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Dissenting Missionaries, Public Opinion and the Campaign Against British Colonial Slavery, 1831-1834

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**Dissenting Missionaries, Public Opinion and
the Campaign Against British Colonial
Slavery, 1831-1834**

Gordon Robert Haigh

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the Degree of Master of Philosophy**

Date: June 2019

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I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the relationship between the persecution of missionaries in the Caribbean and the mobilisation of the British public against slavery. It focuses on the response in Britain following a major slave insurrection in Jamaica at Christmas 1831 when Baptist missionaries were falsely accused by the planters of instigating the event. It examines how the British press, missionary societies and abolitionists reacted to news of the missionaries' persecution and discusses how this energised evangelicals to engage in anti-slavery politics. Historians have acknowledged that evangelicals were a powerful force in the ending of slavery in the 1830s and this thesis begins by discussing the historiography concerning the relationship between evangelicals, missions and anti-slavery. It moves on to provide a general outline context of the history of evangelicalism, missions and anti-slavery in Britain. It also briefly discusses earlier instances of intense persecution of missionaries in the Caribbean, following a slave uprising in 1823, and the impact of this in Britain. The thesis then focuses on exploring the reactions in Britain to the persecution of the missionaries in Jamaica. It discusses the responses in the press and missionary society periodicals, and influence on public opinion regarding slavery. It then examines the impact of the speaking tours of Britain conducted by missionaries who returned from Jamaica, especially the Reverend William Knibb, who conducted a two-year national public speaking campaign calling for the immediate ending of slavery. Finally, it examines the impact of evidence presented to Parliamentary Select Committees by the returned missionaries. The thesis concludes that the news of the persecuted missionaries in Jamaica and the missionaries' own public speaking tour were major factors in motivating the evangelical public to play a significant role in the final stages of the anti-slavery campaign that resulted in the successful passage of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank the staff of Sheffield Hallam University Library, Bodleian and Angus Libraries in Oxford, the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, Bristol Baptist College library and Sheffield City Archives for their help during the research for this thesis. I would also like to thank Bev Chapman and Christie Bannister, Student Support Officers in the Sheffield Hallam University's Graduate School for their invaluable assistance. My gratitude also goes to my wife, Diane, and fellow students, Mike and Rachael, for their constant encouragement. Finally, I would like to thank Sheffield Hallam University for the genuine privilege of appointing Professor Alison Twells as my Director of Studies and Professor Clare Midgley as my Research Supervisor whose patience, inspiration and support have been so much appreciated. My thanks go to you all.

Gordon Haigh

INTRODUCTION

'It was much in the way thus quaintly described, that a better order of things was brought about in British Guiana and the other West India Colonies. The Martyrdom of *Smith* in Demerara ... the irrational violence to which *Shrewsbury* was subjected in Barbadoes - the vile persecution to which *Knibb* and others were exposed in Jamaica - and the cruel suffering of very many of obscurer position and humbler name - all did their part, as so many practical and unmistakable developments of the horrid nature of West Indian slavery; a system, which when thus seen in its true character, was indignantly repudiated by the British nation, as a foul disgrace to the British name. The friends of religion and liberty, after fifty years' hard toil on behalf of the African race, at length succeeded in obtaining from the British Parliament the Act of Emancipation, which embodied a legal recognition of the *right* of the slave to be free.'¹

This quotation from a hagiographical missionary memoir suggests that outrage in Britain at the persecution of missionaries in the Caribbean colonies played a crucial role in bringing about the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833. The period within which the events described occurred was the decade from 1823 and involved Dissenting and Methodist missionaries who worked with enslaved black people in the British West Indies' plantation colonies.² This thesis takes the above statement by E. A. Wallbridge as the starting point and critically evaluates how the events in Jamaica following a major slave insurrection that involved Baptist and Methodist missionaries in 1831-32 influenced the people in Britain concerning colonial slavery.³

¹ Quotation is from Edwin Angel Wallbridge, *The Demerara Martyr* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969 [1848]), p. 189. Note: Barbados was formally spelt 'Barbadoes'. The word 'Negro' has been used in this thesis as it appeared in contemporary sources or in the titles of organisations and publications. By using this word, the author does in any way condone its use in the present-day context.

² Use shall be made of the term 'Dissenter' in this thesis rather than 'Nonconformist' since the former was the popular term in the early-nineteenth century for Protestants groups which did not subscribe to the tenets of the Church of England. The terms 'Nonconformist' or 'Free Church' became more appropriate in the Victorian and later periods. In England and Wales. Dissenters were mainly Baptists and Congregationalist or Independents. In Scotland the 'Dissent' was similarly used in the early-nineteenth century to describe (mainly) Presbyterians outside the Church of Scotland and in Scotland the term Nonconformist was not used. See David W Bebbington, *Victorian Nonconformity* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2011), pp. 1-22. In this thesis 'Methodists' have been loosely included as 'Dissenters' although as Owen Chadwick has identified, 'Methodists were not sure whether they were Dissenters' on account of their close relationship with the Anglican Church. See Owen Chadwick *The Victorian Church, Part 1, 1829-1859* (London: SMC Press, 1971), p. 370.

³ The term 'slavery' has a variety of meanings but, in this thesis, it refers to people in the Caribbean who were treated as the 'property' of the plantation owners and who were frequently exploited, punished, forced to labour and bought or

General Background

The trans-Atlantic shipment of enslaved Africans to the British Caribbean colonies had legally ended in 1807. In order to combat the continuing illicit transportation, laws were passed requiring the colonies to keep registers of all enslaved people and in 1819 a central register was established in London in which the records from the colonies were deposited.⁴ However, although this provided statistical information, it could not measure the often barbaric treatment of enslaved people.⁵ Aware of this continuing ill-treatment abolitionists believed that conditions should be eased and that enslaved people, should be *gradually* prepared for eventual liberty.⁶ In order to achieve this, in January 1823, the London based *Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions* - the Anti-Slavery Society - was founded.⁷ Within months of its creation, and before William Wilberforce had relinquished his leadership of the abolitionist party in Parliament to Thomas Fowell Buxton in 1825, the latter in May 1823 presented a motion to the House of Commons proposing legislation to control the punishment and improve the conditions of people living under slavery.⁸ Like many other abolitionists, Buxton, as an Evangelical, believed that enslaved people should be Christianised, particularly in readiness of emancipation. He consequently proposed that religious instruction be arranged and enslaved people be encouraged to attend religious gatherings. However, the Leader of the Commons, George Canning, being unconvinced by Buxton's proposal to legislate for the improvements, instead persuaded the House that British Colonies should voluntarily introduce 'amelioration' measures.⁹ Despite the fact that Canning had consulted those in

sold as 'commodities'. Generally, the enslaved people were either plantation (predial) workers or domestic (non-predial) workers. In this thesis the term 'abolitionist' applies generally to those who opposed slavery. The term 'Caribbean' comprises the region southeast of the Gulf of Mexico and the North American mainland, the West Indian islands and the area east of Central America, and north of South America. The colony of Demerara-Essequibo, which is now within Guyana on the north coast of South America, has been foreshortened in this thesis to 'Demerara'.

⁴ Barbara Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society, 1650-1838* (London: James Currey, 1990), pp. 30-31

⁵ William A Green, *British Slave Emancipation, The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment, 1830-1865*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 100n; Bush, *Slave Women*, pp. 40-45. See also C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (London: Penguin Books, 2001, [1938]), pp. 9-10.

⁶ Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains, The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery* (London: Pan Books, 2006), pp. 322-323.

⁷ In this thesis the term 'Anti-Slavery Society' will be used as an abbreviation for longer title of the Society.

⁸ Charles Buxton (ed), *Memoirs of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, Baronet*, (London: John Murray, 1848), pp. 129-130.

⁹ Generally, British colonies were either 'Crown Colonies' which were under the direct control of the Crown or 'Chartered or Legislative Colonies' which had elected Houses of Assembly and set their own laws. Each colony had a Governor who was the monarch's represented appointed to oversee the Assembly. Crown Colonies' included Trinidad and 'Chartered or Legislative Colonies' included Jamaica. The latter colonies were recommended to introduce the amelioration measures while in 1824 the Crown colonies were obliged to implement the measures. The West Indies

Britain having pecuniary interests in the colonial economy, when the white planter-dominated colonial administrations received notification from the Colonial Office of the recommendations, there was huge resistance as it was believed that control of their enslaved workforce would be eroded and that the lucrative Caribbean export business would be jeopardised. These amelioration measures also had consequences for Dissenting and Methodist missionaries who worked with enslaved black people in the colonies. This was because the planters and colonial administrations believed that the missionaries were in league with the British abolitionists who had supported the amelioration measures and consequently the missionaries became the focus of much local resentment.

One of the victimised missionaries was the Congregationalist, Reverend John Smith, a missionary of the London Missionary Society (LMS), who was arrested for instigating a slave insurrection in Demerara in 1823.¹⁰ This was followed in the same year by persecution in Barbados of the Wesleyan missionary, Reverend William Shrewsbury of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS).¹¹ Then, about a decade later, Baptist and Wesleyan missionaries, who had been sent to work with the enslaved people in Jamaica by the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) and WMMS respectively, were arrested for involvement in a major insurrection at Christmas time in 1831. This latter incident forms the core of this thesis.

Before the insurrection in Jamaica, because of the suspicion by the white colonists that the missionaries were involved in anti-slavery agitation, strong opposition to these 'Sectarians' had developed.¹² Consequently, the blame for instigating the rebellion in Jamaica was directed towards the missionaries, some of whom were arrested and imprisoned. In 1832, after trials and when the charges against them had been dropped, some Baptist and Wesleyan missionaries returned to Britain in order to inform their missionary societies of

were administered by the West Indian Department of the Colonial Office, which was controlled by the Secretary of State and his Parliamentary Under-Secretary. For more details see Green, *British Slave Emancipation*: pp. 65-84, 101-105.

¹⁰ See Wallbridge, *The Demerara Martyr*; David Chamberlin, *Smith of Demerara, Martyr-Teacher of the Slaves* (London: Simpkin, Marshal, Hamilton, Kent & Co. 1923).

¹¹ John V. B. Shrewsbury, *Memorials of the Rev William J Shrewsbury* (London: Hamilton, Adams, & Co., 1869).

¹² 'Sectarians' was the title given to religious groups which did not adhere to the tenets of the Established Church and was often used in the colonies as a derogatory word for Dissenters.

the abuses they had experienced. Reverend William Knibb, a Baptist, and the Wesleyans, Reverends Peter Duncan and John Barry, after meeting their missionary societies, presented evidence to Parliamentary Select Committees and took part in a national anti-slavery public speaking campaign where they effectively exposed the atrocities of colonial slavery they had witnessed. The arrival of the missionaries from Jamaica coincided with a campaign by the Agency Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society to persuade the British public to support the *immediate* ending of colonial slavery. This was also the time when legislation for the formation of a reformed Parliament had been passed that would, during the following year, result in the election of a Whig administration which supported the abolition of slavery. In 1833 the Slavery Abolition Act was passed and this became effective on the 1st August 1834. Associated with this legislation was a huge compensation payment to the planters for their loss of enslaved labour. However, for the formerly enslaved people, a transitional arrangement, the 'apprenticeship' scheme, had been imposed which, according to abolitionists, was slavery but as another name. After further campaigning by abolitionists, this arrangement ended in 1838.

