grants to cover the costs. The other duties of the southern superintendent, like baptizing and marrying, should be performed by Webb. The Committee hoped this would encourage greater self-reliance and exertion on the part of the Native Churches, as it had in other parts of the world where the Society had had to withdraw missionaries. But this revealed muddled thinking. Either the southern churches needed a missionary or they did not. If they did, they needed a resident man, not an occasional hurried visitor. If they did not, there was no need to call on the already overworked minister in Port of Spain. The experience of missionary withdrawal in other parts of the world, under different conditions, did not necessarily mean that extra self-reliance would be brought forth from the village churches. The real aim of the Society in pulling

out its missionaries was to release resources for other fields, as the context of this suggestion shows. Princes Town, with 4,000 inhabitants, and with Anglicans, Catholics, Wesleyans, apart from the Baptists, could not take precedence over the needs of populous Africa, China, and India.⁵¹

The request that Gammon undertake duties in the south was not only muddled thinking, but the cause of an indignant reply from Gammon's deacons, to whom he showed the letter. They thought it unfair to ask Gammon to do what was demonstrably beyond the power of two men to do. Gammon had to educate the Port of Spain Church up to the level of self-support, and could not afford to be away from home. His health would be risked by such long journeys. The arrangement could not be worked satisfactorily or safely.⁵²

But Gammon and the Port of Spain Church did make real efforts to help the abandoned south. Inniss, who had signed the indignant letter, recorded that Gammon did occasionally visit the south for baptisms, marriages, and Quarterly Meetings.⁵³ When Gammon resigned in 1902, the BMS Committee "vested all the property in Trinidad in the Pastor and Deacons of St John's as Lessees and Trustees", and thus the northern church assumed responsibilities which they felt included some obligation to the villages.⁵⁴

That sense of responsibility had one unintended effect. In 1902 the Port of Spain people invited Rev J J Cooksey to come out as the superintendent of the south. He had nothing to do with the BMS; his stipend was paid by the Government's Ecclesiastical Grant, which the Society had never accepted on principle, but which was received by the Port of Spain Church on the ground that the Government was:

"only returning a portion of the money paid in by the people to assist in the spreading of the Christian Religion, which they were convinced was conducive to the maintainance of Law and Order".⁵⁵

This Grant was paid to all the denominations in proportion to their

numbers, now that the old dominance of Catholic and Anglican had been abolished by the colonial administration.

Cooksey settled in Princes Town, taking over the church vacated by the demise of James Saunders, and when Inniss wrote (1904), there were all the signs of a happy and successful ministry.⁵⁶ But Cooksey was a disaster. He took up the old battle against 'shouterism', but in a way that lacked discretion or sense, and provoked outright hostility from pastors and congregations alike, and resulted in the disruption of the Baptist Union. According to Poole, his life was threatened and attempted. He served about three years, worked for a while with the Canadian Mission (Presbyterian), and then returned to the Sudan Mission, from which he had been 'borrowed'. At one point he prosecuted a leading native pastor in the courts, alleging in evidence that he represented the London BMS and acted with authority. The court, however, ruled that he had no sort of authority over the churches. The local pastors "exulted", the Baptist name was disgraced, and in some cases, where the BMS held only the title to chapels, the property was bought, so that thereafter London could have no claim. Many of the churches, including Third Company, Fifth Company, Sixth Company, and Matilda Boundary, broke away to form a new Baptist body, independent of the BMS.⁵⁷

In the midst of these troubles, in 1904, a visitor from the BMS again came to Trinidad as a representative of the Society, as part of a West Indian deputation. The representative, the Rev Charles Williams, was grieved to find Cooksey in "great trouble", having "set his face like a flint" against the "All Night Meetings". Cooksey had set himself to win where all his BMS predecessors had failed. He had the support of Port of Spain, and of many leaders even in the south. "All Night Meetings" had been banned in all premises owned by the BMS, and the Union practically refused fellowship with those churches that sanctioned such meetings.⁵⁸

