



140th Anniversary of the Zion Hill Baptist Church

**THE HISTORY OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH
IN EDUCATION AND THE LIBERATION
OF THE JAMAICAN PEOPLE**

Professor Emeritus, Errol Miller

February 21, 2021

Rev Raquel Buckley, Pastor; Mrs. Claudia Bailey, Church Secretary; Miss Monica Thompson, Secretary of the 140th Anniversary Committee; Deacons, officers, and members of the Zion Hill Baptist Church; Members of the Clergy; guests at the church and in cyberspace; brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus everywhere, I am honored to have been invited to be the virtual Presenter this evening as part of the celebration of the founding of the church 140 years ago. I have been asked and will take account of February as Black History Month.

I wholeheartedly congratulate the Zion Hill Baptist Church for your endeavors in education over the years as recorded in the materials sent me by Mrs. Bailey. Your engagement in education in Zion Hill and the Richmond areas bears the stamp of Baptist engagement in education from its inception. You know and will celebrate your history in education during this 140th celebration. I pray that, by God's grace you will continue and, in the future exceed your past to the glory of God.

The Topic is: 'The History of the Baptist Church in Education and the Liberation of the Jamaican People.' As a believer in Jesus the Christ as Savior and Lord and as a science teacher who incorporates history in my work, and reads it for enjoyment, I have approached this presentation from three perspectives. First, that the Eternal, Invisible, Infinite God is working His purpose out in ways that we cannot fully understand. Second, facts matter even if they are inconvenient. Third, time and place are critical because they provide context to God's workings and historical facts and sequence.

There is a big picture about each element of the Topic: the Baptist Church, Education, Liberation of Jamaica as a people and Jamaica as a country. Then there are progressively more and more interacting details. The magnitude of the Topic is far beyond coverage in one hour. Hence, in 45 to 50 minutes I will try to cover as much as possible of the big picture, leave the rest to question and answer as time allows. I am also going to leave it to Rev. Buckley, theological matters that I may touch on but am not as incompetent to elaborate.

I interpret the term 'Baptist Church' as a Baptist. That is, the autonomy of the local Church to serve its community as led by the Holy Spirit without external direction but may freely join with other Baptists or other churches. Zion Hill Baptist Church is a member of the Jamaica Baptist Union and shares that heritage. St Mary has its own unique history that I have run into throughout my adult life but am yet to fully understand. I will share what I know and leave the rest to the Lord to fulfil His purpose for His Glory.

THE BIG PICTURE

Starting in reverse order, allow me to outline the big picture of each element of the Topic.

The Big Picture: Jamaica as Colony and Country

Jamaica has **always** been on the frontier of modern development since 1655, both as a colony and as a country. This is true of having a money economy, its form of governance, holding elections, the clash of cultures, the quest for freedom, seeking opportunity, and becoming somebody. To think of Jamaica as an 'underdeveloped' or 'developing' or 'third world' country with the goal to be developed, is to be misled by an external formulation. If Jamaica is to be liberated as a country, this mindset has to change or our present and our future will languish in our past.

Jamaica is a modern country of lesser means. Most of the wealth generated from Jamaica's enterprises have not been reinvested in Jamaica's development. Gold robbed from Spanish

domains by pirates and buccaneers headquartered in Port Royal, and earned by Port Royal as a transshipment port especially in the slave trade, was melted into gold bars and shipped to London. This made Port Royal the bullion making capital of the Western Hemisphere. Port Royal, and later Kingston, rivaled Boston and New York as port towns of the Western Hemisphere. Legendary buccaneer leader, Welshman Henry Morgan of lowly birth, got a cut off robbing Spanish gold, bought a plantation in St Mary, became a gentleman, Lt. Governor of Jamaica, and was knighted Sir Henry Morgan. London benefited much more than Port Royal. By 1800 Jamaica was home to some of the wealthiest men and most sophisticated managers of large enterprises in the world. Sugar wealth from Jamaica helped to finance the Industrial Revolution in England, paid much of the British costs of the American War of Independence, and supported the lavish lifestyle of a new social class in England created from brutal exploitation in Jamaica. That class has been mistakenly called absentee planters underplaying their presence, positions, and prominence in England. Jamaica has never been the greatest beneficiary of its wealth.