Aims and Approach of the Thesis

It is the general aim of this thesis to explore how the persecution of Baptist and Methodist missionaries in Jamaica, following a slave insurrection at Christmas 1831, and the accounts of these events by the missionaries who later returned to home to Britain, had influenced British public opinion against the continuation colonial slavery that in turn contributed Parliament passing the Abolition legislation in 1833.

This thesis is particularly concerned with the mobilisation of what Catherine Hall has called the 'missionary public'. This being a sector of the British population that supported Christian missions and which was often able to influence broader 'public opinion'.¹³ In discussing the concept of 'public opinion', Hall draws on the

¹³ The term 'missionary public' appeared in *The Home Mission*, a publication of the American Home Missionary Society, (New York, William Osborn, June, 1848), Vol. XX, p. 28. The 'missionary public' is defined by Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007 [2002]), pp. 292-295.

work of Jürgen Habermas who, in the mid-1960s, introduced the concept of the 'public sphere' as 'the realm of social life' where discourse takes place between private individuals. In this space there is free communication between individuals and it is here where 'public opinion' can be formed.¹⁴ In a democratic society, the public sphere ideally mediates between society and the state and its authorities.¹⁵

More recent scholarship has offered further insights into the nature of 'public opinion'. In the third edition of Carroll J. Glynn's comprehensive study published in 2016, several definitions of the term were explored including it being a 'rhetorical construction', the aggregate of all or the majority of individual opinions, or a reflection of the opinions of the influential 'elite'.¹⁶ Examining the history of the concept, Glynn referred to the 'modern' theorist of public opinion, James Bryce, who, during the late nineteenth century, argued that newspapers reflected and influenced the views of the public.¹⁷ Then, writing in the 1920s, Walter Lippmann considered how public opinion was formed and argued that people's views of reality were guided by the 'pictures in their head' and the creation of 'stereotypes' which were not just formed by the individual but were influenced by the surrounding culture. Therefore, stereotypes, although not necessarily accurate, provided a description of people or a population which helped to form a sense of understanding of the world.¹⁸ Lippmann's contemporary, Edward Bernays, argued that, in addition to the influence of the press, public opinion was formed by external factors such as church sermons and lectures all of which were 'moulders of the public mind'.¹⁹

For historians, public opinion is a useful concept as it encapsulates the range of attitudes and opinions identified in various sources such as the records of public

¹⁴ Jürgen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere' in C. Mukerji & M. Schudson (ed.) *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspective in Cultural Studies* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 389-404; Also Jürgen Habermas, 'The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article (1964)', *New German Critique*, No. 3, (Autumn, 1974), pp. 45-55.

¹⁵ There are various explanations of the 'public sphere'. See Kate Nash's 'Introduction' in Nancy Fraser et al, *Transnationalizing the Public Sphere*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), p. 1

¹⁶ Carroll J. Glynn, et al, *Public Opinion* (Boulder, USA: Westview Press, Third Edition, 2016), pp. 13-25. Also see Edward Bernays, *Crystalizing Public Opinion* (North America: Liveright, 1923 and later republished by Ig Publishing New York, 2011), pp. 87-92

¹⁷ Glynn, *Public Opinion*, pp. 40-45.

¹⁸ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, (New York: Harcourt, 1922); Edward Bernays, *Crystalizing Public Opinion*, (New York: Open Road, 2011 [1923]) and *Propaganda* (New York: Liveright, 2005 [1928]); Also see Glynn, *Public Opinion*, pp. 16-19.

¹⁹ Bernays, *Crystallizing*, pp. 93-105. Five years later Bernays published his book, *Propaganda* (New York: Liveright, 2005 [1928]).

meetings, petitions to Parliament, and editorials and letters published in newspapers and periodicals. In this thesis, the impact of the events in Jamaica on British public opinion on slavery will be explored with particular reference to newspapers and religious and anti-slavery periodicals.

Regarding the nineteenth century press as a source for historical research, Aled Jones has commented on how, through the advancement in print-technology and improved transportation, newspapers became readily available in both urban and rural parts of the country. In addition, through improved literacy, newspapers 'percolated through the middle and lower-middle classes to the vast and previously untapped market of the working class'.²⁰ Jones has also suggested that the press not only influenced 'the human mind' but shaped 'social behaviour'. Thus, by the mid-century, the press became 'securely implanted into the cultural landscape as an essential reference point in the daily lives of millions of people.' Newspapers were, therefore, agents of change as they disseminated information and ideas to the British population.²¹

Hannah Barker has also considered how the freedom of the press was embodied in the notion of British liberty and why, during the early nineteenth century, it was described as the 'fourth estate' (i.e. after the church, aristocracy and the state) since it adopted the role of protector of democracy and public interest.²² While Barker has suggested that editorials and the style of reporting represented the opinion of the public, so too did published letters. However, as Denise Bates has argued, editorials often expressed the opinion of the newspapers' senior staff, as well as reflecting the values of the proprietor and, arguably, the newspaper's readership.²³ British newspapers, according to Barker, unlike their European counterparts, were far more critical and outspoken of government and the opinions they imparted assisted in bringing politics from the 'restricted arena of the political and social elite to a much wider

²⁰ Aled Jones, *Power of the Press* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996), pp. 5-7.

²¹ Jones, *Power*, pp. xi - 4.

²² Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (Harrow: Pearson Education, 2000), pp. 11-28.

²³ Denise Bates, *Historical Research Using British Newspapers* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books Limited, 2016), Bates also commented on newspapers being used as a historical source in order to determine public opinion since editorials and published letters could represent bias and cultural prejudice, pp. 23-56.

public.²⁴ While the emphasis on shaping public opinion has been credited to the press, as Susan Thorne has argued, religion in the nineteenth century was also a highly influential force despite only half of Britain's adult population regularly attending church and chapel services. Therefore, and in agreement with Catherine Hall, it was at such religious gatherings where, during the early nineteenth century, public opinion was often shaped.²⁵ In addition to the influence from the pulpit, as will be seen in this thesis, was the part played by religious periodicals some of which were published by missionary societies.

Primary Sources

As the British press is a key primary source in this thesis, the following outlines the range of newspapers that were published in the early nineteenth-century together with their political perspectives.²⁶ The most dominant and highly respected newspaper of the period, particularly because of its popularity with the establishment, was *The Times*. From 1817 to 1841 its editor was the liberal-minded Thomas Barnes who ensured that the newspaper retained its 'independent, accurate and strong' reputation and it became known as 'The Thunderer'.²⁷ The main rival for *The Times* was the 'reforming' *Morning Chronicle*. By 1823 this newspaper was owned by John Perry who supported the Whig party and recruited Britain's best radical journalists.²⁸ Another popular daily newspaper of the period was *The Morning Post*, which originally was a Whig newspaper but later adopted a Tory position.²⁹ Included in the list of provincial newspapers was the *Manchester Guardian* which had been founded in 1821 by a Dissenter, John Edward Taylor, who aimed to promote liberal interests.³⁰ There was also an abundance of local and provincial newspapers and included within these were the liberal *Liverpool Mercury*, *The Leeds Mercury* and *Sheffield Independent*, the latter two also having an association

²⁴ Hannah Barker, 'England, 1760-1815' in Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows, (eds.) *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). pp. 93-94.

²⁵ Susan Thorne, 'Religion and Empire at Home' in Catherine Hall and Sonya O Rose (eds.), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 143-146.

²⁶ Please note, in this thesis reference is made to the digitized copies of the British newspapers available on-line from Gale, which is a Cengage Learning partner with the British Library. Although dates of the newspapers are given, sometimes page numbers do not appear and for this reason these details are not always presented in the thesis.

²⁷ Bates, *Historical Research*, p. 5

²⁸ Bates, *Historical Research*, p. 4.

²⁹ Bates, *Historical Research*, p. 4. Also, Laurel Brake & Marysa Demoor (eds.) *Dictionary of Nineteenth-century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (London: British Library and Academia Press, 2009), p. x.

³⁰ Bates, *Historical Research*, pp. 5-6.

with Dissenters.³¹ Of the Scottish newspapers, the liberal weekly, *The Scotsman*, was published in Edinburgh from 1811 and this was predated by *The Observer* which became Britain's first Sunday paper.³² According to Barker, by the 1830s newspaper readership in the provinces represented 16% of the population of England while in London the estimated figure was five times higher.³³

One feature of the nineteenth-century British press was the re-publishing of articles that had previously appeared in other newspapers. This was true of reports and letters that had previously been published in the colonial press although they were often delayed by up to two months because of the long sea voyage involved. An important aspect of this thesis is the examination of these newspaper articles and letters that had been re-published in the British press and often expressed colonial opposition to the abolitionists and missionaries.

In addition to the newspapers, several other primary sources are extensively used in the thesis. Firstly, there are the periodicals published by the key organisations. In the case of the Anti-Slavery Society, there are *The Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, (1825-1830) and *The Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend* (1830-1836) which presented information about the Society's campaigns at the national and local level, and many items of news on slavery. In the case of the Dissenting and Methodist denominations and missionary societies, these included the *Baptist Magazine* (1809-1904), *The Christian Observer* (1802-1874), *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* (1813-1836), *Missionary Chronicle* (1836-1890), the WMMS's *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* (1823-1918) and the BMS's *Missionary Herald* (1819-72). Apart from the education provided by these religious magazines, those who supported missions generally gained knowledge of overseas missions from visiting missionaries, letters, sermons and the general press.³⁴ However, regarding these missionary society publications, as Jeffery Cox has pointed out, they tended to be hagiographic and prejudiced against those who opposed

³¹ Jeremy Black, *The English Press 1621-1861*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001), p. 164.

³² Bates, *Historical Research*, pp. 10-11.

³³ Barker, *Newspapers*, p. 46-48.

³⁴ Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 13-14.

missions.³⁵ Of importance in this thesis is Andrew Walls' observation that while the abolitionists had certainly mobilised public opinion on slavery, because of the support given by missionary public, missionary societies gradually took over this anti-slavery role.³⁶

Other sources used in the thesis are parliamentary papers that contain reports of select committees, legislation and the action taken by the Government. Within these is *Hansard* which was the main accurate and impartial record of Parliamentary debates in the Houses of Lords and Commons. As a means of examining the discussions and resolutions of the Anti-Slavery Society and the BMS, the committee minutes of these organisations are important primary sources. In addition, the first-hand written accounts by witnesses of slavery together with the missionary biographies, despite being hagiographical by nature, also provide valuable evidence.

