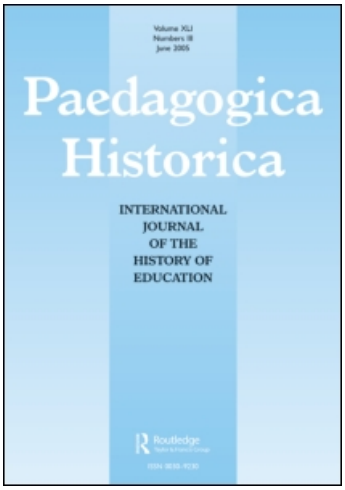

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THE PEDAGOGY OF CONVERSION : MISSIONARY EDUCATION TO SLAVES IN THE BRITISH WEST INDIES, 1800-1833

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Introduction

The claim has been asserted, almost universally and absolutely, that nineteenth-century imperialism and Christianization were mutually compatible (1). The West Indian case, during the period 1800-1833, seems somewhat of an exception because evangelical missionary education brought to slave society a reaction of hostility, repression, and suspicion. To maintain absolute tyranny over the persons, production, and reproduction of another class of men as chattel property, the presumption must remain for the dominant group that "slavery and knowledge are incompatible" (2).

Had the agents from the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS), the London Missionary Society (LMS), and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) been only preachers whose message did what it purported, that is, to inculcate the appropriate cardinal virtues such as subordination, obedience, industry, and gratitude, the dissensions between missionaries and planters might not have been precipitated. As it was, these men were also pedagogues whose goals required pedagogical means, systemized instruction, and discrete content. When planters interfered with the effective transmission of religious and moral principles by prohibiting reading and writing, censoring content, and intervening in classroom and chapel affairs, then missionaries became vocally, and sometimes actively, concerned about slavery.

Despite prohibitions and restrictions, despite "strict injunctions" that religious instruction be conveyed only by catechizing and by oral means, and despite calumnies, a scurrilous press, harassments, and persecution, from the beginning of the Independent John Wray's mission to Demerara in 1807, and in the Antiguan Methodist bands

(1) See, e.g., Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London : André Deutsch, 1964); Klaus Knorr, *British Colonial Theories, 1570-1850* (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1944); and Jack Gratus, *The Great White Lie* (New York : Monthly Review Press, 1973).

(2) Henry Whiteley, *Excessive Cruelty to Slaves...* (London, 1853), p. 13, and Charles S. Sydnor, *Slavery in Mississippi* (Baton Rouge, La. : Louisiana State University Press, 1966), p. 53.

preceding that date, reading and often writing were taught to bondsmen in Antigua, Jamaica, and British Guiana. Evangelicals have a particular brand of "true and vital" Christianity which requires Scripture reading as a prerequisite to conversion, and missionaries were known to deviate from those conventions and laws in virtue of which ignorance was as necessary to bondage as the whip was indispensable to it, and according to which literacy was a cause of civil mischief (3). Such arguments regarding the provision of education to any of the "dangerous and perishing classes" were, of course, not unusual either in Britain itself or any of her colonies. The poor, and likewise the slave, would be made "too wise", and education would prove an "impolitick measure" and "subversive of good order" (4). Thus "the prejudice against schools", as the Secretary of the WMMS observed, was "much stronger than against preaching" (5).

It is therefore crucial to an understanding of the nature of evangelical missionary education to slaves that the methods employed in providing any education so clearly opposed to the workings and nature of slave society should also be understood. Such an examination may best be served under three headings. Firstly, what were the aims of missionary education and how were these congruent with, or antithetical to, the broader society in which they were to operate? Secondly, what were the methods of instruction utilized to achieve such aims ? Thirdly, what was the nature of the content and materials used ? Finally, we might inquire into what impact missionary endeavour had on slave society in the West Indies.

Aims of Missionary Education

Obviously, the saving of souls was the prime aim behind all missionary activity, but in a unique way the saving of souls through a particular conversion experience was crucial to evangelical missionary effort. As early as 1795 the *Instructions for Missionaries to the West Indies* stressed that the "great point must be to make the negroes... not merely *nominal* but *real* Christians" (6). It was on this point that the four denominations under examination agreed, and it was on this

(3) Governor Murray to Bathurst, August 24, 1823, "Missionary Smith's Case", CO111 : 53, pp. 10-12, Public Records Office (hereafter cited as PRO).

(4) Smith to Burder, March 18, 1818, Box 2, British Guiana/Demerara (hereafter cited as BG/D and, in the case of Berbice, BG/B) (1815-22),LMS.

(5) Richard Watson, *A Defence of Wesleyan Missions in the West Indies* (London, 1817), p. 9, n. 7.

(6) *Instructions for Missionaries to the West Indies* (London, 1795), p. 14.

point, too, that interdenominational disputes most often arose when individual missionaries in other societies appeared to relax their vigilance. Conversion was stipulated by most evangelicals as a requirement for baptism, even if not by Church missionaries from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), who were reputed to be sympathetic to planter interests.