The Big Picture of The Jamaican People

The Jamaican people are a unique amalgam. Jamaicans are as a peculiar variant of White Anglo Saxon Protestant dominant culture opposed by dissenting Protestants of Britain mixed with Western African cultures of the Akan peoples of Ghana, the Ibo and Ibibio peoples of Nigeria, peoples of West Central Congo, who constitute the majority of the population, along with an indigenous mixture of those called mulattoes, as well as Jews and Christian Lebanese refugees of religious persecution, and indentured servants from China and India. We are a mixed-up set of Old-World peoples in the process of becoming one humanity at home and abroad. Many Jamaicans discover their 'Jamaican-ness' abroad. Many people from elsewhere have come to Jamaica or met Jamaicans and become Jamaicans by choice.

All peoples who came or were brought to Jamaica sought another chance to be somebody in society. This includes both the third and fourth sons of the English aristocracy as well as the sanctuary slaves of West Africa. All groups have exercised agency in their interest. Jamaicans are a 'fight-back' people, especially our women, originally the most marginalized. Claude McKay from the hills of Clarendon in 1919 in New York captured this spirit in his poem: *If We Must Die*. The final line reads: "Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!"

Fighting back has been both a blessing and a bane.

The Big Picture of Liberation

Liberation implies denial of freedom. The two greatest denials of freedom in Jamaica's history have been: i) denial of personal freedom in slavery; and ii) denial of national sovereignty by colonialism. The enslaved in Jamaica repeatedly and consistently rebelled, more than in any other colony. What is not often discussed are alliances among the free and divisions among the enslaved. During slavery, the society was divided by Constitution and law into free and slave. The Maroons, of Akan heritage, fought for and were granted autonomy by Treaties of 1739. This further divided the people of African ancestry, particularly the Akan, and expanded the free, especially by military alliance in case of foreign invasion, and rebellion or run-away by the enslaved. The Tacky Rebellion, Coromantee War, of 1760/61 was the first major test of this alliance of the free. Members of the alliance were the British army, local militias of free men of all complexions, and Maroons. Tacky and Apongo who led the rebellion were Akan. Akan fought Akan.

The Tacky Rebellion, Coromantee War, started in Port Maria and Annatto Bay on Easter Sunday 1760, spread to Portland, St Thomas, Kingston and then jumped to Westmoreland on Whit Sunday. It was started by Tacky in St Mary and continued by Apongo in Westmoreland. It lasted for nearly 18 months. It was put down by the new alliance of the free. The British Press and public became engaged with issues in Jamaica with the rebels gaining many admirers and sympathizers in Britain. The Sam Sharpe Rebellion of 1831/1832, or Baptist War, was put down by the same alliance of the free and with the same brutality as the Coromantee War. Paradoxically, the defeated rebels won emancipation imposed by the Imperial Government in 1833.

The Morant Bay Rebellion, led by Native Baptists, was put down by the same military alliance but with greater brutality, even when everybody was free. Morant Bay rocked and divided British Society and Jamaican society from top to bottom. The murder of George William Gordon was prosecuted in England, while Governor Eyre, the murderer had many defenders in Jamaica. Morant Bay caused the Jamaican Assembly to give up freedom. The Imperial Government imposed Crown Colony Government to deliver on the emancipation promise of citizenship to the descendants of the enslaved. Liberation and Baptist engagement have involved more than education, but education has informed all those involvements.

The 1938 labor and social upheaval started in Serge Island, St Thomas, jumped to Frome in Westmoreland, doubled back to the Kingston waterfront, and then stopped in Port Maria when 11 people were shot dead by the police. This was ricocheting echoes of the past. The British administrators kept records. They heard the echoes. They immediately started the process that resulted in independence in 1962, first by granting adult suffrage and responsible government in 1944. St Mary and the Baptists occupy places on the road from Jamaica's settlement to its emancipation and independence.