Structure of the Thesis

It is the principal aim of the thesis to show how information about the persecution of Baptist and Methodist missionaries by white colonists in Jamaica aided British abolitionists in their campaign for the immediate ending of slavery. This was reinforced by those missionaries who returned to Britain and took part in a national public speaking anti-slavery campaign. The thesis is divided into two parts, the first, which comprises chapters 1 and 2, presents an overview of evangelicals, missionaries and the anti-slavery movement in Britain. Chapter 1 will present a critical overview of the historiography concerning the relationship between the missionary movement, evangelicalism and the anti-slavery movement. Chapter 2, by drawing on secondary source material, will provide the essential context for the case study. It will begin by outlining the development of evangelicalism and the emergence of the missionary movement from the eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. Chapter 2 will then discuss the development of the anti-slavery movement and finally provide a summary of the events in 1823 concerning the persecution of missionaries in Demerara and

³⁵ Jeffery Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 114-124.

³⁶ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), pp. 251-252.

Barbados. The second part of the thesis comprises chapters 3 and 4 and will be based on an analysis of primary source material concerning the missionary persecution and public opinion against slavery in the aftermath of the Jamaica slave uprising of 1831-32. Chapter 3 will begin with an outline of how missionaries were accused of instigating the event and this will be followed by an examination of the responses by the British press and missionary societies to the missionaries' arrest and the further intensifying anti-mission sentiments in Jamaica. Chapter 4 will initially examine how those missionaries who returned home from Jamaica and became involved in the anti-slavery campaign, generated public support for the immediate abolition of colonial slavery. The chapter will then show how the abolitionist leadership used the persecution of the missionaries to forward their anti-slavery campaign and how the missionaries themselves directly influenced politicians on the slavery question. The Conclusion will discuss how information about the persecution of Methodist and Dissenting missionaries by the plantocracy in Jamaica, and those missionaries who returned to Britain to take part in a national speaking tour, contributed to the campaign for the immediate ending of colonial slavery.

**PART 1: EVANGELICALS, MISSIONARIES AND ANTI-SLAVERY
IN BRITAIN: AN OVERVIEW**

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW: CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AND ANTI-SLAVERY

Part 1 of this thesis, which comprises this and the following chapter, draws on secondary source material to explore the relationship between Protestant evangelical Christian missions and anti-slavery in Britain during the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century. In this chapter a review of the historiography of the relationship between the missionary, evangelicalism and the anti-slavery movements will be considered. After briefly discussing the value of nineteenth-century biographies of missionaries, it will be shown how the early anti-slavery histories, which were written by British scholars, emphasised the importance of British elite abolitionists and their humanitarianism drive. The publication of Caribbean scholarship in the 1930s and 1940s marked the first challenge to the British-centred scholarship by placing the enslaved people at the centre of anti-slavery activity and raising the possibility that economics, rather than humanitarianism, was the causal factor. The so-called economic 'decline theory' generated much debate and although elements of this were later disproved, this work opened up new areas of investigation. From the 1960s, with decolonisation and the spread of anti-colonial nationalism, there was a growth of non-European anti-colonial critique that reinforced the emphasis on the enslaved peoples' own part in achieving emancipation. The 'new social history' and then 'women's histories' also began to emerge, with studies revealing the importance of public pressure on Parliament and the involvement of British women in anti-slavery. From the 1990s, 'new imperial history' began to explore the relationship between Britain and its colonies from postcolonial perspectives.¹

The first accounts of the relationship between missionary work in the Caribbean and anti-slavery activity in Britain were generally written by relations, ministers or other supporters of the missionary movement. These nineteenth-century biographies, which tended to be published for a Christian readership and

¹ See Catherine Hall & Sony Rose, 'Introduction: Being at home with the Empire' in Hall & Rose, *At Home with the Empire*, for a full description of the historiography of the Empire and the Metropole, pp, 1-31.

focused on how missionaries tackled the Christianisation of the 'heathen' world, were, as Clare Anderson has cautioned, generally missionary-centred and hagiographical.² Yet, as Emily Manktelow has pointed out, while missionary biographies have had a chequered past, they are once again being explored by scholars as they enrich historical understanding.³ Of relevance to this thesis are the biographies by John Howard Hinton, Edward Bean Underwood and William Fitzer Burchell who respectively wrote about the Baptist missionaries, William Knibb, James Mursell Phillippo and Thomas Burchell all of whom worked with the enslaved people in Jamaica and later played a major role in the British anti-slavery campaign.⁴ Despite the partisan nature of these accounts, they contain valuable information about the lives and experiences of the missionaries, including extracts from primary sources such as letters which, if read carefully, provide useful sources for critical scholarship.

The earliest academic scholarship on anti-slavery came from British historians whose work emphasised the humanitarian drive of the 'Clapham Sect', a group elite Anglican Evangelicals who collectively became known as 'the Saints'. These histories conveyed a sense of pride in the nation's moral action in ending slavery. W. E. H. Lecky, for example, stated in 1884 that 'the unweary, unostentatious, and inglorious crusade of England against slavery may probably be regarded as amongst the three or four perfect virtuous pages comprised in the history of the nation.'⁵ Lecky's approach, by focusing on the humanitarianism of the anti-slavery movement, remained the undisputed interpretation of British anti-slavery. William Law Mathieson in 1926 and Sir Reginald Coupland in 1933 similarly focused on the campaigning by elite anti-slavery activists particularly William Wilberforce, his Anglican Evangelical associates and their Quaker allies.⁶ Frank Klingberg, writing in 1968, continued

² Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 17.

³ Emily J. Manktelow, *Missionary Families, Race, Gender and Generation on the Spiritual Frontier*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2013), pp.10-11.

⁴ John Howard Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb, Missionary in Jamaica* (London: Houlston & Stoneman (Second Edition) 1849), Edward Bean Underhill, *Life of James Mursell Phillippo, Missionary in Jamaica* (London: Yates & Alexander, 1881), William Fitzer Burchell, *Memoir of Thomas Burchell, Twenty-Two Years a Missionary in Jamaica* (London: Benjamin L. Green, 1849).

⁵ Although the work of Thomas Clarkson had previously been published in 1839 and a biography of William Wilberforce was published by his sons in 1841, the first major work on anti-slavery was by W. E. H. Lecky whose *A History of European Morals*, was published in 1869. The above quotation appeared in the 6th edition that was published in 1884, Vol. 1, p. 153.

⁶ William Law Mathieson, *British Slavery and its Abolition* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1926); Sir Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: Frank Cass, 1964 [1933]). See comments by Jack Gratus, *The*

to emphasise the humanitarianism of the British anti-slavery movement while moving beyond an exclusive focus on the abolitionist leadership to explore the involvement of the middle classes and evangelical congregations. While acknowledging the persecution of John Smith in Demerara and William Shrewsbury in Barbados during 1823, Klingberg ignored the anti-slavery campaigning by those missionaries who returned from Jamaica in the early 1830s. Nevertheless, he did recognise how the 'modern agencies of publicity; lecture, pamphlet, newspaper and bill board' had all shaped the public mind on slavery.⁷ This thesis will explore how some of these same agencies influenced British public opinion on slavery but, rather than focusing on 'the Saints', will instead examine the publicity associated with the persecution of the missionaries in Jamaica and their involvement in the anti-slavery campaign.

In the 1930s and 1940s a major challenge to British-centred humanitarian abolition historiography came from two Trinidadian Marxist scholars. Firstly, in 1938, C. L. R. James published his pioneering work, *The Black Jacobins*, which focused on the enslaved people as being 'agents' of their own liberty and who, under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture, created the first black republic following a revolution in the French colony of San Domingo (Haiti) in the 1790s.⁸ Secondly, after many years of rejections in Britain, in 1944 the University of North Carolina Press published Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery*.⁹ This work, which was a precursor to later post-colonial histories, opened up a long debate that has lasted into the twenty-first century as was evident by a conference held at University College London in 2018.¹⁰ In his controversial book, Williams argued that the slave trade and slavery played an important role in the funding of the industrial revolution in Britain and that a decline in growth from 1783 had led to the ending of the slave trade in 1807 and the abolition of slavery two and a half decades later. Furthermore, Williams argued, the public campaign against slavery simply added to the hastening end of the

Great White Lie, (London: Monthly Review Press, 1973), p. 13, on how early British scholars had created myths in abolition history.

⁷ Frank L. Klingberg, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in England: A Study in English Humanitarianism* (Los Angeles: Archon Books, 1968), pp. vii-viii, 218-249.

⁸ C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (London: Penguin Books, 2001 [1938]), Introduction by James Walvin, pp. viii-ix.

⁹ Eric Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994 [1944])

¹⁰ Conference: *Slavery & Capitalism, The Williams' Thesis for the 21st Century*, held at UCL on 5th May 2018 - <https://slaveryandcapitalism.wordpress.com/> See also, UCL's recent project concerning the distribution of the £20m compensation to slave owners, *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* - <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/project/context/>

economically redundant system. While Williams acknowledged the importance of the persecuted missionaries, his main argument was that the emphasis on humanitarianism by early British historians had distorted the real reasons behind abolition.¹¹ In a subsequent book, published in 1964, *British Historians in the West Indies*, Williams continued his criticism of earlier British scholarship by suggesting 'that British historians wrote almost as if Britain had introduced Negro slavery solely for the satisfaction of abolishing it.'¹²

In the 1970s, Roger Anstey in England and Seymour Drescher in America challenged Williams' 'decline theory'. Arguing that the profit from the slave trade was insufficient to fund the industrial revolution, Anstey also claimed that it was a combination of philosophical, theological and political factors, rather than economic forces, that actually brought the slave trade to an end.¹³ In his repudiation of Williams' theory, Drescher, in his *Econocide*, presented empirical evidence which showed that, for the period 1770 to 1823, the economy of the West Indies had actually flourished and that this had continued until after the slave trade had ended. Furthermore, he added, there was little evidence of any terminal decline before 1823.¹⁴ Although challenging Williams, Drescher recognised that historians could no longer explain abolition by the traditional humanitarian means alone and hoped that his analysis would 'lay the groundwork for a fresh investigation of political abolition' in order to find alternative explanations.¹⁵

Alongside the on-going debate on the Williams' thesis, in the 1970s and 1980s a number of scholars explored the relationship between the anti-slavery and evangelical movements in Britain. Among these was Roger Anstey who argued that evangelicals shared the same moral philosophy as Enlightenment thinkers in cherishing 'liberty, benevolence and happiness'.¹⁶ As these principles were polar opposites to slavery, to which the evangelicals believed was 'of all the

¹¹ Williams, *Capitalism*, pp. 177-179.

¹² Eric Williams, *British Historians and the West Indies* (Trinidad: P.N.M. 1964), pp. 147-164, 182

¹³ Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1975).

¹⁴ Seymour Drescher, *Econocide, British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001 [1977]).

¹⁵ Drescher, *Econocide*, p. 8.