A secondary aim was that of maintaining social order; secondary, because it was naturally and logically subsumed under the first point of Christianization, in the minds of missionaries at least. Nevertheless, the contradiction between maintaining social order and providing education for slaves, although apparent to slave owners, seemed less so to the educators. The question of whether missionaries truly believed that a balance might be maintained between religious instruction and slavery is not quite clear. On the one hand it was quickly recognized that "knowledge was power" and that planters could not "conceive of how this power [could] be communicated to the blacks without endangering themselves" (7), or, as one Methodist realized, that man being "an improveable animal" must the "more desire an improvement of his condition to the extent he sees it enjoyed by others" (8). On the other hand, missionaries such as Thomas Hyde in 1821 wanted their sermons published "to show our opponents that the negroes are taught nothing... but what is calculated to promote the interests of the owners as well as the slaves" (9). How the two interests could be justly reconciled did not seem to divert missionaries who did not usually engage in such legalistic argumentation. Theirs was a moral, not a political, crusade.

The slaves on Blake's Estate attending Bethesda School in Antigua were reported to "evince humble and subordinate deportment" and even "contentment in their station" (10). Although one rector was able to cheerfully comment that "corporal punishment" was "happily precluded" (11) by Christianization, it is, of course, doubtful that any pacificatory system of instruction could have produced such universal contentment. However, "uniform obedience" (12) was purported to be a major aim of religious instruction because it was

(7) Watson, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

(8) Rev. Hope Masterton Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa* (London, 1863), p. 67.

(9) Hyde to Committee, September 26, 1821, Item 56, W1 (1812-22), WMMS.

(10) *Missionary Register* (November, 1818),484-86.

(11) *CMS Proceedings* (1819-20), 23.

(12) *Ibid.*, p. 205.

believed that civil order for any society was necessarily bound to moral order and that moral order was best served by religious principles. These principles included honesty, truth-telling, industry, sobriety, chastity, fidelity, and obedience. Conversely, social order would deteriorate if cardinal vices were allowed to flourish (13). It should be added that missionaries were consistent in requiring adherence to such principles from all members of society, bond or free, and for all societies. It is, however, noteworthy that planters should have been restless when confronted with any form of religious instruction to slaves, even that which fundamentally appeared to support the virtues they most desired to flourish among their slaves, even if not among themselves.

A third aim of missionary education was that of preparing slaves for a new civil and moral order after Emancipation. Apparently, only a religious education could prepare them adequately to take upon themselves the onerous burden of freedom. The civilizing of slaves was always seen as synonymous with Christianizing them. As John Wray of the LMS wrote from British Guiana in 1827:

> A religious education only can prepare the negroes for a state of freedom and the general diffusion of true Christianity and good laws to encouraging industry. (14)

It was commonly believed, not only by missionaries but by other members of the public as well, that "to release the community of slaves from their bondage" before religious restraints had been substituted for their previous state meant that slaves would become "more licentious" and "more intractable than savages" (15).

However, it must be noted that none of the aims mentioned could be satisfactorily realized without the introduction of systematic and organized teaching practices and a discriminate selection of appropriate subject matter. The question, therefore, which logically follows is concerned with what these teaching methods were and which content was to be transmitted. The most effective means to sound religious and moral knowledge and to the preparation for assuming

(13) "Review of Advice to Servants : Being Five Family Lectures Delivered to Domestic Slaves in the Island of Barbadoes in the Year 1822 by the Rev. Hothersall Pinder", *The Christian Remembrancer,* VI (March, 1824), 151-54; *Missionary Register* (November, 1818), 484-86; and "A Leeward Island Resolution and Law on Public Worship of Slaves...", Item 38, W1 (1803-13), WMMS.

(14) Wray to Burder, March 9, 1827, Box 2, BG/B (1827-34), LMS.

(15) Rev. John Hampden, *A Commentary on Mr. Clarkson's Pamphlet* (London, 1824), p. 46.

the civil responsibilities of a society without slaves was through literacy. It was to the acquisition of such skills that most pedagogical problems of pre-Emancipation missionary schooling were related.

The insistence upon catechizing and oral instruction and the prohibition of reading and writing were manifestations of the planters' deep-rooted fears of an informed slave population. Such constraints inevitably led to supervised and circumscribed instruction and impeded any *effective* Christianization. "True believers", however, are prone to overcome obstacles to the dissemination of their beliefs, either by defiance or by circumvention. Though managers, owners, and the Governor himself might be "adverse to reading", it was taught nevertheless, "by stealth" (16). Moreover, the dominant white society was not unaware of this state of affairs.

Methods of Instruction

John Wray, an Independent in Berbice, was teaching reading according to the "Lancastrian Plan" as early as 1813 (17). Phillippo, a Baptist in Jamaica, had operated a day school since July 1825 and a Sunday school before that, both of which consisted of a "mixture" of the Lancastrian and National plans, adopted the best features of both, and included reading (18). Hurst, a Wesleyan in Antigua, was requesting a printing press for Sunday school lessons on the Lancaster Plan in 1814 (19). And William Dawes, a few years later, protested that the CMS insistence on the National Plan was "objectionable" and that his own teaching methods, which included some reading, were preferable (20). One cannot suppose the above missionaries were exceptional cases.