I am not attempting to make any moral equivalences between the alliances of oppression and dehumanization and the coalitions of resistance and liberation in Jamaica's history. Rather, I am pointing to the complexity of human engagements. A history of the Jamaican people, as a whole, which refrains from deifying and demonizing, but recalls and recounts the vicious and virtuous deeds of all, is still to be written in order to help to unpack our past, redeem the present and construct the future.

The Big Picture of Baptist Beginnings in Jamaica

Baptists were among evangelical Christians who became allies of the enslaved. Baptists came to Jamaica in January 1783 in the persons of African American Rev George Liele, George Gibbs, and George Lewis from the Southern Colonies and Moses Baker, from New York. All were evacuated by the British navy after the American War of Independence. Moses Baker became an early convert of Rev Liele as did coloured Kingstonian free man Thomas Nicholas Swiegle. Liele arrived with his wife and two children, Baker with his wife, while Gibbs and Lewis were single.

George Liele was born and brought up in Virginia. The Liele family was owned by Henry Sharp who moved to Georgia in 1770. Liele was converted at the Buckhead Creek Baptist church in Georgia in 1771. The church was of Anabaptist orientation. Henry Sharp had become a deacon. Impressed with Liele's piety, zeal, and passion to serve the Lord, in 1773, Sharp manumitted Liele. The Buckhead Creek Baptist Church ordained and licensed him to preach to blacks and whites in Georgia and South Carolina. In 1775, Liele established at Silver Bluff, Georgia, the Ethiopian

Baptist Church of Jesus Christ which was the first church founded by an African American in the United States.

Henry Sharp was killed in the War of Independence. His sons tried to re-enslave the Liele family but failed. As British Troops were being evacuated from Georgia in 1782 Rev. Liele indentured himself to Colonel Kirkland to pay the passages of his family to Jamaica. By his own account, Rev. Liele started preaching in September 1784 at a house in Kingston with a congregation of four. Colonel Kirkland had helped Liele to get a job with the Governor. Eventually, Liele repaid Kirkland and the Liele family joined the free people segment of the Jamaican society.

Liele petitioned the Assembly and was granted a license to preach and established the first Baptist Church in Jamaica, at the corner of Windward and Elliston Roads, which followed an Anabaptist covenant, repeated at least once per month. One element of that covenant was that persecution and suffering were almost an inevitable result of faithful Christian witness. Liele worked to support the young church and was once jailed for debts owed by the Church. The membership of the Kingston chapel included a few whites, some free coloreds, and many blacks, mostly enslaved.

In 1778 Moses Baker and his wife were invited by Isaac Lascelles Winn, a Quaker planter, to give religious instruction to the enslaved on his plantation at Aldephi in St James. There Moses Baker founded the Baptist Chapel with a similar Anabaptist covenant. After Winn died Moses Baker relocated to Flamstead and started a second Baptist chapel in St James.

George Lewis, who was born in Guinea was brought to Virginia and enslaved there. Like Liele he attended, was baptized, and became a member of a Baptist Church in Virginia. In Kingston, and as a member Liele's Church, George Lewis became an itinerant preacher and peddler, mostly in the hills of Clarendon, Manchester, and St Elizabeth. He was hanged for preaching on one of his trips.

George Gibbs was a native of one the Southern States, where he had been enslaved. He became a free man in Jamaica, probably because he paid his passage. He was a teacher at the Baptist Chapel at Windward Road. Gibbs was an assistant of Liele as the latter expanded beyond Kingston, especially in the church established in Spanish Town.

A Mr. Lang, proprietor of Goshen estate in St Mary, had several African Americans among his enslaved. They invited Gibbs to visit them which he did. Later he went to Russell Hall, near Ocho Rios, held services there and baptized many converts of different complexions. Later George Gibbs married a lady from Pembroke Hall, St Mary, settled down and preached there. He preached and held services in the districts including Bagnall and Guy's Hill. Gibbs is credited with first establishing the Baptist church in St Mary and the hills of St Thomas-ye-vale, now St Catherine.