¹⁶ Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1975), pp. 89-125, 405.

social evils ... particularly condemned', they became the main supporters of anti-slavery.¹⁷ Furthermore, Anstey also identified how evangelical doctrines placed a duty on Christians to abolish slavery.¹⁸ Duncan Rice, in addition, argued that the anti-slavery and evangelical movements were symbiotic and 'mutually reinforced one another ... [as] both focused on the problems of freedom – in one case, freedom from temporal bondage' and the other 'freedom of ethical choice'.¹⁹ Seymour Drescher, however, argued that, while the growth of evangelicalism and abolitionism occurred at the same time, evangelicals 'latched on to, rather than independently launched the anti-slavery movement'.²⁰ This was, however, contested by David Brion Davis, who in his *Slavery and Human Progress* argued that the key impetus behind anti-slavery in Britain came from the abolitionists' religious beliefs.²¹ Indeed, in his later *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation*, Davis argued that evangelicals saw the ending of slavery as a religious 'eschatological event' when 'Providence had revealed itself through ... the ability of an enlightened and righteous public'.²²

By focusing more specifically on the relationship between the anti-slavery and missionary movements, Duncan Rice argued that 'both missionary and anti-slavery sentiment had crucial roles in crystallizing the values of middle-class Victorian Britain', which were often manifested in support for both missions and abolition.²³ Rice argued that the relationship between abolition and overseas missions was nowhere more evident than in the Clapham Sect where the two movements were seen to be mutually supportive of each other. Rice also discussed the implications of the class dimensions of the recruitment of missionaries, noting that, in contrast to the Anglican Church Missionary Society, whose missionaries came from a middle-class background, Dissenting

¹⁷ Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 406; See also Roger Anstey, 'The Patterns of British Abolitionism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries' in Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (eds.), *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform* (Folkstone: Wm Dawson & Sons, 1980), pp 21-22.

¹⁸ Roger Anstey, 'Slavery and the Protestant Ethic', in Michael Craton, (ed.), *Roots and Branches, Current Direction in Slave Studies* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1979), pp. 157-181; David Hempton, 'Evangelicalism and Reform, c. 1780-1832' in John Wolffe (ed.), *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal* (London: SPCK, 1995), pp. 17-19. See also Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006) which develops Anstey's argument on the influence religion had on anti-slavery, pp. 336-352

¹⁹ C. Duncan Rice, 'The Missionary Context of British Anti-Slavery Movement' in James Walvin (ed.), *Slavery and British Society 1776-1846* (London: Macmillan Press, 1982), p. 150.

²⁰ Seymour Drescher, 'Two Variants of Anti-Slavery: Religious Organisation and Social Mobilisation in Britain and France, 1780-1870', in Christine Bolt & Seymour Drescher, *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform* (Folkstone: Wm Dawson & Sons, 1980), pp. 45-46.

²¹ David Brion Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 168-226.

²² David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation*, (New York: Vintage Books 2015), p. 261.

²³ Rice, 'The Missionary Context', p. 151.

missionary societies generally recruited devout young males from the artisan class. These men were enthusiastic in their mission to convert the 'heathen' abroad even to the point of martyrdom, and this willingness to suffer on behalf of others extended to the enslaved people in the West Indies. Rice referred to the persecution of the missionaries in Jamaica and how, after returning home, some had toured Britain to present 'abolitionist propaganda' about the suffering of the enslaved people and expose the planters as opponents of 'the Gospel'.²⁴ It was the joining of the anti-slavery movement and Christian mission, Rice concluded, that brought slave emancipation to fruition.²⁵

From the mid-1980s, under the influence of the 'new social history' scholarship, with its focus on writing 'history from below', there was an increasing emphasis on exploring popular abolitionism in Britain. This thesis, in its examination of the development of public opinion against slavery, builds on this work. James Walvin identified how the 'value-laden' traditional British histories of slavery and abolition were in need of reappraisal in recognition of the changing ethnic composition of modern British society.²⁶ He analysed the anti-slavery campaigns as a popular movement by placing them 'within the broader context of black history Britain and the British West Indies'.²⁷ In addition, J. R. Oldfield explored how national campaigning and petitioning had brought the slave trade to an end.²⁸ Furthermore, David Turley explored the culture of anti-slavery in England over a longer period, attempting 'to understand anti-slavery as a cultural response to changes in both English society and in Britain's relations with the external world'.²⁹ He examined how abolitionists sought to gain public support in the context of competition from other causes such as Chartism and the Anti-Corn Law League.³⁰ Turley, like earlier authors, acknowledged that anti-slavery expression was mainly evangelical in character and argued that, in cooperation with Quakers, it became a powerful political force.³¹ Clare Midgley explored the vital role of females in the abolition movement, demonstrating how

²⁴ Rice, 'The Missionary Context', pp. 160-161.

²⁵ Rice, 'The Missionary Context', pp. 150-163.

²⁶ James Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838* (London: Macmillan Press, 1986), pp. 1-13.

²⁷ Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom*, p. 13.

²⁸ J. R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery* (London: Frank Cass, 1998); J. R. Oldfield, *Chords of Freedom* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007),

²⁹ David Turley, *The Culture of English Anti-Slavery 1780-1860*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1991), pp. 2-3 and 181-195.

³⁰ Turley, *The Culture*, pp. 181-195

³¹ Turley, *The Culture*, pp. 17-46.

women's anti-slavery associations influenced public opinion.³² Regarding the link between anti-slavery and Christian missions, Midgley argued that, whereas before 1823 the relationship was generally ambivalent, after that date missionaries provided information on the damaging effects of slavery to religious congregations at home, many of which included women who were involved in anti-slavery associations.³³

Other scholars explored in more depth the links between the development of anti-slavery in Britain and the activities of evangelical missionaries based in the Caribbean, and also the significance of the agency of the enslaved people themselves. In the 1970s Stiv Jakobsson noted that historians had previously only superficially explored the contribution to abolition made by the missionaries who worked with the enslaved people in the Caribbean. His study set out to correct this omission and argued that the missionaries had actually played a major role in the development of British anti-slavery.³⁴ In the 1980s, attention turned to the role of the enslaved themselves in their emancipation. The Caribbean writer, Michael Craton, in his *Testing the Chains* explored the causes of plots and revolts in the West Indian colonies from the perspective of the enslaved people.³⁵ Like James, Craton argued that the action of the enslaved people was significant in determining their future. He linked this with missionary activity by observing that Christian missions offered attractions such as chapels which provided refuges from plantation life, meeting places for those from different plantations and 'opportunities for self-expression and spiritual release'.³⁶ In a later study, Craton identified missionaries as allies in slave resistance partly because planters had recognised missionaries as coming from a lower class and living different lifestyles to themselves. He suggested that these factors contributed to the suspicion by the white colonists that the missionaries were agents of the British anti-slavery movement.³⁷ While crediting the missionaries as supporters of the enslaved people, Craton argued that it

³² Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870*, (London: Routledge, 1995).

³³ Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, pp. 54-55.

³⁴ Stiv Jakobsson, *Am I not a Man and a Brother? British Mission and the Abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery in West Africa and the West Indies 1786-1838* (Uppsala, Sweden: Gleerup, Almquist & Wilsells, 1972).

³⁵ Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains, Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

³⁶ Craton, *Testing the Chains*, pp. 241-253.

³⁷ Michael Craton, *Empire, Enslavement and Freedom in the Caribbean* (Jamaica: Ian Rendle Publishers, 1997), pp. 263-281.

was, nonetheless, the missionaries' primary aim to convert and teach 'civilised behaviour', not to forward emancipation.³⁸

Scholars have also investigated the links between slave insurrection and Parliamentary debates, what Michael Craton had described as the 'rumour syndrome'.³⁹ This was a situation whereby news reaching the Caribbean of debates in Parliament about slavery had led to the enslaved people (mistakenly) believing that their freedom had been granted. The result was frustration and anger when their (supposed) freedom was denied by the colonial authorities and planters. The Caribbean historian, Gelian Matthews, claimed that this 'rumour syndrome' was evident during the slave rebellions in Barbados in 1816, in Demerara in 1823 and in Jamaica in 1831-32.⁴⁰ Matthews also argued that the abolitionists' policy would have remained *gradual* if the slave revolts had not occurred and that it was the fear of further unrest that had fuelled the growing support in Britain in the 1820s for *immediate* abolition.⁴¹ However, she did not explore the role of missionaries or the missionary movement in transmitting news of these revolts to Britain.

Of particular relevance to this thesis are two studies on missionaries in the Caribbean. Firstly, Mary Turner, in 1982, published her book which explored the relationship between missionaries and the enslaved people in Jamaica.⁴² This study connects directly with the focus in this thesis on missionaries and the 1831-32 Jamaican slave rebellion. Turner explained how English Baptist missionaries had been invited to the island by the African-American leaders of the black Baptist congregations who had come to the island following American independence.⁴³ This request had followed the emergence of a religious sect, the 'Native Baptists', which had become popular within the island's enslaved population. This independent sect had become a problem for the black Baptist

³⁸ Craton, *Empire*, pp. 376-380; See also Jack Gratus, *The Great White Lie: Slavery, Emancipation and Changing Racial Attitudes* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1973) who explores how white supremacy was reinforced by the anti-slavery leadership.

³⁹ Craton, *Testing the Chains*, pp. 243-244.

⁴⁰ Gelian Matthews, 'The Rumour Syndrome, Sectarian Missionaries and Nineteenth Century Slave Rebels of the British West Indies', *The Society for Caribbean Studies Annual Conference Papers Vol. 2, 2001, ISSN 1471-2024*.

⁴¹ Gelian Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement*, (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), pp. 1-27.

⁴² Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries: The Disintegration of Jamaican Slave Society, 1787-1834* (Jamaica: The Press University of West Indies, 1998 [1982]).

⁴³ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, pp. 11, 17.

leadership as it had embraced elements of orthodox Christianity and superstitious African religious practices.⁴⁴ The British BMS responded to the request but, before sending the missionaries to Jamaica, had instructed them to avoid involvement in local and civil matters and, rather than criticise slavery, to accept the institution. However, Turner argued that, after witnessing the horrors of slavery, the missionaries soon became troubled and began to sympathise with the plight of the enslaved people.⁴⁵ Turner outlined the lead-up to the insurrection in Jamaica, the role played by Native Baptists, the ramifications the uprising had for the British missionaries based in the colony, and how they had later responded by taking part in the anti-slavery campaign in Britain.⁴⁶

Secondly, the Brazilian scholar, Emilia da Costa, in 1994 published her book on the Demerara rebellion of 1823, in which the LMS missionary John Smith was implicated. The work drew upon the narratives of the colonial authorities, the missionaries and the planters, each of whom 'expressed the positions from which they spoke, their class, religion, ethnicity, status, gender, and the role each played in society.'⁴⁷ From this, she explored the 'contradictory worlds' and interrelationships as well as the tensions between them that were based on contrasting values and beliefs. da Costa argued that the missionaries had been sent by their societies to 'civilise' the 'heathen' slaves and, although the missionaries had expected to meet ignorant 'babes', they had actually penetrated an unfamiliar and uncomfortable colonial culture where the white population held the enslaved black people in cruel subjection. While, as da Costa argued, the missionaries were convinced of their 'superior' European culture and religion, they soon discovered that amongst the colonial whites there existed a level of 'savagery' that was expressed in their harsh treatment of the enslaved people. In contrast to the whites, the enslaved people had absorbed the missionaries' lessons of love and redemption which, da Costa argued, had been interpreted as a promise of freedom. Furthermore, she

⁴⁴ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, pp. 18, 57-58, 72-73.

⁴⁵ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, pp. 8-9, 65

⁴⁶ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, pp. 148-178.