Few missionaries seemed to be observing the prohibitions. As early as 1810, John Davies was asking for Murray spellers (21) and four years later for copperplates to teach the Langford System of Writing.

(16) Smith to Burder, February 28, 1823, Box 3, BG/D (1823-29), LMS.

(17) Wray, "Extracts from a Letter Addressed to Zachary Macaulay,... Some Suggestions for the Moral and Religious Improvement of the Negroes" (n.d.), Box 1A, BG/B (1813-22), LMS.

(18) Edward Bean Underhill, *Life of James Mursell Phillippo* (London, 1881), p. 75.

(19) Hurst to Blanshard, June 17, 1814, Item 58, W1 (1814-15), WMMS.

(20) Dawes to Secretary, May 28, 1820, Box 1, M1-8 (1814-17), pp. 24-27, CMS. *The Antigua Free Press,* January 11, 1828, p. 1, also reports reading instruction being imparted to slaves.

(21) Davies to Directors, July 4, 1810, and May 3, 1814, Box 1, BG/D (1807-14), LMS.

The same missionary was also responsible for the first printing done in Georgetown for teaching negroes and slaves, which printing consisted of detailed reading lessons (22). Immediately before the 1823 Demerara Revolt, Wray was teaching 60 slave children out of a school of 84, bond and free, to read (23).

The Wesleyans, usually anxious not to offend, were also disregarding the instructions. In 1829 at Willoughby Bay, Antigua, there were 662 pupils, including 136 slaves and 51 slave children, the remainder being free. Of the slaves, 36 were teachers instructing 218 pupils in alphabet, 74 in first-syllable words, and 83 in third-syllable words (24). Some ten years before, Mr. and Mrs. Thwaites had published extracts about "the patience and perseverance of the poor slaves in learning to read" (25). In 1819 the BMS requisitioned for Jamaica two hundred copies of Watts' *Hymns,* three hundred copies of Rippon's *Selections,* and scores of tracts from the Religious Tract Society (26). One cannot suppose these quantities were ordered not to be read.

These are only a few of the many examples that could be adduced of the inevitable effects of restrictions placed upon a group whose main object was to Christianize the slaves and whose main method was dependent upon the very means forbidden them – that of teaching slaves to read the Scriptures. William Knibb's distress was typical. He asked his family in England for books for his Lancastrian school, which had 70 children reading the Bible and many cyphering and writing. "This is an important object", he said, "for till the poor things are taught to read, little moral or religious improvement can be expected" (27).

By far, monitorial instruction was preferred by missionaries, which was due as much as anything to the fact that if one belonged to either the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church, or the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS) with its Lancastrian system, a steady

(22) Rev. John Davies, "The First Printing Done in Georgetown, Demerara, toward Teaching the Children of the Black and Coloured Population, Reading, 1809-10", *ibid.*

(23) Wray to W. Beard, Governor of Berbice, June 18, 1821, Box 1A, BG/B (1813-22), LMS.

(24) *Eleventh Annual Report of the WMMS Sunday Schools* (Antigua, 1828), Item 2, W1(1829), WMMS.

(25) *CMS Proceedings* (1818-19), 354-55.

(26) *BMS Proceedings,* III (1815-20), 90.

(27) Knibb, Care of Edward Knibb, January 8, 1826, W1/3, BMS.

provision of supplies could be depended upon from Britain. In its first report (1812), the National Society, whose principles were adhered to by the CMS and some WMMS missionaries, stated the following :

> ...[T]he national religion should be made the foundation of national education... for if the great body of the nation be educated in other principles than those of the Established Church, the natural consequences must be to alienate the minds of the people from it, which may, in succeeding generations, prove fatal to the Church, and to the State itself. (28)

The ignorance of slaves was, it seems, as prejudicial to the "great body of the nation" as to "the State itself", for the Church of England regarded these methods as equally appropriate for them as for the British poor. The Madras system provided the basis for the National Society and its founder, Dr. Andrew Bell, said his aim was to "make good scholars, good men, and good Christians" (29). One might add to this, good slaves.

There was a difference between CMS schools and Dissenting schools, if not in the methods of simultaneous instruction, then in content. Even so, the differences in content arose out of the major distinction between the National and Lancastrian systems; the latter having been devised by Joseph Lancaster on non-sectarian principles, intended to satisfy and unify Dissenting participants in the system. In LMS, and particularly BMS, schools the sectarian principle led to slightly more diversity in content and more provision for secular subjects. The mechanical parts of both systems were in most ways not significantly different.