The organizational structure of Baptists and Methodists, which employed Class Houses led by laymen, was attractive to the enslaved, particularly the Ibo and Ibibio who had no central authority in their governance arrangements. As peoples, Ibo and Ibibio were egalitarian in their social order, suspicious of the powerful, practiced conciliation and consensus, and prized individual achievement.

Available evidence is that both Liele and Baker died in about the middle of the 1820s. There is no record of Gibbs having children or when he died, but no reason not to believe that he survived until the 1820s, that is, between 55 and 60 years before Zion Hill Baptist Church was founded. In

1840 there were four Baptist chapels in St Mary. Zion Hill Baptist have a third-generation connection to the pioneering work of George Gibbs in St Mary.

The African Americans who founded Baptist churches in Jamaica were refugees of the American War of Independence. They came by one-way tickets courtesy of the British navy. They joined the free-men class of the Jamaican society but became part of a different segment of free men. Their passion was spreading the Good News of the Gospel not personal advancement. There were whites who were hostile to them and whites who were friendly and gave assistance. They accepted assistance where it served their purpose to build the Kingdom of God and not money.

THE BIG PICTURE OF EDUCATION

Education can be conceived narrowly as formal schooling or more broadly as raising consciousness knowledge or a path of upward social mobility in escaping persistent poverty. The Great Commission given by Jesus in Mathew 28: 16-20: “*Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*” includes education. Galatians 3: 28: “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male nor female for are all one in Christ Jesus is subversive to world’s structures of domination and subordination that practices discrimination*”.

The Gospel and education were subversive to slavery. They afflicted the consciences of some slaveholders and frightened others, even by hymns. For example, Moses Baker was arrested, charged with sedition and inciting insurrection, and jailed in irons on the report of an overseer. The overseer had attended a service at Crooked Spring where Baker led the singing of a hymn written by Isaac Watts. The second verse read:

*We will be slaves no more,
Since Christ has made us free
Has nailed our tyrants to his cross,
And bought our liberty.*

The charges were dropped. At the end of the Second Maroon War in 1796 Moses Baker was slated for deportation but was rescued by influential whites in St James. Faithful Christian witness attracts attention: positive and negative. It is seldom neutral.

Dr. John Rippon, a member of the Particular Baptists in London published the Baptist Annual Register, from 1790 to 1802, which chronicled Baptist work as it began to spread from Britain to North America, and India. In 1790, Rev. Joseph Cook of South Carolina, an English Baptist Minister, wrote to Rippon telling him of George Liele who had gone to Jamaica and established a church. Charles Cooke, a white Kingston merchant, and member of the Assembly, wrote to Rippon in 1891 about the zeal, industry, and Christian example of Liele. Rippon wrote to Liele concerning his articles of faith and practice and sponsored a visit by a Mr. Green to Kingston to confirm the information he had received from Charles Cooke and Liele himself. Dr. Rippon’s inclusion of Baptists in Jamaica in the Register started correspondence between Liele, Baker and the Particular Baptists in England. God works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform.

CHURCH SCHOOLS AND AN UNINTENDED BENEFIT

By 1790, African American and Jamaican Baptists had established church schools in Kingston, Port Royal, and Spanish Town, which had large numbers of free people who desired schooling for

their children. Slavery in Kingston and Port Royal was different from the rest of Jamaica. As port towns, the enslaved were mainly jobbers rented out by their owners to provide services, engage in peddling, and work on wharfs. They too desired schooling. Some paid church dues. Thomas Swiegle, the school master at Windward Road, with Liele's blessing, founded the East Queen Street Baptist Chapel and school by 1800.