⁴⁷ Emilia Viotti da Costa, *Crowns of Glory, Tears of Blood, The Demerara Rebellion of 1823*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. xv.

added, the enslaved people became convinced that they had allies in England who were very sympathetic to their situation.⁴⁸

Studies of the interlinked histories of Britain's Caribbean colonies, and the emergence of evangelicalism and the missionary and anti-slavery movements in Britain, impacted on, and contributed to, a broader study of the history of the British Empire. In the first place, they intersect with a body of historiography debating the relationship between Christian mission and imperialism. A feature of the expansion of the British Empire was the coincidental growth of global Christian mission and Brian Stanley in *The Bible and the Flag* considered the relationship between British imperialism and overseas mission.⁴⁹ On the basis of evidence that missionaries prioritised the drive to evangelise, independently of official colonial policy agendas, Stanley challenged those historians who had argued that the missionaries were 'handmaidens to western expansion'.⁵⁰ Stanley, however, acknowledged that the relationship between mission and abolition was a complex one, pointing out that the Church of England's missions to the West Indies had mainly aimed to serve the white plantation owners and that it had been left to the Dissenting and Methodist missionary societies to work among the enslaved people.⁵¹ Andrew Porter, a leading British imperial historian, later explored the relationship between imperialism and mission and, in his *Religion Versus Empire*, concluded that there was no simple connection between the two.⁵² Nevertheless, missionary societies worked alongside the expansion of the British Empire to such an extent that, as David Bosch has argued, the British State began to consider that 'the right to have colonies carried with it the duty to Christianise'.⁵³

By the time Porter's study had been published in 2004 a strong challenge to earlier approaches to conventional British imperial history had emerged in the form of the 'new imperial history' which was heavily influenced by the writings of 'postcolonial' theorists such as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said. The latter's

⁴⁸ da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, pp. xvii - xix.

⁴⁹ Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag* (Leicester: Apollon, 1990).

⁵⁰ Stanley, *The Bible*, pp. 11-13.

⁵¹ Stanley, *The Bible*, pp. 58-61, 86-91; Also see Brian Stanley, 'British Evangelicals and Overseas Concerns', in John Wolffe (ed.) *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal*, (London: SPCK, 1995), p. 82.

⁵² Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 7-10.

⁵³ David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), pp. 227-228.

influential study, *Orientalism*, argued that an image of 'the Orient' had been created by the West that depicted 'other' people as different to themselves.⁵⁴ The 'new imperial history' was also influenced by the post-structuralism of Michel Foucault and other French scholars, by trends in cultural and literary studies, and by feminist theory. Antoinette Burton, for example, acknowledges the influence of Gayatri Spivak's article 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' and other feminist writers.⁵⁵

The leading proponent of the 'new imperial history' was Catherine Hall, who stressed the importance of bringing colony and metropole into the same analytical frame. Her seminal work, *Civilising Subjects*, is of great relevance to this thesis, as it focuses on Baptist missionaries in Jamaica and their supporters at home.⁵⁶ It incorporated part of her earlier study on the Baptist missionaries of Jamaica that was included in her *White Male and Middle Class*, published in 1992.⁵⁷ In this discourse, Hall argued, that the missionaries had constructed their own identities and histories about their effectiveness in Jamaica. In addition, during the anti-slavery campaign, Hall argued that the British public had given the missionaries the right to be heard because of their 'special knowledge of Jamaican society and the institution of slavery'. Therefore, they were able to represent themselves as the 'conscience' of the British nation. However, while the missionaries claimed to be the voice the enslaved people, as Hall argued, the image they created had been interpreted by white Englishmen.⁵⁸ In *Civilising Subjects*, Hall attempted to unravel 'a set of connected histories' that linked 'Jamaica with England, colonised and colonisers, enslaved men and women with Baptist missionaries, freed people with a wider public of abolitionists in the metropole'.⁵⁹ The time span of Hall's work extended from before the insurrection in 1831-32 until the rebellion in

⁵⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (London: Pluto Press, 1986 [1952]), and *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967); Edward W Said, *Orientalism, Western Conception of the Orient* (London: Routledge, 1978); Also see Kathleen Wilson, *A New Imperial History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1-5; see also Stephen Howe, *The New Imperial Histories Reader*, (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1-20.

⁵⁵ Antoinette Burton, *Empire in Question – Reading, Writing and Teaching British Imperialism*, (London: Duke University Press, 2011) is a collection of Burton's essays ranging from 1994 to 2006. Reference is made to Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' which was included in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), pp. 271-313.

⁵⁶ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007 [2002])

⁵⁷ Catherine Hall, 'Missionary Stories: Gender and Ethnicity in England in the 1830s and 1840s' in *White Male and Middle Class* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007 [1992]), pp. 205-254.

⁵⁸ Hall, *Missionary Stories*, pp. 210-212.

⁵⁹ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 7.

Morant Bay during 1867, and in her study she agreed with da Costa by arguing that it was the Baptist missionaries' aim to 'civilise' the enslaved 'heathen' people, whom they thought as 'poor creatures' in need of salvation and, as 'colonisers', to create a new society based on British values.⁶⁰ In converting the enslaved people, Hall showed how Christianity, with its focus on spiritual freedom from sin, played a vital role in the outlook of the converted enslaved people as it provided encouragement for the possibility of physical liberty.⁶¹

In the second part of Hall's volume, she focused on the Midland industrial town of Birmingham with the aim of discovering what 'provincial men and women' thought about 'empire'.⁶² Of particular importance to this thesis is Hall's discussion of the press which, she noted, provided an important means of informing the public about the colonies. Hall acknowledged Kathleen Wilson's argument that newspapers helped to 'shape the social, political and national consciousness of the middling and artisanal people' living in different localities and binding the readership 'in particular ways to the wider political process of the state, nation and empire'.⁶³ Furthermore, Hall pointed to how the local British newspapers had regularly reported events in the empire in order to educate the readership about the colonies.⁶⁴ Hall also made reference to both the missionary and anti-slavery societies in disseminating information through public lectures and meetings, pamphlets and magazines to the public in order to build support for abolition.⁶⁵ Of particular value to this thesis, is Hall's analysis of the British evangelicals who supported overseas missions and whom she termed the 'missionary public' (as discussed in the Introduction). This was a specific section of the population that 'overlapped' the general public and was able to shape 'public opinion'.⁶⁶ Hall explained that the key aim of the men and women who formed the 'missionary public' was 'a commitment to converting the heathen, whether at home or abroad'.⁶⁷ In influencing the 'missionary public', Hall emphasised the important role of the BMS's publication, the *Missionary*

⁶⁰ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 97.

⁶¹ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 105

⁶² Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 11-14.

⁶³ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 274.

⁶⁴ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 274-276.

⁶⁵ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 276; Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People, Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 37-38.

⁶⁶ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 292-295.

⁶⁷ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p.293-294

Herald, which became a means of informing its readership about overseas missions.⁶⁸

Hall's approach and findings were further developed in other contributions to the new imperial history which explored the impact of the empire on British society 'at home'. In 1999 and later in 2006, Susan Thorne, in her study of Congregational missionaries, examined how evangelicalism had powerfully influenced public opinion and how chapel-goers were 'educated from the pulpit'. She pointed to how 'missionary intelligence' became a major source of influence and argued that it was the missionaries who had 'spearheaded' the popular campaign against colonial slavery.⁶⁹ Alison Twells in 2009 argued that a 'missionary philanthropy' had developed in the nineteenth century and how this became a central feature of English middle-class culture. Twells also discussed the development of missionary societies and the emergence of a national network of local supporting organisations which brought together men and women from different religious denominations.⁷⁰

A further feature of the study of the empire 'at home' had been the exploration of the relationship between the history of black people in Britain and the British population's perception of the black enslaved in the Caribbean colonies and their broader attitudes to 'race' and slavery. Despite black people living in Britain for about five centuries, according to Walvin, because of the nature of available evidence, it is difficult to establish a clear understanding of how black enslaved people were perceived.⁷¹ Certainly, a literary and political debate took place during the eighteenth century and part of this related to the 'Somerset Case' in 1772 which involved the former black slave, Jonathan Strong.⁷² Understandings in Britain of the black enslaved Africans in the Caribbean tended to be based on the dissemination of the views of white visitors,

⁶⁸ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 298-301.

⁶⁹ Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture in Nineteenth-Century England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 13-14. Also, Susan Thorne, 'Religion and Empire at Home', in Catherine Hall & Sonya O. Rose, *At Home with the Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 143-147, 153-158.

⁷⁰ Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850; The 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 1-24, 52-82, 103-105, also Alison Twells, 'We Ought to Obey God rather than Man' Women, Anti-Slavery and Non-Conformist Religious Culture', in Elizabeth J. Clapp & Julie Roy Jeffrey (eds.), *Women, Dissent & Anti-Slavery in Britain and America, 1790-1865*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp 66-87.

⁷¹ Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom*, pp. 69-85.

⁷² James Walvin, *Black Ivory, Slavery in the British Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell 2006 [1992]), pp. 10-20.

merchants, sailors and plantation owners who generally adopted a pro-planter and pro-slavery perspective. An image of black inferiority emerged and this was reinforced by eighteenth-century philosophers, including John Locke and David Hume. Furthermore, in 1774 Edward Long, a former slave owner in Jamaica, published his influential *History of Jamaica* that was based on pseudo-science. In this Long went as far as to suggest that black people were a different species and that they were stereotypically lazy, childish, dishonest, and untrustworthy.⁷³ Three decades later Bryan Edwards published his books and these, by drawing on Long's work, also presented a disparaging evaluation of the enslaved black people.⁷⁴ From these appraisals, planters claimed that black people were ideally suited to slavery and this, according to Peter Fryer in his *Staying Power*, injected racism into British culture.⁷⁵

While the abolition movement was primarily a humanitarian campaign, the movement could not ignore the prejudiced views that continued to be strongly promoted by the pro-slavery lobbyists who persisted in denigrating black people. Long's opinion had been derived from the belief that the races had different origins (polygenists) while the Judeo-Christian view was that all mankind came from a single source (monogenists). However, this did not stop some Christian ministers defending slavery, indeed one Anglican clergyman in Jamaica, the Reverend George Bridges, who became a leading opponent of abolition and Dissenting missionaries, published in 1828 his *Annals of Jamaica* in which he defended the right of the white colonists to maintain slavery.⁷⁶ These publications by Long, Edwards and Bridges collectively assisted the planters in their opposition to the Christianisation and education as they supported a belief that enslaved black people were unsuited to receive white European teaching. The impact of these beliefs and Long's widely read book

⁷³ Edward Long, *History of Jamaica*, Vol. I, II and III (London: Cambridge University Press, First published in 1774 and republished in 2010), Also see Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 102.

⁷⁴ Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British colonies in the West Indies*, 2 vol. (London: John Stockdale, 1806); Hall, *Civilizing Subjects*, pp. 102-103;

⁷⁵ Peter Fryer, *Staying Power*, (London: Pluto Press, 2010 [1984]), pp. 133-159; Also, Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British*, (London: Grafton Books, 1991), p. 3-5; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), pp. 17, 103-104.