The object of the BFSS was to provide scriptural education to the children of the poor on "unsectarian principles" because that Society firmly believed that "popular ignorance is a national calamity" (30). The principles of both the BFSS and of scriptural education were seen to be as suited for the slave as for the manufacturing poor of England. Like the National System, the education provided by the Society was one with a class bias so that the poor and likewise the slave might be made "respectable", so as to "counteract" those "hurtful influences" a surly lower class might perpetrate on the social order (31). The BFSS stressed that the middle classes ought to have a

(28) *First Annual Report of the National Society* (London, 1812).

(29) Sarah Trimmer, *A Comparative View of the New Plan of Education by Mr. Joseph Lancaster*... (London, 1805), p. 130.

(30) *Manual of the System of Instruction, with Plain Directions for the Establishment of Schools* (London, 1843), p. 1.

(31) *Manual of the System of Primary Instruction Pursued in the Model Schools of the BFSS* (London, 1831), p. 1.

particular interest in educating the poor because they were, after all, so dependent upon the latter's labour. In 1816 a BFSS manual stated that as it was to the labouring population's efforts that "we owe our comforts and convenience, we have a deep interest in the state of their morals" (32).

Obviously, slave owners were even more directly dependent upon slave labour for their "comforts and convenience". However, slave owners were more likely to sympathize with the Mandevillian idea that "knowledge both enlarges and multiplies our desires" and that a slave's knowledge ought never to be "extended ... beyond what relates to [his] calling" (33). Under the circumstances and in view of all their limitations, the monitorial systems of certain missionaries could no more be approved of by slave owners than Sunday school instruction was.

The 1829 Report of the BFSS officially opened a separate subscription for the West Indies (34). By this time, William Knibb, the Baptist, had a "British school" in Kingston, Jamaica, begun in 1825, with 250 children under a plan "exactly resembling the Borough Road School", the BFSS London training centre which he had attended. His monitorial system extended beyond the confines of the school, "for some of the children earned a few pence by teaching their elders in the evenings" (35). By 1831, another Baptist, James Phillippo, also requested funds and materials for his Spanish Town enterprise (36). Wray is also mentioned in the 1831 BFSS Report as having a British school in Berbice by 1831. By 1833, Charles Thwaites, a Methodist superintendent of schools in Antigua, had received a supply of materials and apparatus for the British system (37).

The Infant School Method

If slave owners objected to educating their slaves at all, their reactions to another method of instruction utilized by some missionaries can best be speculated upon. Some missionaries prior to Emancipa-

(32) *Manual of the System of Teaching Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Needlework in the Elementary Schools of the BFSS* (London, 1816), pp. vii-viii.

(33) Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees : or, Private Vices, Public Benefits* (Edinburgh, 1772), I, 216.

(34) *Report of the BFSS* (1829), 32.

(35) Philip Wright, *Knibb, the Notorious* (London : Sidgwick and Jackson, 1973), p. 33.

(36) *Report of the BFSS* (1831), 116-19.

(37) *Report of the BFSS* (1833), 29-30.

tion reported their use of "The Infant School System". LMS reports between 1831 and 1833 in British Guiana reveal a diffusion of the Infant Method among missionaries there before it had gained any significant impetus in Britain itself.

That any missionaries were using the Infant School System prior to Emancipation is surprising on two counts, the first being that the Home and Colonial Infant School Society in England was not established until 1836 (38), and it was this society rather than the previously established Infant School Society of 1824 which popularized Pestalozzian principles in Britain itself. The Infant School Society, whose methods were also primarily Pestalozzian, did not have the impact of the later Society, which received more funding and enthusiastic support. Both societies, however, directed their zeal at the children of the manufacturing poor. It appears that the missionaries concerned had already recognized the utility of the Infant Method before its general dissemination. Secondly, by nineteenth-century standards the Infant Method might be seen as a progressive one; indeed, many of its Pestalozzian techniques have remained in use in infant schools to this date. Such techniques, then as now, were based on the child's response to sense data, verbal and rhythmic exercises, physical play and manipulation, playground equipment, the practising of sounds, and the drawing and forming of letters in order to read and write.

Pestalozzian principles were in direct contravention to monitorial systems. Charles Mayo, who systemized the Infant Method for the Home and Colonial Society, declared that its purpose was not "to explain processes but to unfold principles". The pupil was not taught "to comprehend a rule" but "to form it for himself" (39). However, as with the monitorial systems, the social class bias behind the Infant Method was apparent. According to this latter method, it was essential to "implant right dispositions" during infancy rather than correct bad habits" later on, so as to prevent the poor, who were full of "woe, wretchedness, and depravity", from contaminating "the more respectable class" (40). The children of the poor and, consequently,

(38) See Nanette Whitbread, *The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School* (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 12-14; Hugh M. Pollard, *Pioneers of Popular Education, 1760-1850* (London : John Murray, 1956), pp. 180-87; and W. A. C. Stewart and W. P. McCann, *The Educational Innovators, 1750-1880* (London : Macmillan, 1967), pp. 151-52, 169-79, and 242-46.