In 1802, the Hon Simon Taylor, the third richest man in the British Empire and most powerful oligarch in Jamaica, with vengeance against Methodists, single-handedly engineered in two days, a law passed in the Assembly and Legislative Council and signed by the Governor which shut down preaching by dissenting Protestant denominations in Jamaica. Taylor, a planting attorney, was Custos and Chief Magistrate of St Thomas in the East, Chairman of the Vestry, Member of the Assembly, Major General of the Horse Militia, and Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas. He owned and lived at the Prospect Pen Great House, now Vale Royal. Taylor never married but had a brown paramour at each plantation he owned. He sired many children. He died in 1813. Preaching resume in 1814.

Available evidence suggests that it was their schools that kept Baptist congregations during this period of persecution. Methodists and Moravians sought assistance from their missionary societies in London. Swiegle and Baker restarted their correspondence with the English Baptists in Bristol. In 1807, Swiegle reported that Windward Road and East Queen Street Chapels had about 700 members each. In 1813 African American and Jamaican Baptists invited English Baptists to send missionaries to Jamaica to help to deal with the hostile planter class.

The first English Baptist missionary, Rev. John Rowe, arrived in 1814 and went to assist Moses Baker at Flamstead but could not get a license to preach. He started a fee-paying school in Falmouth. Thomas Swiegle died in 1811. East Queens Baptist church not only survived but grew. English Baptist missionary Rev. Le Compere became the minister in 1818, stayed for one year, was replaced by Rev. James Coultart, who completed the building of the new Chapel with a seating capacity of 2000. At its dedication on January 22, 1822, East Queen Street membership was 2,937, one of the largest Baptist churches in the world. Like most city churches there were problems. Rev. Coultart had some issues with piety that were not different from Paul with the city church at Corinth. From all appearances, persecution for 12 years had exploded Baptist membership as their church schools played a big part in keeping their congregations. Jesus said: "I will establish my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

After 1814, African American pastors and Jamaican lay preachers formed a partnership with the English Baptist missionaries, with the former playing second fiddle to the latter. Jamaica was still the Grim Reaper's Garden. Rev. Rowe died in 1816. Like many who came to Jamaica to make profit, many missionaries of all denominations, died within a year or two of arrival. This did not affect the flow. English Baptists came first to Kingston and Eastern Parishes, but the greatest need was in Western and Northern Parishes. They formed the Western Baptist Union. By the end of the 1820s, Thomas Burchell, James Phillippo, William Knibbs, and Joshua Tinson had become known as the leaders of Baptists in Jamaica. By 1834, they were the acknowledged local champions of the abolition movement in Jamaica.

FREEDOM FRACTURED THE PARTNERSHIP AMONG BAPTISTS

The partnership between the original Baptists and English Baptists fractured after emancipation for profound reasons which included education. Leaders of Baptist churches in the Eastern and

Southern parishes challenged the English Missionaries and Baptist Missionary Society on three main grounds. First, the necessity to continue to recruit missionaries from Britain given proven and gifted Jamaicans who had been their assistants. Second, the need for theological training to qualify as a minister. Adherence to the Bible, piety and exemplary living had been their mainstay of ministry. Rev. William Knibb had no training in New Testament Greek or Hebrew. Third, the use of resources given the cost of recruiting, keeping missionaries especially given the high death rate. Resources could be better employed in ministry.

In 1835, the British Parliament granted 30,000 pounds to fund the Negro Education Grant to provide education for the children of the newly freed in the Empire. It was to be phased out over 10 years. Protestant churches became the allies of the British Parliament in the creation of the Denominational Public Elementary School System, open to all children. In 1835, the British Parliament also granted a similar amount to provide public elementary schools in Britain.

English Baptist missionaries in 1837 formed the Jamaica Baptist Education Society led by Rev. Joshua Tinson. The Committee followed the Liele pattern of funding church schools and took no money from the Negro Education Grant. By 1840, the Education Society had 56 day schools, with 6,901 students, 11 Evening Schools with 407 students and 54 Sunday Schools with 11,875 students. Overall, the Society employed 90 teachers. The attempt to establish a technical school in Spanish Town in 1839 failed.