Williams did not despair. He seems to have been received in friendly fashion, preaching for Cooksey at Fourth Company, and

meeting the southern leaders at Third Company and Princes Town. He was charged to take back a message of goodwill and friendliness to the BMS. It may be that the hostility was against Cooksey's tactless methods rather than against the Society as such. Williams hoped that those loyal to the Union could make a new start, could review and revise their plans, secure a purer membership in the churches, an abler and more influential pastorate, and enter upon an era of unity and peace, and prosperity. Williams believed that this was the darkest hour in Trinidad, and that soon a new day would dawn.⁵⁹ He was wrong about the 'soon'. It took many years, and the credit for drawing the Union together again must go to J H Poole, who worked for a generation between 1912, when he became pastor in Port of Spain, and 1946, when he finally persuaded the BMS to restart operations in Trinidad. He was enabled to do this partly at least because of personal friendship with Dr H R Williamson, Foreign Secretary of the BMS, who toured Trinidad in 1944 as part of a world survey of the fields to work out a new strategy for mission. This, however, lies outside the limits of this study.⁶⁰

It cannot be said that the story of these churches is a very happy one. The BMS clearly did not think much had been achieved. The silence of both members of the 1892 deputation during the celebrations of the Society's Centenary is eloquent. Both Greenhough and Bailey had much to say about the glories of the Jamaica mission, and they generously commended the Bahamas churches. Even John Bailey, recently returned from his visit, was silent about Trinidad when he addressed a Centenary meeting at Northampton in March 1893.⁶¹ It was just as if Cowen, Gamble, Williams and their colleagues in Port of Spain, had never existed, and the Company Villages had never been discovered. While no discussion of the failure of a mission can reasonably be expected on a public platform, it would not have been out of place to mention these churches and to wish them well. The Centenary Volume does not even mention Trinidad in the index. The Celebration Volume, which consists mainly of speeches at meetings in various parts of the

country, notes only the contributions of Trinidad to the Centenary Fund: £37.15.1 from Port of Spain, £34.2.0 from the San Fernando Stations.⁶²

Yet the mission was not without some good. At least every missionary down to Cooksey sustained his position, despite difficulty. With tact, patience, and steady teaching, using a low-key approach over many years, much of the division and heart-burning could have been avoided. Pastoral standards could have been raised through preachers' classes such as Williams inaugurated. The cases of Charles Webb and James Saunders show that local people were capable. The old trouble over "Africanism" was going to pass away sooner or later anyway. It is fruitless to speculate on what might have been in history, but it is not unreasonable to suggest that if the protests of Gammon, Williams, the Port of Spain Church, and the Baptist Union, against withdrawal in 1892 had been heeded, the subsequent disasters might not have happened. The BMS, on its part, might then have been spared the need, and expense, of beginning all over again in 1946. Though there was never the chance of Trinidad matching the spectacular results of Jamaica, much could have been done to make the churches genuinely self-sufficient well before that date. W H Gamble once remarked about the mission: "I trust that good is being done, if not so much as I desire or expect".⁶³ He was right; and if the good had been persisted in steadily, the mission would have produced much fruit in the long run.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

1. D J East, The West Indies, in J B Myers (ed.), Centenary Volume of the Baptist Missionary Society, (BMS, London 1892), p.215, and the Appendix, Table I, p.324; J H Poole, The Baptist Church in Trinidad: An Historical Sketch (Typescript, BMS archives), p.2.
2. Minute Book (7) Western Committee, pp. 97-99, 19 June, 1888.
3. Minute Book (7) Western Committee, pp.53, 17 January, 1888.
4. Minute Book (5) Western Committee, pp. 96-97, 19 June, 1883.
5. Minute Book (9) Western Committee, pp. 256-257, 18 December 1894, recording letter of R E Gammon, 20 September 1894.
6. L O Inniss, Diamond Jubilee of Baptist Missions in Trinidad 1843-1904 (Port of Spain 1904), p.10.
7. Ibid., p.7.
8. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
9. Ibid., p.8.
10. Williams to Baynes (BMS Secretary), 8 July 1878 (BMS archives).
11. William Williams, A Description of Trinidad 1881-1882 (Ms. transcribed by Clare Taylor, Aberystwyth, 1973; original in the National Library of Wales), p.19.
12. The series of Trinidad Tracts issued by the Haverfordwest Mission Press in Port of Spain are largely (not exclusively) concerned with anti-catholic polemic. The Press was mainly the contribution of John Law, missionary in Port of Spain 1845-70, but Cowen is known to have written some of them.
13. BM/MH, Vol. XL, February 1849, p.122, letter of John Law, 21 November 1848.
14. BM/MH, Vol. XXXXII, November 1851, p.727, Letter of Cowen, 25 August 1851.
15. Minute Book (8) Western Committee, pp. 204-209, 22 October 1891.
16. J G Greenhough, b.1843 in Germany; brought up in Yorkshire; worked from the age of 11 in a saddlers' shop; entered Rawdon College; graduated BA(Lond.) 1866; MA (Lond.)1867. His main pastorate was at Victoria Road Leicester (1879-1904), "where he remained for 25 years without ever once preaching a bad