(39) C. Reimer, *Lessons in Number* (London, 1831), Preface by Charles Mayo, p. viii.

(40) Charles Mayo, *Observations on the Establishment and Direction of Infant Schools*... (London, 1827), p. 9.

the children of slaves were to be trained by the method into "order, docility, and natural kindness" (41).

Mr. Lewis of the LMS in 1831 had an infant school of about eight children attending for two days a week and he enthused over the fact that the "pictorial manner of teaching" was admirably "adapted to arrest the attention" of adults and children (42). Another Independent in Demerara, Joseph Ketley, was asking his Society for more infant equipment because the only resources he had at his disposal were some pictures, a few arithmetic exercises, and reading lessons (43). In 1833 his infant school had 150 children, ranging from only eighteen months to seven years of age (44). James Scott wrote in that same year that he had found the Infant Method appropriate for his schools (45).

Although some modifications to the Monitorial and Infant Systems omitted reading, especially for those who found literacy to be either unnecessary or undesirable in the training of the poor, this was not an intention of the systems concerned. These systems all included either the rudiments of literacy or the development of literacy skills, and with these aspects included so too was the utility and efficiency of the systems best realized. Few of the evangelical missionaries who provide the evidence for this paper opted out for those alternatives which precluded literacy, unless it was quite impossible for them to do otherwise. In these cases catechizing was resorted to and took on a significance not seen as altogether desirable by the missionaries themselves.

Catechizing

As a satisfactory method, catechizing was commonly viewed by missionaries as a "most ingenious device for training teachers to teach nothing" (46). However, it was probably the only method the "planters even remotely approved of to teach slaves". Catechizing proved all too often to be a "very laborious task" for answers could be repeated "a hundred times over" before recall was established (47). Wray doubted the efficacy of catechizing under these circum-

(41) *Ibid.*
(42) Lewis to Clayton, October 22, 1831, Box 4, BG/D (1830-35), LMS.
(43) Ketley to Secretary, May 24, 1832, *ibid.*
(44) Ketley to Ellis, September 12, 1833, *ibid.*
(45) Scott to Ellis, August 24, 1833, *ibid.*
(46) *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter* (November 30, 1831), 472.
(47) Wray to Directors, November 21, 1808, Box 1, BG/D (1807-14), LMS.

stances, and another missionary, John Davies, complained that to the illiterate, numerous explanations were required (48). With reading restricted, William Dawes of the CMS could ruefully assert that the term "catechist" was more appropriate to his missionaries than that of "schoolmaster" and that the term designated accurately the nature of the instruction they imparted (49).

Due partly to reading prohibitions but even more to a strained relationship with the Church of England in the sugar colonies, CMS missionaries before Emancipation were not ordained but designated as schoolmasters and catechists, their pedagogical functions thus being stressed.

Oral Instruction

The manner of instruction by evangelical missionaries was viewed by the SPG chaplain on the Codrington Estates in Barbadoes as a "condescending familiarity" and quite "disgusting" for being so (50). In 1823, a year before that comment was made, another observer noted that the missionaries' very habits of life and education gave them a "marked advantage over our ecclesiastics in matters of conversion" because they were used to "dealing with ignorant men whose minds and habits comprehend slowly" (51). In addition, it was praiseworthy that they learned "to unvowell [the] half intelligible jargon" (52) of slaves.

There is evidence that the missionaries' methods of oral instruction were ones of "patience and perseverance" (53) and thus were envied but rarely emulated by the official clergy. There is also evidence of a personal relationship between teacher and slaves which also included tenderness and respect for "the vigor of their intellect and acuteness of their understanding" (54). An example of tenderness is in the wry

(48) Davies to Directors, October 4, 1809, *ibid.*

(49) Dawes to Sir Benjamin D'Urban, October 1823, Book 1, M1-8 (1814-27), pp. 267-74, CMS.

(50) "Review of Advice to Servants...", *op. cit.* In 1807, Bishop Beilby Porteus observed that many clergymen lacked "the peculiar sort of talents and qualifications... so successfully displayed in the missionaries of other churches". *An Essay toward a Plan for the More Effectual Civilization and Conversion of the Negro Slaves...* (London, 1807), p. 173.

(51) Sir G. H. Rose, *A Letter on the Means and Importance of Converting Slaves in the West Indies to Christianity* (London, 1823), pp. 15-33.

(52) *Ibid.*

(53) Porteus, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

(54) D. W. Furley, "Protestant Missionaries in the West Indies : Pioneers of a Non-Racial Society", *Race*, VI (January, 1965), 234.

comment by an otherwise dour Mrs. Dawes :

> I was sorry to find several who must be five years old, not able to answer the question, who made you ? The greater part answered, "Mammy, ma'am". (55)

Where missionaries lacked the means for the best possible instruction, or where they lacked linguistic ability, intimate and direct contact combined with genuine concern for their clients must have overcome such impediments to effect teaching. Like Smith, they were encouraged to speak "in the plainest manner", as they would "to children", and to accompany their catechizing with "familiar conversation" rather than formal instruction (56).