In 1839/1840, some original Baptist launched the Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society (JNBMS), continued the Liele pattern of church schools but did not establish an overarching coordinating committee as the English Baptists had done. When the Negro Education Grant was phased out in 1845 the Lady Mico Charity closed all their elementary schools, The Anglican Church and other denominations closed most of their elementary schools because they had relied on the Grant. Baptists, Native and English, became the largest and most influential single provider of public schooling in Jamaica because they financed their schools through cash and kind by their churches.

The JNBMS had five rules:

- i) to set aside and ordain persons of known piety for the work of ministry;
- ii) to admit into the Society congregations that were fit and proper;
- iii) to promote Christian education of the young;
- iv) to stimulate and encourage each other in preaching in Jamaica and where funds permitted, to send missionaries to Africa; and
- v) to maintain the unity of the spirit and work with other similar organizations.

The JNBMS became the first missionary society to be established in the Western Hemisphere outside of the United States.

In 1840, the JNBMS had as Secretary, John Duff and Treasurer, William Killick but no President. This had the stamp of Ibo and Ibibio culture. The society had 38 chapels in 13 of the 22 Parishes with a total membership of 13,687. The four chapels in Kingston and four in St Andrew had nearly half the membership. Native Baptist churches were in the southern and eastern Parishes. There were seven chapel in Clarendon and four each in Vere and St Mary. The new Society was immediately larger than those of the Presbyterian, Church of Scotland, and Roman Catholics and equal to Moravians. Only Anglicans, English Baptists and Methodists were larger in membership.

In 1840, English Baptists led the first major voter registration campaign to register black and coloured men to vote to elect candidates that would represent small settler interests in the Assembly and in Vestries. This campaign was island wide. However, the greatest electoral successes were in the southern and eastern Parishes of St John, St Thomas ye-Vale, St Catherine, St David, St Mary, and Portland, not in the Northern and Western, stronghold of the English missionaries.

English Baptists formed the Jamaica Baptist Missionary Society in 1842 with local funding and declared itself financially independent of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in London. When the Baptist Missionary Society sent its first missionaries to Africa in 1843 there were two Jamaicans, Joseph Merrick and Alexander Fuller, aboard the HMS Chilmark.

The BMS in 1839 decided to train Jamaicans as Baptist ministers. On October 3, 1843, Calabar Theological Institution, with Rev. Joshua Tinson as its president, opened in Rio Bueno, Trelawny. Some of the enslaved from Nigeria had named the property 'Calabar' because the Rio Bueno area reminded them of the Port from which they had been shipped on the Calabar River. Again, an Ibo memory was connected to the Baptists and then to education.

At Falmouth, Trelawny in 1849, Baptist churches, most founded by English Missionaries, formed the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU). The denomination had moved from its African American beginnings through English missionary assistance to Jamaican nationality. Note, the BMS was fully focused on Asia, had started to move into Africa, and needed English missionaries to meet those demands. The BMS started to divest full engagement in Jamaica, starting with peaching.

The first collaboration between the JBU and the BMS was in the founding of the Jamaica Normal School in September 1857 at Rio Bueno with nine students and Mr. A. H. Dick BA from London University as its first master. The Jamaica Normal School trained male teachers irrespective of denomination. It was located on the same premises of the Calabar Theological Institution but was a separate entity. The Normal School had a model elementary school as was the standard for the training of teachers. In effect, the JBU assisted by the BMS created an Education Complex which integrated the three tiers of the Denomination Education System which was the principal route of upward social mobility open to the progeny of the formerly enslaved.

The second collaboration was in 1868. The education complex was relocated from rural Rio Bueno to the premises of the East Queen Baptist Church in Kingston, all named Calabar: the Calabar Elementary School, the Calabar Normal School, the Calabar Theological College, and the first attempt at the Calabar High School which did not survive. The Government discontinued funding of denominational colleges training male teachers in 1899, an action taken in all British Colonies in the West Indies. In 1901, the Calabar Theological College was relocated to Chetolah Park.