⁷⁶ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 101-102.

lingered well into the first half of the nineteenth-century and thereby influenced British perception of black enslaved people.⁷⁷

Seeking to combat such perspectives in order to convince the British public of the suffering humanity of enslaved people, evangelicals rooted their opposition to slavery in the Bible, claiming that, as all humans were descendants of Adam and Eve, any bodily differences were the result of culture and climate, not a mark of innate inferiority or superiority. Both evangelicals and Quakers, in fact, argued that slavery was a violation of God's will.⁷⁸ They also considered that the black enslaved people were perfectly capable of being educated and converted to Christianity, as well as being suited to eventual emancipation, however, in making this evaluation, many British evangelicals often displayed a sense of white superiority. Such attitudes, therefore, impacted on the British public's reactions to events in Jamaica in 1831-32.

This chapter has briefly discussed the historiography of the relationship between the missionary and anti-slavery movements which ranged from the hagiographic nineteenth-century biographies to the developing academic scholarship of anti-slavery during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Of particular relevance to this thesis is the scholarship concerning joining of the anti-slavery and missionary movements and how, in the early 1830s, the latter gradually took over the abolition role. Also, of importance is the scholarship concerning the inter-relationship between the enslaved people, planters and missionaries in the Caribbean colonies and the 'missionary public' in Britain which was able to shape public opinion.

⁷⁷ Fryer, *Staying Power*, pp. xiii-xiv, 133-135, 156-169; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988 [1966]), pp. 459-464.

⁷⁸ David Olusoga, *Black and British*, (London: Macmillan, 2016), pp. 201-203, 209-210, 223-232. Also, Twells, *The Civilising Mission*, pp. 12-16.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Drawing on existing scholarship this chapter will provide the background and context for the succeeding two chapters that explore primary sources on how missionaries, who worked with the enslaved people in Jamaica at the time of an uprising in 1831-32, had influenced British public and political opinion on slavery. The first part of this chapter will provide an overview of the development of evangelicalism and the emergence of the missionary movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The second part will explore the emergence of the anti-slavery movement from the passing of the Slave Trade Act of 1807 through to the formation of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1823 and the subsequent campaign that led to the passing of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833. The chapter will conclude with a brief outline of the key precursors to the developments in Jamaica in the 1830s and how, following a slave rebellion Demerara during 1823, this had led to the persecution of the missionaries in both Demerara and Barbados news of which had influenced British abolitionists.

PART 1: EVANGELICALISM AND THE MISSIONARY MOVEMENT

During the late eighteenth century, Britain was profoundly influenced by a Protestant 'Evangelical Revival' which had its origins in Europe with the formation of the Moravian Church (United Brethren) and other Protestant sects that had emerged during the seventeenth century. In England, evangelicalism sprang initially from a group of High Anglican churchmen, including Charles Wesley, John Wesley and George Whitefield, who formed the 'Holy Club' at Oxford University in the 1730s and who embarked on preaching tours and provided the foundation of the Methodist movement. The key characteristics of evangelicalism, which was described as the 'religion of the heart', was a conversion experience, belief that Christ's sacrificial death was a substitute for the punishment of sinful mankind, that the Bible was the 'infallible word of God'

and, in obedience to Christ's 'Great Commission', to spread the Gospel to 'all nations'.¹ During the 1780s and 1790s, evangelicalism spread into the 'Old Dissent' denominations of Baptists, Congregationalists (or Independents) and, to a lesser extent, Presbyterians.² In England, members of these denominations also fought the discriminatory legislation of the Test and Corporation Acts which kept them out of public office.³ While the revival led to the development of an Evangelical section within the Anglican Church, it made a smaller impact on the Quakers who believed that God directly communicated with them as individuals to result in a life that attested to this inward experience.⁴ In Scotland, the situation was different. Here, the Established Church was the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and at the time of the Disruption in 1843, after a long struggle, the conservative Moderates and zealous, expanding and the more dominant Evangelicals, divided.⁵

Explanations for the Evangelical Revival in Britain have ranged from the Dissenters' widespread opposition to the tithe system which funded the Established Church to, as Anna Johnston has argued, the huge social and economic changes created by industrialisation and urbanisation in the post-Enlightenment period.⁶ Whatever the explanation, as Richard Reddie has affirmed, evangelicalism, and Methodism in particular, had by the end of the eighteenth century 'changed the socio-political and religious landscape of Britain ... [as] ...there was hardly a town or city that did not fall under' its influence.⁷ This can be seen in the growth of attendance at chapels and churches, one example being the membership of English Baptists which, between 1800 and 1838, had increased by over 72% to 100,000.⁸ Similarly, the Wesleyan membership had increased over three-fold from 1800 to reach

¹ Matthew, 28: 19-20.

² David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 5-19; Andrew F Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (New York: Orbis Books, 1996), pp. 80-84.

³ Twells, *The Civilising Mission*, p. 5 and 176.

⁴ Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 19-30.

⁵ Gerald Parsons, *Religion in Victorian Britain: Volume 1 – Traditions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 118-125.

⁶ Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writings and Empire, 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 13-14.

⁷ Richard S Reddie, *Abolition: The Struggle to Abolish Slavery in the British Colonies* (Oxford: Lion, 2007), p. 138 quoting from Asa Briggs, *England in the Age of Improvement: 1783-1867* (Place of Publication: Folio Society, 1997).

⁸ The quoted figure is the total of General and Particular Baptists. See Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 146-151.

271,400 in 1835.⁹ In 1820, Britain's church and chapel-going population amounted to about 1.66 million (8% of the population) and 437,000 (2% of the population) were Dissenters. Between 1820 and 1840 church and chapel attendances had increased to about 2.46 million with the number of Dissenters (by then re-designated as Non-Conformists) almost doubling to 835,000.¹⁰ When combined, the Anglican Evangelicals, Methodist and Dissenting congregations collectively became a major influence in British society and, as Bill Hilton has argued, evangelicals were able to create a huge change in public morality that was 'out of all proportion to their numbers'.¹¹

The notion of mission was a central feature of the Evangelical Revival and this focused on missions both at home and overseas. Home missions included Sunday Schools, Bible Societies and a range of voluntary 'paternalistic humanitarian schemes' for the poor.¹² Among the Evangelicals that became hugely influential in mission, as well as numerous humanitarian projects including campaigning for the abolition of slavery, was the London-based elite 'Clapham Sect', otherwise known as 'the Saints'. Included within the sect's numerous projects was support for the Anglican Evangelical Church Missionary Society (CMS).¹³

While the Church of England had embarked on mission with the formation of Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in 1698 and Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) in 1701, based on Arminian theology that salvation was available for everyone who accepted the Christian Gospel message, it was not until 1792 when William Carey, and other Baptist

⁹ Hempton, *Methodism*, p. 109, A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914* (1976) p. 31; Currie, Gilbert and Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers*, p. 140.

¹⁰ Currie, *Churches and Churchgoers*, pp. 25-27; Genealogical Research in England and Wales: Population of Great Britain and Ireland 1570-1931; David Thompson, *England in the Nineteenth Century*, (London: Penguin Books, 1991) pp. 59-60, indicates higher figures in stating that by the late 1820s the number of English Non-conformists had reached two million within a population of thirteen million. However, Currie, Gilbert and Horsley who use the term 'density' to describe the church membership as a percentage of the whole population, have calculated the density of Wesleyan and Methodist churches to have been 1.34% in 1800 and 2.65% in 1835, p. 65; Hugh McCleod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, (London: Macmillan Publishers, 1984), pp. 21- 23.

¹¹ Bill Hinton, *Age of Atonement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 219; Twells, *The Civilising Mission*, pp. 4-7; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 292-294.

¹² Twells *The Civilising Missions*. pp. 6-7; Alex Tyrrell, *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain*, (London: Christopher Helm, 1987), p. 63; Hilary M. Carey, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c. 1801-1908*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 149-151.

¹³ Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 29-34.

ministers in Northamptonshire formed the BMS.¹⁴ Carey, known as the 'father of modern missions', during 1793, had sailed to India where he initiated a mission in Serampore. His five-fold mission included preaching the Gospel, distributing Bibles in local languages, establishing places of worship, understanding non-Christian local culture and training converted indigenous people to undertake the Christian work.¹⁵ In 1795 the LMS was formed which, although originally non-denominational, became a Congregationalist mission, in 1799 the Anglican CMS was established and in 1818 the WMMS was founded.¹⁶

By the early nineteenth century, an active mission field had been established in the British Caribbean colonies.¹⁷ The earliest to arrive had been the European Moravians who began their long-term mission during 1732. It was half a century later when Thomas Coke sent Wesleyan missionaries to the West Indies and in 1814 the BMS established a mission in Jamaica following an invitation from the leaders of the black Baptists who had arrived on the island following the American evangelical 'Awakening'.¹⁸ As well as the LMS, other missions in the Caribbean colonies included the Edinburgh-based Scottish Missionary Society and the Anglican CMS.¹⁹ However, as the purpose of this latter society was to serve the white population, little interest had been shown for the enslaved people. The Anglican clergymen in the Caribbean were originally under the leadership of the Bishop of London but, because of their negligence and luxuriate lifestyle, in 1825 a local bishop was appointed in Jamaica.²⁰

Missionary influence on the enslaved people in the Caribbean occurred at several levels: the missionaries changed slave culture by displacing much of

¹⁴ Stephen Neill, *The History of Christian Missions* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 197-204; Brian Stanley, *The Bible and the Flag* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990), pp. 58-61: General Baptists embraced Armenian theology whereas Particular Baptists were Calvinists; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 87-88.

¹⁵ Neill, *History of Christian Missions*, pp. 221-226

¹⁶ Neill, *History of Christian Missions*, p. 214; Andrew Porter, 'An Overview, 1700-1914', in Norman Etherington (ed.), *Missions and Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 46-47; Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 35-37, 274-288

¹⁷ Neill, *Christian Mission*, pp. 224-226, J. H. Buchner, *The History of the Mission of the United Brethren's Church* (London: Longman, Brown & Co., 1854), pp. 24-45; pp. 46-83.

¹⁸ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 86-87.

¹⁹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, pp. 40-42; Stanley, *The Bible*, pp. 55-58; Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792-1992* (Edinburgh: T & T Clerk, 1992), pp. 1-15, Stephen Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (London: originally published by Pelican Books in 1964, second edition reprinted by Penguin Books in 1990), p. 210; 222-223; Hilary M. Carey, *God's Empire; Religion and Colonisation in the British Worlds* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 148-243; Johnson Grant, *History of the English Church* (London: J Hatchard & Son, 1820), pp. 346-350. Ernest Marshal Howes, *Saints in Politics: The Clapham Sect and the Growth of Freedom* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1960), pp. 72-82.