There is little evidence, however, that the missionaries did in fact make serious efforts to "unvowell [the] half intelligible jargon", if the above commentator meant the African dialects. Some may have learned the local patois, but they did not translate Scripture into patois, although learning of languages and translation was the usual practice in the South Seas, India, and Africa. If missionary Stearne was correct when he said in 1830 that the slaves were still "as little acquainted with English as when they first left their own countries", we might inquire why the missionaries apparently neglected to learn such languages as the bondsmen did speak (57).

The answer to the above question may be that the missionaries sent to the West Indies were not very adept at learning a second language. A more probable explanation, however, is that what with the number of languages and dialects that had been brought over in the trans-Atlantic crossings, and the amount of proliferation and mixture of these languages and dialects, so much modification must have occurred as to make a systematic learning very difficult. Modifications occurred even from estate to estate, with the different mixings of slaves. Yet again, the West Indies were organized after the pattern of European civil life, whereas Africa, India, and the South Seas were not. English was the official language of the Caribbean colonies. Finally, English was the language of the *masters,* and in a slave society the enslaved were required to learn the language and *mores* of the dominant class rather than the other way round. The missionaries

(55) Mrs. Dawes to Secretary, March 10, 1820, Book 1, M1-8 (1814-27), pp. 5-14, CMS.

(56) "Instructions from the Directors of the Missionary Society to Mr. Smith, ... December 8, 1816", *Proceedings of a General Court Martial against John Smith of the LMS,* pp. 623-30, CO111 : 42, PRO.

(57) Stearne to Coates, July 19, 1830, CW/050/3, CMS, and *Missionary Register* (December, 1829), 541-44.

in this respect were probably no less ethnocentric than the European class of which they were after all a part. Thus, Mr. Swinyard could regret that while attending a particularly colourful love-feast he knew "so little negroism" (58), and Wray ironically wondered whether God could understand Berbice Creole or whether the slaves "must learn English" to pray (59).

On considering the content of the instruction given, it is difficult to understand why the planters should have objected to such instruction, until one remembers that the content being used was not as crucial as the fact that reading was being taught at all.

Content

Advanced reading, writing, and arithmetic were not necessarily prerequisites either for the lives and occupations of the poor or for those of the slaves, although the simpler stages of these subjects could be useful. The only books that were to be introduced into Antiguan Sunday schools, according to custom and good sense, were those that contained "the alphabet, the different parts of the catechism, and the Holy Bible". Even these were to be explained to, and not read by, slaves (60). That geography should have been taught to slaves in BFSS schools in Jamaica is almost incongruous, yet Mr. Tinson reported that an average attendance of 132-140 pupils at a school in Kingston were learning the various countries and chief towns of the British Isles as well as the geographical divisions and capital cities of Europe (61). The provision of any subject matter normally associated with the "liberal arts" did not appear incongruous to those who introduced history, geography, or natural science into their mission schools.

Even when the question-answer methods of rote memorization were used, some BFSS materials introduced aspects of geography. For example, a map of the Holy Land was to be copied on slates, with a monitor pointing at the city of Tyre :

Monitor : What is it ?
Pupil : On an island.
Monitor : Describe the situation of the island.

(58) Swinyard to Marsden, April 12, 1817, Item 129, W1 (1816-18), WMMS.
(59) Wray to Hankey, July 17, 1823, Box 1B, BG/B (1823-26), LMS.
(60) *First Annual Report for Conducting the Methodist Auxiliary Sunday School Society at Parham, June 7, 1820,* Item 105, W1(1818-20), and Item 51, W1(1822-23), WMMS.
(61) *Report of the BFSS* (1831), 119.

Pupil : It is at the eastern extremity of the Levant, opposite the northern part of the Holy Land, from which it is separated by a narrow strait. (62)

It may be imagined that to a body of slaves such information was bewildering and barely comprehensible. But, then, to an equivalent body of the "manufacturing poor" in England it cannot be assumed to have been any less bewildering. The educational value of the experience gained in the streets, mills, and mines was no more edifying than that of the plantations, the only advantage being that although scarcely more educated than slaves, the poor who were herded into the Sabbath schools at home could at least understand the English language !

It is in relation to the teaching of such subjects as geography and natural science that the Infant Method must also been considered. Pestalozzi's pedagogical principles, faithfully reproduced in the publications of Charles and Elizabeth Mayo and used by the Infant Society, described object lessons which included history, geography, nature study, cyphering, writing, drawing, and spelling. Publications relating to all of these subjects were printed before the Society itself was finally established and it is assumed those missionaries who used the Infant Method, its materials, and equipment before 1833, were familiar with the liberal and integrated content of the Infant System's object lessons. If they were still waiting for some of Mayo's later works, Pestalozzi's writings were readily available. Elizabeth Mayo's *Lessons on Objects* (1831) and *Lessons on Shells* (1832) contained over one hundred different object lessons for the missionaries to use. However, the greater bulk of content was indisputedly religious in character.