The third collaboration was the founding of Calabar High School in 1912 on the Chetolah Park premises by Rev. George Price, English, and Rev. David Davis, Australian. In 1952, both institutions were relocated to Red Hills Road, where the Calabar High School remains, and the Calabar Theological College became part of the United Theological College of the West Indies in 1968. From the turn of the 20th century, most English Baptist missionaries came as teachers and not pastors.

English Baptists did not pioneer elementary education in Jamaica, individuals and charitable trusts did. They did not establish church schools, African American Baptists did. Neither did English

Baptists pioneer normal schools, Moravians and Mico did. Neither did they start High Schools, the Roman Catholics did. Nor did English Baptists pioneer theological training at the tertiary level, the Presbyterians did in 1841 with the founding of Presbyterian Theological Hall in Bonham Springs, St Mary, relocated to Montego Bay in 1844.

What English Baptist missionaries did in Jamaica in education, in conjunction with the JBU over a period of about 100 years, mirrored what Baptists did in Britain. English Baptists did the best they knew about education. English Baptist missionaries and the JBU were the first to integrate all levels of schooling into an education system capable of producing Jamaicans of letters of the descendants of the enslaved Jamaicans. Baptists and other Jamaican people supported this vision and participated in its provisions.

HAS THERE BEEN ANY JBU SPONSORED SCHOOL WITHOUT BMS SUPPORT?

The short answer is yes, the William Knibb Memorial High School in Falmouth founded in 1961, by Rev. Stephen James pastor of the Duncan's Circuit of Baptist Churches and chairman of its Board for 17 years. The school was supported by the JBU and many stalwart Baptists. It was grant aided by the Ministry of Education in 1975. The Board, Principals, and teachers have all been Jamaicans.

WESTWOOD HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS: MISSTEP OF THE BMS-JBU ALLIANCE

It would be remiss not to mention a major misstep in education by the JBU-BMS collaboration: Westwood High School for Girls, founded in 1882. Three Knibb brothers came to Jamaica. Thomas came as a teacher and died a year after he arrived. William and Edward followed him and survived. Edward had two daughters who founded a school for girls in Falmouth. Rev. Menzie Webb, Baptist Minister, and a Presbyterian Minister, both black, registered their daughters at the school. White parents objected and when the Knibb sisters refused to dismiss the two black girls, white parents withdrew their daughters resulting in the temporary closure of the school.

Rev. Webb was the pastor of the Stewart Town Baptist Church. With assistance of funds raised by the wife of the Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society in England and the help of Rev. Henderson of the Brown's Town Baptist Church, Web founded the Westwood School, in Stewart Town, Trelawny, open to girls of all complexions. Rev. Webb applied to the JBU for the school to come under its umbrella. The JBU declined. It would seem that up to 1912, the JBU was committed to the education of only black and coloured men. Rev. Webb was elected the member of the Legislative Council from Trelawny in 1901, probably as a mark of people support for his spirit of resistance and success in education.

WHAT OF THE NATIVE BAPTISTS AND THEIR SCHOOLS?

The short answer is four-fold. First, the economic crisis of 1846 following the Sugar Duties Equalization Act and the Cholera Pandemic of 1850-1851 devastated the limited resources of the JNBMS. Second, the success of the initiatives of the English Baptists resulted in many native Baptists, including some churches, joining the JBU. Third, Native Baptists left schools to their individual churches and did not collaborate to establish education institutions above the infant and elementary levels. Fourth, Native Baptist Churches were systematically wiped out by the reign of terror ordered by Governor Eyre following the Morant Bay riot. The remnant that survived the reign of terror joined JBU churches. We have only begun to scratch the surface of the sacrifice made by Native Baptists in the liberation of the Jamaican people.