²⁰ W.J. Gardner, *A History of Jamaica*, (London: Elliot Stock, 1883), pp. 330-337.

their former African religious beliefs and practice; the enslaved people were taught obedience, loyalty, industry and submission; they were also given the opportunity to become church leaders, and were offered an education which enabled them to comprehend information from the outside world. Furthermore, as Patricia Rooke has argued, Christianity provided the enslaved people with psychological release, social opportunity and the promise of political freedom.²¹ However, at the same time, she argued, missionaries promoted a 'paternalistic' system that fostered passivity which suited imperialist ideology.²²

While there had been 'a growing interest in the education of enslaved children' by Christian missionaries, prior to emancipation the planters had opposed the teaching of literacy as it was believed this could produce a desire for liberty, and consequently, missionaries were generally seen as a threat to the stability of colonial society.²³ Other factors also influenced the white colonists' intolerance of missionaries and one of these was a long tradition of opposition to religious nonconformity that emerged from the time of the English Civil War when the colonists, as supporters of the Royalists, censured denominations that were at variance to the tenets of the state religion, the Anglican Church.²⁴ Social status also affected planters' attitudes to the missionaries. Unlike the CMS, who sent out trained Anglican clergy, the Methodist and Dissenting missionaries, who worked with the enslaved people, generally came from the artisan class, despite the leadership of the missionary societies who sent them generally comprising middle-class businessmen and professionals. Missionary work, as Anna Johnston has suggested, provided opportunities for 'social advancement, community standing, and a challenging and exotic career'. In the colonies, class conflict was apparent as the wealthy white planters often accused the missionaries of acting 'above their station'.²⁵ Recognising that missionaries were not always welcome, missionary societies generally issued instructions to their new missionaries to avoid involvement in local political matters. Their role,

²¹ Patricia Rooke, 'Slavery, Social Death and Imperialism: The Formation of a Christian Black Elite in the West Indies, 1800-1845', in J. A. Mangan (ed.), *Making Imperial Mentalities, Socialisation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 29-30.

²² Rooke, 'Slavery', pp. 23-45; See also David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission, Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), pp. 281-283.

²³ W. Higman, *A Concise History of The Caribbean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 185. Rooke, 'Slavery, Social Death and Imperialism', pp. 23-45.

²⁴ Rooke, 'Slavery, Social Death and Imperialism', pp. 162-165; For a history of Cromwell's conquest of the Caribbean islands see Carla Gardina Prestana, *The English Conquest of Jamaica*, (Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2017).

²⁵ Johnston, *Missionary Writings*, pp. 8-9, 17; Lambert, *White Creole Culture*, pp. 160-165.

they stressed, was to focus on promoting Christianity and the moral improvement of the enslaved people.²⁶

Apart from each of the main English missionary societies having a central office in London, which appointed and oversaw the work of its overseas missionaries, there was a network of local missionary society associations scattered across the country. At open meetings of these local associations, the evangelical or 'missionary public' received information about life in the colonies and discovered the progress of the missions they supported. As well as at public meetings and in church or chapel services, supporters of missions also obtained information about the activities overseas in missionary society magazines, and it is these periodicals that form an essential primary source in this thesis.

PART 2: THE ANTI-SLAVERY MOVEMENT

Open opposition to slavery can be traced to a prominent Philadelphia Quaker, Anthony Benezet, who during the mid-eighteenth century had drawn upon earlier anti-slavery sentiments expressed a century earlier by George Fox, the movement's founder. The Quakers' doubts about slavery coincided with powerful criticism by Enlightenment writers particularly those in Scotland. Having maintained regular communication with British Quakers, Benezet extensively broadcast his opposition to the slave trade and among those influenced was John Wesley who introduced anti-slavery into Methodism. In 1786 Thomas Clarkson, a graduate of Cambridge University published his prize-winning anti-slavery essay and joined the Quaker abolitionists in their campaign.²⁷ Being an evangelical, anti-slavery became a lifelong expression of Clarkson's Christian belief alongside his passion for overseas missions.²⁸ William Wilberforce, a Member of Parliament for Yorkshire was so impressed by Clarkson's essay that he too joined the abolition cause and at the same time was converted to evangelical Christianity. Upon joining the Quakers,

²⁶ Porter, *Religion*, p. 85-88; Geliem Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolition Movement* (Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge, 2006), pp. 28-35.

²⁷ James Walvin, *A Short History of Slavery*, (London: Penguin Books, 2007), pp. 147-152.

²⁸ Ellen Gibson Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography*, (York: William Sessions, 1996), p. 2.

Wilberforce became the Parliamentary leader of abolition and Clarkson a researcher and national public speaker. In 1787 this group of Quakers and Evangelical Anglicans formed the Abolition Committee, the aim of which was to stop the trans-Atlantic shipment of Africans in the hope that planters would improve the treatment of the enslaved people as replacement would be prevented. The Committee's campaign generated support from women, and many Dissenting groups. In 1788 over 100 petitions had been received by Parliament and this increased to about 520 in 1792.²⁹ By now the campaign was driven by the Clapham Sect, a group of prominent Evangelicals which included William Wilberforce, Henry Thornton, Thomas Fowell Buxton, James Stephen, Zachary Macaulay, Lord Teignmouth and Hannah More. In addition to petitions, the propaganda campaign included tracts, essays and published testimonials as well as public meetings in order to oppose the slave trade. While public meetings had been prohibited in Britain because of fear of the revolutionary ideas from France, between 1794 and 1799 Wilberforce continued to present motions in Parliament against the slave trade. These were in turn rejected by the West India lobby which supported the continuation of slavery. Despite the conflict with France in the early 1800s, abolitionists continued to bombard the public with anti-slavery propaganda and Wilberforce, who preferred to deal with the political class, regularly presented motions in Parliament where they were constantly met by opposition in the House of Lords.³⁰ However, with a change in Government, abolition legislation rapidly made progress and in 1807 the Slavery Abolition Act was passed.

In order to monitor the effectiveness of new legislation, abolitionists formed the African Institute, one outcome of which was a Government instruction to the Royal Navy to seize ships taking part in the illegal trade.³¹ However, having met this resistance, the major sugar producers in Jamaica, began importing chattel labour from the neighbouring Spanish colony of Cuba. As demand had still not been satisfied, planters forced their enslaved people to work harder thereby dashing the British abolitionists' hope for improvements in the condition of the

²⁹ Walvin, *A Short History*, pp. 152-155.

³⁰ Walvin, *A Short History*, pp. 155-163; Also see Gelian Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement*, (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), pp. 1-27.

³¹ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, p. 119-120.

enslaved people. In order to monitor the situation, the Clapham Sect recommended the forming of a register of the enslaved people, however, because of delays caused by the Napoleonic Wars, Wilberforce did not introduce the Slave Registration Bill until the conflict with France had ended in 1815.³² When the proposal was presented to Parliament, it was defeated because of the opposition from the powerful West Indian lobby in the Commons which believed that the proposed legislation would violate the colonies' right to self-management. In addition, there was a fear that any interference in slavery from Britain would encourage slave unrest in the colonies.³³ Sure enough, in 1816, after rumours had spread among the enslaved workers in Barbados, who had mistakenly believed the Registration Bill had decreed their release but was being withheld by the planters, a revolt did break out that resulted in damage to estates and the slaughter of several hundred enslaved people.³⁴ Despite the defeat of the Bill in Parliament, the colonial authorities decided to keep records and in 1819 a register was established in London so that colonial slavery could be monitored.³⁵

The ending of the Revolution and Napoleonic Wars with France gave an opportunity for British abolitionists at the Congress of Vienna to stop the French trading in slaves. To strengthen this demand, a campaign was launched in Britain and within thirty-four days, in June 1814, nearly eight hundred petitions containing a total of one million signatures, which represented about a tenth of the country, were presented to the House of Commons. These anti-slavery sentiments so antagonised the French Royalists, who had associated anti-slavery with the 'Jacobinism' and the Revolutionary cause, that the French press opposed the British abolitionists' aim. Nonetheless, in June 1815, the Congress, including France and eight other European powers, signed the Treaty of Paris which opposed the slave trade although not slavery.³⁶

In 1822 with concerns among British abolitionists about the continued ill-treatment of enslaved people in Britain's Caribbean colonies, the anti-slavery

³² Ernest Marshall Howse, *Saints in Politics, The Clapham Sect and the Growth of Freedom* (Frome, Somerset: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1960), pp. 138-150.

³³ Mathieson, *British Slavery*, pp. 22-32.

³⁴ Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: The British Struggle to Abolish Slavery* (London: Pan Books, 2005) pp. 318-320.

³⁵ Howse, *Saints in Politics*, pp. 150-151.

³⁶ Howse, *Saints in Politics*, pp. 144-147.

campaigner, Thomas Clarkson, published his pamphlet arguing for abolition.³⁷ In this, Clarkson expressed the belief that slavery was illegal and contrary to the British Constitution and, as it 'was based upon misrepresentation, false assumptions and fraud', Parliament had the right of intervention. Instead, he advocated the benefits of emancipation, although believing that this should be accomplished in 'careful stages until the slaves were Christianised to the same level as the free peasants of Britain'.³⁸ In January 1823, from this concern about slavery emerged 'The Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Dominions', shortened to the 'Anti-Slavery Society', the policy-making group of which was its London Committee. The Society became a national body and, with its 250 local associations, gained support from the growing and influential evangelical churches and chapels throughout Britain. Regarding the link between the Anti-slavery Society and the missionary movement, the composition of the London Committee by 1833 included a number of officials or relations to leaders of the missionary societies including the CMS, the BMS and the WMMS. The Committee also included the Reverend Jabez Bunting who was the national leader of the Wesleyan Methodist church as well as being the editor of the WMMS's publication, *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*.³⁹ Regarding the founding of the Society, Roger Anstey has suggested that it was James Cropper, a Liverpool Quaker and abolitionist, who actually initiated its formation and that this had been a response to the Quakers' Yearly Meeting in 1822 when it was resolved 'to take any measures for the gradual abolition of slavery'.⁴⁰

Shortly after the Anti-Slavery Society had been founded, in March 1823, Wilberforce presented a petition to the Commons from the Quakers that declared 'it was the duty of Parliament to put an end to slavery'. Following Wilberforce's speech, Thomas Fowell Buxton, who was due to take over the political anti-slavery leadership, gave notice of his intention to raise the matter

³⁷ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, p. 161.

³⁸ Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson*, pp. 160-162.

³⁹ The Anti-Slavery Society Committee's minute book in 1832/33 does not list the membership of the committee but from those attending meeting the following four ordained ministers have been identified: Reverend J Ivimey [BMS Committee member who wrote "Utter Extinction of Slavery in 1832], Rev John William Cunningham, evangelical Anglican who was the former curate at Clapham and then vicar of Harrow as well as being Governor of Church Missionary Society, and Reverend Richard Watson [Secretary of WMMS between 1821-25]. Also included in the minutes in 1832 was the active abolitionists parliamentarian Dr Stephen Lushington MP whose name did not appear on the original list of 1823.