In 1809, the Rev. John Davies of the LMS in British Guiana printed his own series of reading lessons for "children of the Black and Coloured Population", based on BFSS examples (63). It bears a remarkable resemblance to much of the National Society's sequenced lessons for reading which contained moral and religious content (64). Davies' first lesson listed nouns such as arm, dog, and rib, followed by simple statements and questions :

(62) *Manual of the System of Primary Instruction..., op. cit.*, p. 45.

(63) Davies, "The First Printing Done...", *op. cit.*

(64) See Rev. Frederic Iremonger, *Dr. Bell's System of Instruction, Broken into Short Questions and Answers for the Use of Masters and Teachers in the National Schools* (London, 1835), and Andrew Bell, *Elements of Tuition* (Edinburgh, 1831).

I am
You may
He ran
Not yet
How are you, sir ?

The second class were given a simple story to read, beginning with "Ann, sit down and read. What shall I read, sir ?". The story included such questions as the following :

Who made you ?
The Great God.
What does he do for you ?
He keeps me from harm by night and by day.

The more advanced lessons did not contain explicit religious content, although they were morally didactic. They did contain very Anglo-Saxon children, however, such as Charles, Jane, James, and Ann.

Apart from the materials and apparatus provided by the National Society, the BFSS, and the Infant Society, the missionaries received materials and books from the catalogues of the Sunday School Union and the Religious Tract Society. The parent missionary societies also forwarded those materials which were contributed by subscribers to missionary enterprises. Small and inexpensive "gifts" were also forwarded to the missions, to be used as prizes and rewards in the monitorial schools. The vast majority of materials used were related directly to Scripture. Even the books consisting of moral and instructive tales related to but thinly disguised scripturally based themes and, as such, were exceedingly didactic in their purpose. They ranged from the *Recaptured Negro* and *Missionary Anecdotes* to *The Pleasantness of Religion Exemplified* and tales about Harry Heedless, Sammy Sly, and William Friendly.

The first catechism of Isaac Watts was in constant demand in missionary requisitions because it combined readily memorizable rhythmic verses with religious statements. Catechisms were a form of learning deemed appropriate for the slave as well as for the freeman. Watts' catechism was created for the young, but it was seen to be eminently suitable for the illiterate poor and for the ignorant bondsman as well.

A similar catechism – a work of no great originality, but one especially adapted for slaves – was devised by John Wray, the LMS missionary. His section on "The Duties of Servants and Slaves to their Masters and Mistresses and Managers" is of special interest. Questions five and eight provide examples of the integration of religion with social and moral duties :

Question : Suppose a servant or slave meets with an unfeeling master, does that lessen the duty of respect ?

Answer : By no means for it is the command of God, I Peter 2 : 18-19, "Servants shall be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward...".

Question : What is the duty of servants as to the property of their masters ?

Answer : To keep from and watch against the sin of theft, waste and negligence, and to be as careful of their master's property as if it were their own. (65)

The content and materials used by missionaries in their schools and in their endeavours to Christianize slaves were the same as those used by evangelicals in Sunday schools and charity schools in England. There is little evidence that the materials were adapted to a new set of social or cultural circumstances relating to slaves or even to the West Indies. John Wray's catechism and John Davies' reading lessons were exceptions and not the rule. The Christianization of slaves was seen, in fact, as no different from the Christianization of the lower classes in Britain.

The slaves were seen as an extension of the "poor", albeit ones with black skins and in a more unfortunate social condition. Therefore, religious instruction for slaves reflected a class bias rather than a racial one. The differences that can be discerned were due primarily to the differences in the denominations themselves which sent missionaries. For example, the CMS stressed the use of the Anglican liturgy and attempted to provide a greater comprehension of it as well as of the Thirty-nine Articles and the Creed. The Wesleyans used their particular "Methodist" system, which consisted of structured and supervised bands, classes, leaders, catechumens, and ticket systems. The Baptists often adopted some of the Methodist tactics, but set great store by reading the Scriptures. Wesleyans, Independents, and Anglicans all used their own church catechisms which expounded their doctrines.

In most instances, the Dissenters, who used the reputedly non-sectarian Lancastrian system in the West Indies, did not keep their distinctive private or religious views out of the picture. It would be unreasonable to expect them to have been so high-minded as that. After all, they were in the West Indies not only to convert slaves into Christians but surely to make Christian slaves into Baptists, Anglicans,

(65) Notes relating to catechism are in Appendix B, Box 2, BG/B (1815-22), and details of a sermon in which the catechism was described, are found in Box 1C, BG/B (1823-26), LMS.

Methodists, Independents, or whatever.