Jamaican history is replete with instances of alliances of subordinated groups with the dominant for their advantage. Jamaican history is also replete with instances of the beneficiaries of dominant structures who were not satisfied with personal success but sought the liberation of their peers ending in personal sacrifice. Examples of the latter are privileged enslaved who were drivers, broilers, and artisans being the architects of many slave rebellions; Deacon Sam Sharpe and his class members, several English Baptists and Methodists missionaries of Western Jamaica in the Baptist War; and George William Gordon, Paul Bogle, and several elementary school teachers of the Morant Bay riot. These two opposing factions are differentiated by conscience not complexion and by self-interest versus the common good.

FRANCIS WILLIAMS, WHITE SUPREMACY AND THE JAMAICAN SPIRIT

As far as I am concerned all Jamaican history, except for the period of Taino civilization, includes Black history. However, to honor your request for specific attention to February as Black History Month and the focus on education, I will conclude with an aspect of Jamaica's history in education that has been recorded but not celebrated. It illustrates the inconvenient truth that vice and virtue have no color. It is also a stumbling block in using single factors of the present to interpret the past.

A slave, John Williams was manumitted posthumously by his owner who left him a decent legacy. The deed was passed into law by the Assembly in 1708. It made Williams a free man with the 'rights to the known laws, customs, and privileges of an Englishman'. John Williams became a successful planter, owned slaves, and married Dorothy. John and Dorothy Williams had two sons Francis, born in 1702 and Thomas afterwards. The Williams brothers received elementary education at a fee-paying school in Spanish Town.

As the peoples of Africa and Europe collided there was curiosity about the humanity of both, each by the other. The Duke of Montagu, a plantation owner, shared this curiosity. Could a negro provided with the same opportunity as a white man perform equally, intellectually? To an Englishman, there could be no higher standard of proof than grammar school and university education in England. If a negro could receive grammar schooling in England, earn matriculation to university, and graduate from Cambridge or Oxford University, then the intellectual ability of negro and the white man was equal. The Duke decided on an experiment with one subject.

The Duke of Montagu selected Francis Williams. He paid William's passage to England, the costs of boarding, grammar schooling, and university education. Williams successfully completed study at an English grammar school, earned matriculation and graduated from Cambridge University. Francis Williams in 1721 became the first Black graduate of Cambridge University. That is exactly 300 years ago.

Do not believe that 2021 is the first time a black Jamaican has been first in high places. Also at least since 1721, basic education received in Jamaica has allowed Jamaicans to compete successfully in the best schools and colleges in the Western World. Francis Williams was no exceptional case. Professor Kamau Brathwaite documented that between 1770 and 1820, two hundred and twenty-seven Jamaicans graduated from Oxford and Cambridge.

Edward Long was one of the greatest proponents of white supremacy. He knew Francis Williams personally and of the Duke's experiment. Long never said or wrote a single pleasant word about

Francis Williams. Long was not given to facts or proof. He hated and demeaned Williams and all people of African ancestry. Long was dogmatic and impervious to truth that contradicted dogma.

Williams had a biting wit and gave as good as he got. A member of the Assembly once called Williams a 'black monkey' whereupon Williams replied that if he was a black monkey, then the Assembly man was a 'white monkey', since humans came from Africa. With fierce sophistication and subtle wit Williams wrote poetry in English and Latin. Here is one of Francis William's ditties for the ages.

*The bountiful Deity, with a hand powerful and firm,
Has given the same soul to men of all races,
Nothing standing in His way.
Virtue itself and prudence are free from color.
There is no colour in a honorable mind,
No colour in skill.*

Williams wrote an Ode in Latin to each new Governor of Jamaica.

Francis Williams was among the first Afro-Saxons of the Caribbean. That is, master of the English language, culture, and mores as well as any Englishman. This is affirmative resistance to insinuations of inferiority. Francis Williams was Anglican. This is not to say that the Anglican Church is the domain of Afro-Saxons, but it is to say that equaling the master at his own culture is not often understood as resistance to assertions of superiority and supremacy as any other form of resistance. It is as disruptive and destructive as physical rebellion and the deceptive and clever schemes of Anancy. Its source is mastery in education and a liberated mind.

Errol Miller, February 21, 2021.