- sermon"; President of Baptist Union in 1895; and of Free Church Council in 1901; described as a "remarkable preacher, able to express himself with facility and precision", who was also intensely evangelical and "kept to the great verities of the faith, which he commended to the intelligence as well as to the heart"; d. November 1933: Baptist Handbook, 1935. p.320.
17. Minute Book (8) Western Committee, pp. 224-229, 15 December 1891.
 18. John Bailey, b.London, September 1846; trained for ministry at Regent's Park College; BA (Lond); served pastorates at Weymouth, Maryport, and Glossop Road, Sheffield; best known for the latter, where he stayed 17 years; organizing secretary Sudan United Mission 1906; on BMS General Committee 1886-95; died on his way to his office, at Chiswick station, in June 1916: Baptist Handbook 1917 under initials W Y F (W Y Fullerton, BMS Home Secretary).
 19. Minute Book (8) Western Committee, pp. 239-242, 16 February 1892.
 20. J Bailey, Report on the Mission in Trinidad, incorporated in J G Greenhough and J Bailey, Report on the West Indian Missions of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS archives 1892), p.14. (Hereafter cited as Bailey, Report...).
 21. Ibid., p.14.
 22. Ibid., p.14.
 23. BM/MH, Vol. LI, December 1860, pp. 799-800, Underhill's Deputation Report.
 24. Bailey, Report... p.15.
 25. Ibid., p.15.
 26. Ibid., p.15.
 27. Ibid., p.15.
 28. For the geographical disposition of the churches, see Bailey's sketch-map appended to the Report, among end-papers.
 29. Bailey, Report... pp. 15-16.
 30. Ibid., p.15. The inverted commas are Bailey's, and seem to represent William's actual words.
 31. Ibid., pp. 16-17.
 32. Ibid., pp.17. for the troubles at Third Company; for their solution at last, see Minute Book (9) Western Committee, p.171, 19 September 1893.

33. Bailey, Report...p.17; see also Chapter Four above for Webb.
34. Bailey, Report...p.16.
35. Ibid., p.17.
36. Ibid., p.16.
37. Ibid., p.17.
38. Ibid., p.17.
39. Ibid., p.18, summarizing discussion points.
40. Ibid., p.13.
41. Ibid., p.15.
42. Minute Book (9) Western Committee, pp.95-99, 20 December 1892.
43. Minute Book (9) Western Committee, pp. 150-151, 16 May 1893.
44. Inniss, Diamond Jubilee...p.6; Ibid., A Short History of St. John's Baptist Church, Port of Spain (Port of Spain 1929), p.9.
45. Inniss, Diamond Jubilee...p.11.
46. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
47. Minute Book (9) Western Committee, pp. 171-172, 10 September 1893.
48. Minute Book (9) Western Committee, pp. 255-256, 18 December 1894, where the whole letter from the Trinidad Baptist Union is reproduced. The letter is signed by: P P A Bontour, Pastor; Henry Edward, Preacher; Henry Law, Deacon; Moses J Harriot, Deacon; Peter Simon, Deacon; David Joseph, Preacher; Henry Rron (sic - perhaps for Bron or Brown?), Deacon; Joseph Benjamin, Preacher; Isaiah B Gilliard, Pastor; William Proche, Deacon; Harris Ruchersons, Deacon; Thomas James, Deacon; Antoine Elvin, Pastor; R Andres (sic - for Andrews), Pastor; Thomas Maclow, Pastor; Alfred Ffugins, Deacon; P Brown, Deacon; J Sambury, Deacon; A Mitchell, Pastor; C Butler, Pastor; Duncan Fraser, Pastor.
49. J H Poole, The Baptist Church in Trinidad..p.9.
50. Inniss, Diamond Jubilee...pp. 10-11.
51. Minute Book (9) Western Committee, pp. 226-227, 19 June 1894.