Conclusion

Although the numbers of bondsmen receiving missionary education during slavery were few in proportion to the total slave population, the impact of evangelical missionaries on this small, literate, elite group cannot be reduced to mere quantitative data. We are talking of men, not numbers; men, who gained some measure of dignity in *voluntary association* with their chapels and a rudimentary education in the process. Such matters can hardly be measured in terms of statistics, especially when we consider that provisions of schooling in general, and to the working classes in particular, were not yet common practice in Britain itself. In short, it was rather remarkable that any kind of formalized education should have been provided to slaves at all. This certainly was not the case in the American South.

In the final analysis, no matter what the missionaries' crusade entailed, it was their very presence in a milieu quite opposed to educating another man's "property" that effected a discontinuity in the usual assumptions behind slavery and social order. Educating, indeed even "Christianizing", slaves was perceived by members of the white dominant group as antithetical to the workings and nature of slave society and as prejudicial to their own safety. In addition, consequences are of greater historical significance than intentions, and in this context the missionary impact takes on an increased significance because the number of converts is less crucial than any number of literates the missionary system produced. In the four years of apprenticeship after slavery, without the previous constraints, the number of negroes attending missionary schools for whatever was offered in them, increased. Importantly, relationships of mutual trust grew up between missionaries and bondsmen during slavery, especially as a group of militant missionaries had defended slaves and were persecuted for it by planters.

During slavery and apprenticeship, men were formed who, though their talents may possibly have been limited and their proficiencies rather meagre, nevertheless were able to assert some qualities of leadership and organizational talents, and to express acceptable and negotiable verbal and written skills (66). These men were perhaps in

(66) A scrupulously fair treatment of the beginnings of West Indian education as being rooted in the missionary experiments is found in James Latimer, "An Historical and Comparative Study of the Foundations of Education in the British, Spanish and French West Indies (Up to the End of Slavery in the British Islands)" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1952).

many ways not dissimilar to the English working class, who gained secular leadership qualities through their experiences with the Methodist system of bands and societies, as has been demonstrated by E. P. Thompson (1963), Elie Halévy (1924), and more recently in a provocative reassessment of the Sunday schools, *Religion and Respectability* (1976), by Thomas Walter Laqueur. The first two authors are in the tradition of the Hammonds and interpret such training as counterproductive as far as revolutionary action was concerned, whereas Laqueur argues for the positive affirmation of feelings of self-worth, with religion as a legitimate means of social expression. Eugene Genovese, in his book *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1974), argues similarly about slaves, as men under stress, active in their relationships with religious experience. I contend that missionary education in the British West Indies can be understood in a similar light (67).

It must suffice to observe that the missionary system provided almost the sole means of education for slaves as well as an authentic sense of community and group identity for those who chose to participate in its structures. It would indeed be presumptuous of us to view such slaves as "Uncle Toms", merely because they adopted white values, or appeared to capitulate in less than heroic ways. A rudimentary education was useful if they were to enter into that world otherwise denied them. As for the demoralization and destruction of slave subculture by the intrusion of European and Christian values, it must be remembered that West Indian colonial society was far from "pristine" when missionaries entered it and that the coloured population had already been wretchedly dehumanized into "chattel" or brutalized by the imposition of the worst sort of European values either in their capture, trans-Atlantic crossing, and seasoning, or in their Creolization and by perpetual bondage.

By participating in forms of religious expression or in modes of education offered to them by evangelical missionaries, slaves were able to work out some of their own history under the most strenuous of social and political circumstances. They cannot be seen as un-

(67) E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London : Gollancz, 1963); Elie Halévy, *England in 1815* (New York : Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1924); Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability : Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780-1850* (New Haven, Conn., and London : Yale University Press, 1976); J. L. and Barbara Hammond, *The Town Labourer, 1760-1832* (London : Longmans, Green, and Co., 1920); and Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll : The World the Slaves Made* (New York : Pantheon Books, 1974).

perceptive recipients of white values unless we wish to deny them either intelligence or a pragmatic sense. If missionary schools and religious affiliation were functional with regard to either self-respect or mobility, we can assume slaves seized such opportunities, using what they could and modifying those aspects appropriate to their own needs and lives.

The view that missionaries constituted a disparate band of zealots giving out only pious platitudes and a good measure of moralizing must be weighed against the evidence of the assumptions and practices they brought to West Indian society. To accuse their education of being "indoctrination" does not ring altogether true unless we choose to ignore the fact that *the planting class clearly saw it otherwise.* Had it only been indoctrination in the crudest sense, there might have been far less opposition to it. As it was, missionaries were not welcomed in West Indian society and neither were their means of religious instruction encouraged. To see them as mere conservers of the existing social order would in this case be short-sighted if not patently untrue.

Ideally, missionary education was "a means by which the established classes could tame the multitudes, repress social barbarism, and preserve their own superior status", as William A. Green, in his impressive *British Slave Emancipation* (1976) (68), argues in the persistent tradition of scholarship to which we referred at the beginning of this paper. But it remains curious nevertheless that such unequivocal social control was by no means obvious to the slave owners.

(68) William A. Green, *British Slave Emancipation : The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment, 1830-1865* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 327.