52. Minute Book (9) Western Committee, p.255, 18 December 1894, letter from Port of Spain Deacons to A H Baynes (BMS Secretary), signed by J T Hamlyn and Lewis Inniss (the future pamphlet-writer).
53. Inniss, Diamond Jubilee...p.11.
54. Ibid., p.11.
55. Ibid., p.11.
56. Ibid., p.11.
57. Poole, The Baptist Church in Trinidad...p.3.
58. Charles Williams, Report on a Visit to Jamaica, Trinidad, and the Bahamas (BMS archives, 1904), pp. 4-5.
59. Ibid.
60. Poole, The Baptist Church in Trinidad... has an informative account of his own part in pulling the churches together again; see also H R Williamson, The Christian Challenge of the Changing World: Report on a World Tour 1946-7 (BMS archives)
61. J B Myers (ed.), The Centennial Celebrations of the Baptist Missionary Society 1892-1893 (BMS London 1893), pp. 472-477.
62. Ibid., Appendix.
63. BM/MH, Vol. LI, January 1860, p.53, Gamble's letter 22 June 1859.

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CARIBBEAN SEA

The Dragon's Mouths



TRINIDAD

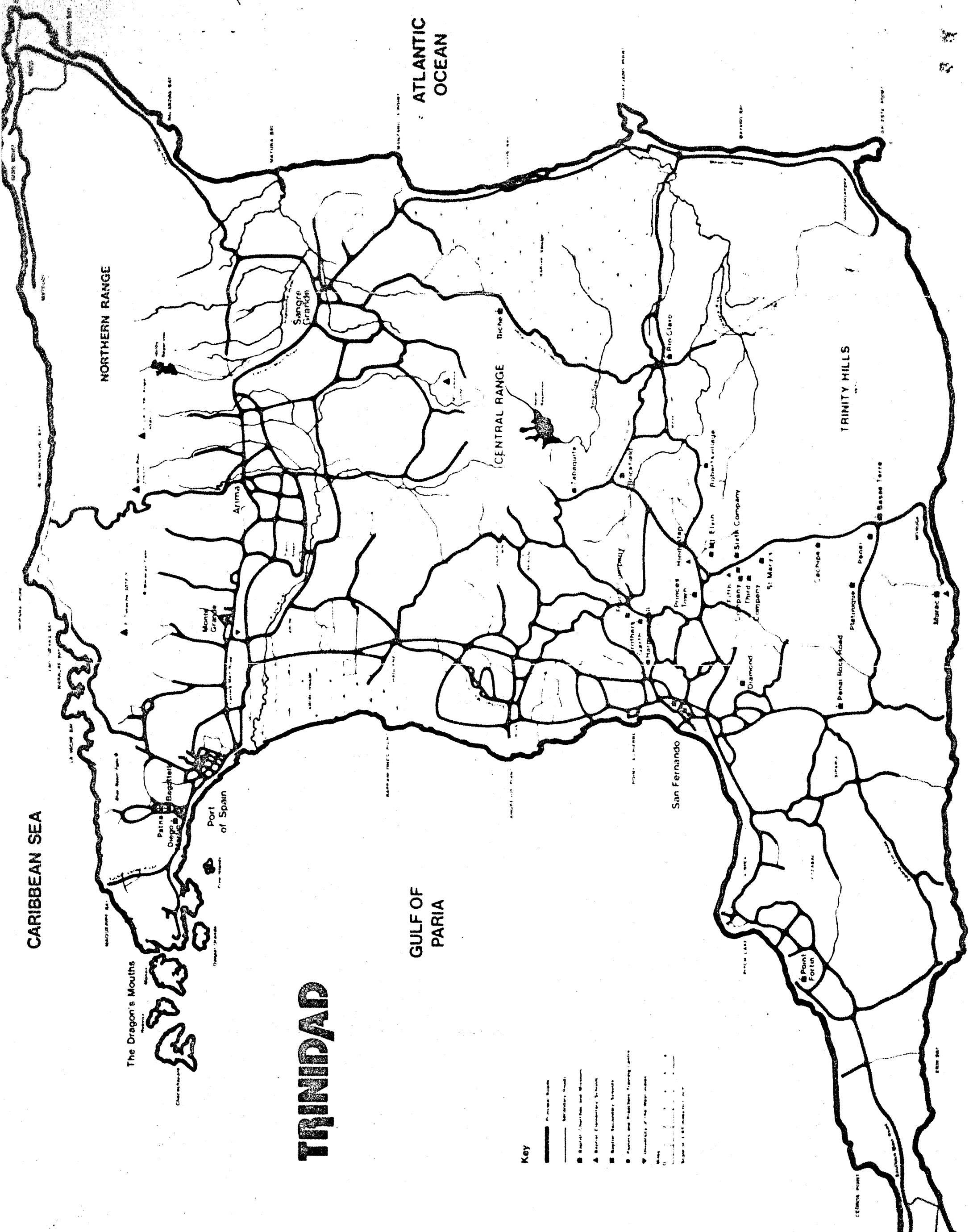
GULF OF
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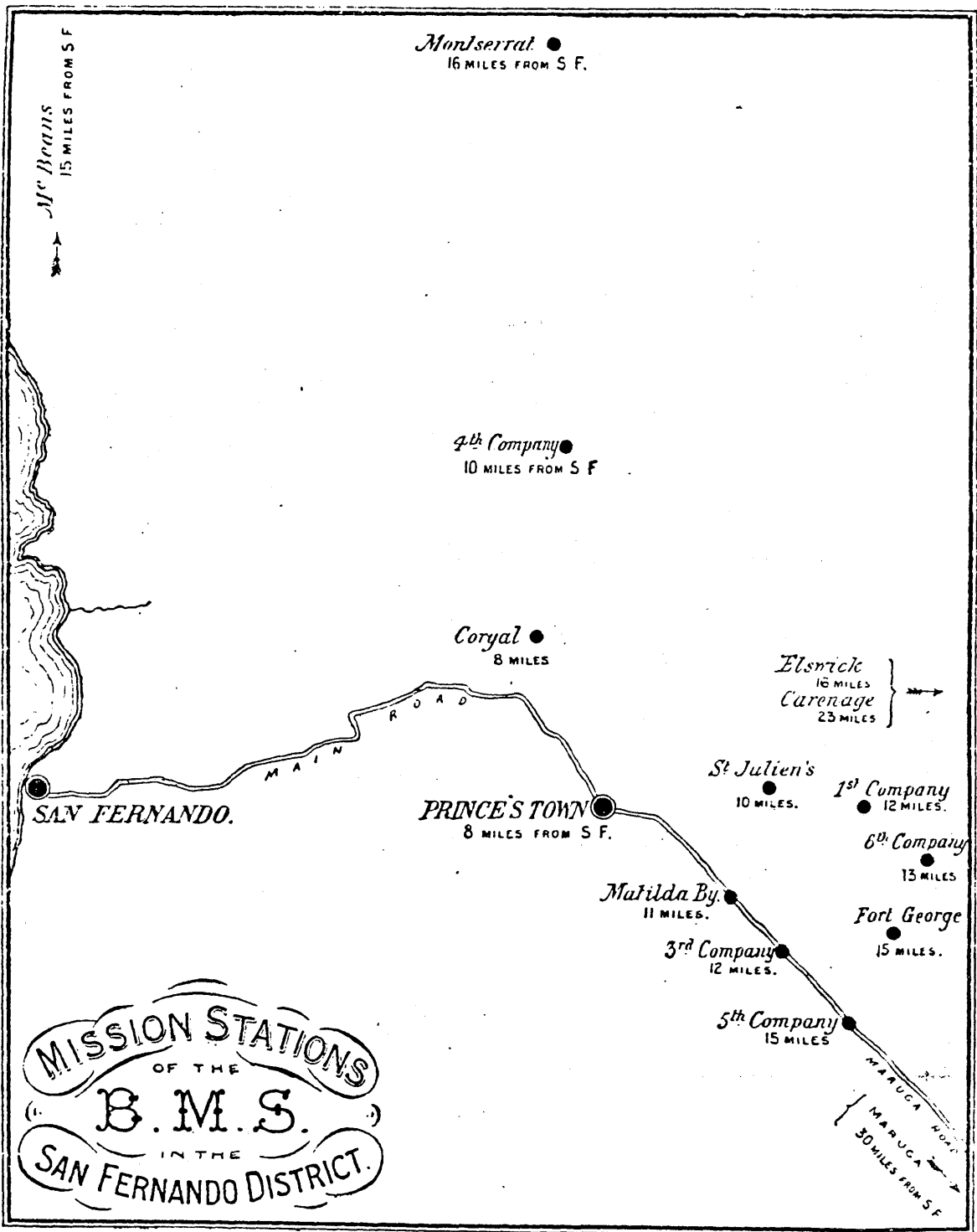
CENTRAL RANGE

TRINITY HILLS



Key

- Primary Roads
- Secondary Roads
- Major Churches and Mosques
- Major Elementary Schools
- Major Secondary Schools
- Parks and Pleasure Training Centers
- Villages of the West Indies
- Airports
- Seaports
- Other



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