⁴⁰ *Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of the Society of Friends* (London: Headley Brothers Ltd., 1972), Chapter 14, Section 651.

at a future meeting of the Commons.⁴¹ On the 15th May 1823 Buxton brought forward a motion that as ‘the state of slavery is repugnant to the principles of the British constitution and the Christian religion ...’, it should be *gradually* extinguished in preparation for emancipation.⁴² The Leader of the House, George Canning, a ‘moderate abolitionist’ but sensitive to the wishes of those with interest in the West Indies economy, expressed unease about Buxton’s motion which required legal intervention and instead proposed that the colonies be ‘recommended’ to make resolutions to ‘ameliorate’ the slaves’ condition by improving their treatment, and promoting moral and religious education.⁴³ Consequently, while the Crown Colonies were obliged to take action, the Chartered or Legislative Colonies were encouraged to make their own amelioration laws that would be incorporated in the ‘slave codes’ which, according to Mary Turner, had formerly been set up by the planter-dominated assemblies in order to control the enslaved people.⁴⁴ Wilberforce reminded Canning that colonial authorities had always resisted reform and that enforcement would be necessary and, although the Commons did not agree, this too was the opinion of the influential Whig politician, Henry Brougham.⁴⁵ After the debate, Earl Bathurst, the Colonial Secretary sent the Commons’ resolutions and a copy of Canning’s speech to the colonial Governors.⁴⁶ When the documents were received there were negative reactions by the colonial administrations because of the British Parliament’s ‘interference’ in colonial matters. As will be discussed in the final section of this chapter, this anger was transferred to the resident Dissenting and Methodist missionaries because of a suspicion that they were ‘agents’ for the abolitionists who had initiated the amelioration recommendations. There was also a suspicion that the missionaries’ evangelical biblical teaching hinted of ‘freedom’.⁴⁷

Despite the Anti-Slavery Society Committee’s reservations about public campaigning, in 1823 the network of local and regional auxiliaries, with a strong

⁴¹ Frank J. Klinkberg, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in England* (New Haven Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1968 [1926]), pp.193-194; Howse, *Saints in Politics*, pp. 155-156.

⁴² Mathieson, *British Slavery*, pp.119-120; Howse, *Saints in Politics*, p. 156.

⁴³ Mathieson, *British Slavery*, pp.121-1230; Howse, *Saints in Politics*, p. 156; James Walvin, *A Short History of Slavery* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), pp. 199-210.

⁴⁴ Regarding slave codes, see Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁵ *Hansard: House of Commons, Debate 15th May 1823 Vol 9*, cc 326-339.

⁴⁶ Mathieson, *British Slavery*, pp. 126-137.

⁴⁷ One example being such as ‘if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed’. **John 8:36** (*English Standard Version*)

inter-denominational membership, 'rallied recruits of all sorts and stations to the humanitarian movement' in order to influence public opinion.⁴⁸ These campaigns included public speeches, the petitioning of Parliament and the printing of anti-slavery propaganda, probably the most important in 1823 being Wilberforce's *An Appeal to the Religion, Justice and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire in behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies*. As a means of disseminating information, the Society began to publish its monthly *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, the editor of which was Zachary Macaulay.⁴⁹ Despite Wilberforce's resistance to women's involvement in the abolition movement, females played a highly significant part in the anti-slavery campaigning through their network of local organisations.⁵⁰ The reasons for female involvement in anti-slavery are complex and go beyond middle-class philanthropy and charitable works. Perhaps it was, in part, related to the emancipating role for women that had been granted by Quakerism and Methodism which enabled women to engage more fully in Christian work. Nevertheless, within two years of the founding of the Anti-Slavery Society, the first women's anti-slavery society was established in Birmingham by Lucy Townsend the wife of an Anglican clergyman. She and Mary Lloyd, a Quaker, became the first secretaries of the 'Female Society for Birmingham', as it became known, which 'diffused information to arouse public abhorrence of slavery' and became so successful that a network of women's anti-slavery associations sprang up over the whole country. As Clare Midgley has pointed out, women's groups marked a change towards 'collective female endeavour' which had 'major repercussions not only on the role of women in the movement but also on the nature of the anti-slavery campaign as a whole'. These women's associations, which comprised a wide range of religious groups, together with a network of men's anti-slavery auxiliaries, became vital in the campaign to end colonial slavery during the decade from 1823. Women's associations also played a significant role in bringing the apprenticeship scheme to a finish in 1838.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts*, p. 26; David Hempton, *The Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion c. 1750-1900* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1996), p. 164; Coupland, *British Anti-Slavery*, p. 120.

⁴⁹ Coupland, *British Anti-Slavery*, pp. 120-124.

⁵⁰ Gratus, *The Great White Lie*, p. 197, Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, p. 48.

⁵¹ Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, pp. 5-6, 14-16, 23, 25-29, 35-40, 43-51 and 81. Of particular interest in this thesis is Mary Anne Rawson of Sheffield who became the Secretary of the Sheffield Ladies Association for the Universal Abolition of Slavery.

Before the formation of the Birmingham Society, in 1824, Elizabeth Heyrick, a Leicester Quaker, had anonymously published a pamphlet entitled *Immediate, Not Gradual Abolition*, which encouraged Christians to stop just sympathising with the enslaved peoples and instead boycott the purchase of slave-grown produce in order to bring slavery to an early end.⁵² This proposal was unpopular with the conservative-minded abolitionist politicians since they feared it would worsen the enslaved peoples' predicament. Within two years of publishing her pamphlet, Heyrick wrote to the leadership of the Anti-Slavery Society promoting the need for *immediate* emancipation and criticising the *gradualists'* current ineffectual policy as it would prolong the enslaved people's suffering.⁵³ Heyrick's proposed economic mechanism to end slavery was shared by James Cropper who believed that, if West India slave-grown produce lost its protective tariffs and had to compete with unprotected 'free labour' produce of East India, Caribbean slavery would soon collapse. However, in 1825, when the President of the Board of Trade, William Huskisson, was considering tariff reform, he showed no interest in changing the regulations dealing with sugar imports. As time progressed, the need for *immediate* emancipation became paramount and, in order to increase public awareness, during 1828, the Anti-Slavery Committee acknowledged the importance of engaging 'properly qualified' agents to speak at public meetings. However, due to the national interest being focused on Parliamentary reform and Catholic emancipation, the Society decided to temporarily postpone this public speaking programme.⁵⁴

In February 1830, much to the dismay of abolitionists, the current Colonial Secretary, Sir George Murray, announced that the amelioration resolutions of 1823 had only been a statement of opinion rather than a genuine pledge and that the Government had no intention of interfering in colonial slavery. He also stated that a representative of the West India planters had informed him that public interest in slavery had subsided. This so annoyed the London Committee of the Society that it was forced to conclude that, should it be left to the

⁵² Clare Midgley, 'The Dissenting Voice of Elizabeth Heyrick' in Elizabeth J Clapp & Julie Roy Jeffrey (eds), *Women, Dissent & Anti-Slavery in Britain & America, 1790-1865*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 88-110.

⁵³ For Heyrick's criticism of the *gradualist* policy, see Gratus, *The Great White Lie*, pp 195-200. Also see Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, pp. 75-76.

⁵⁴ David Brion Davis, 'James Cropper and the British Anti-Slavery Movement, 1823-1833', *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 46. No. 3 (April, 1961), pp.154-163; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 309-325.

Government, no progress would be made in addressing the slavery question. Encouraged by the support of new and younger members, the Society reorganised itself so that by the summer of 1830 there was a concentration on petitioning.

By the beginning of 1831, the London Committee had abandoned its previous cautious approach and attendees at its General Meeting in April of that year, expressed a desire to mobilise public action in order to bring about slave emancipation.⁵⁵ The emphasis had also escalated from slavery being a non-Christian institution to being a national crime. By summer 1831, the Anti-Slavery Society had appointed a special sub-committee, the 'Agency Committee', to organise for the engagement agents to travel the country. However, although the main London Committee had approved the plan, there was fear that the Agency Committee could become too independent. Constraints were, therefore, introduced which required the policies of the Agency Committee to be approved by the main Committee. In addition, the leading members of the Society in Parliament remained concerned that the organisation's strategy was too geared towards gaining public support. Furthermore, while the Agency Committee presented its reports to the main Committee, there was an unwillingness by the former to obtain approval before publishing its anti-slavery propaganda documents. In early 1832, a separation occurred between the main Committee and Agency Committee which, following constant disagreements and impatience, caused the latter to request a separate bank account. Apart from the breaking down of relations between the Agency Committee and the main Committee, by July 1832, a division had also developed within the main Committee as some had claimed that its politically-prudent policy was too much at odds with the supporters of the Agency who wanted *immediate* emancipation. Despite the dispute, the Agency Committee actively pursued its aim of persuading the British public at public meetings to support *immediate* emancipation. At these public meetings, audiences were encouraged to demonstrate their support by signing anti-slavery petitions to Parliament and

⁵⁵ MMS Brit Empire s20E2/3, Anti-Slavery Society Minute Book, Bodleian Library, Oxford, pp. 83-84 (18th April 1831), pp. 84-88 (23rd April 1831); pp. 94-95.

these peaked in period 1830-33.⁵⁶ An analysis of these petitions revealed that a large number of the signatures were by members of Methodist and Dissenting denominations.⁵⁷ In the same period 'hundreds of thousands of women' signed petitions, many of whom were members of the same religious communities.⁵⁸ Petitions, therefore, became an important indicator of gauging public opinion and these were widely published in the British press.⁵⁹

The abolitionists' enthusiastic campaign to end slavery was, however, met with strong opposition from 'The Society of West Indian Planters and Merchants' or 'West India Committee' which had been founded in the 1780s to protect the merchants, absentee planters and agents with interests in the Caribbean colonies and preserve slavery. The West India Committee had maintained contact with the Colonial Office as this was the body to which the Government had consulted on colonial matters. In addition, in order to influence public opinion, like the Anti-Slavery Society, the West India Committee also published its own periodical, *The West Indian Reporter*, and as well as appointing its own agents to speak at public meetings.⁶⁰

In June 1832, Parliamentary Reform legislation was passed which enabled the franchise to be increased and the Parliamentary constituencies modified. Abolitionists took advantage of this situation by campaigning for those candidates who would support immediate abolition in the forthcoming elections for the reformed Parliament. This resulted in the membership of the new House of Commons during early 1833 being virtually devoid of members having West Indies interest.⁶¹ The part played by the missionaries in Jamaica and those who

⁵⁶ James Walvin, 'The Rise of British Popular Sentiment for Abolition, 1787-1832' in Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher, *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform: Essays in Memory of Roger Anstey*, (Folkstone, Kent: Wm. Dawson, 1980), pp. 155, 158-160.

⁵⁷ Seymour Drescher, 'Two Variants of Anti-Slavery: Religious Organisation and Social Mobilisation in Britain and France, 1780-1870', in Christine Bolt & Seymour Drescher, *Anti-Slavery, Religion and Reform* (Folkstone, Kent: Wm Dawson & Sons Ltd., 1980), pp. 45-49. The data used by Drescher was derived from A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740-1914* (1976), pp. 31, 37 and First Report from Select Committee on Public Petitions (1833).
Also see Drescher, *Abolition*, p. 252.

⁵⁸ Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, pp. 62-63. Various Journals of Houses of Commons and Lords and *First of Forty-First Reports of the Select Committee on Public Petitions* (February to August, 1833)

⁵⁹ Seymour Drescher, 'Public Opinion and the Destruction of British Colonial Slavery' in James Walvin (ed), *Slavery and British Society 1776-1846*, (Basingstoke: Macmillian Press, 1982), pp. 25-26.

⁶⁰ Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 241, 482-483, 494, 499-500.

⁶¹ Davis, 'James Cropper', pp.163-168; Green, *British Slave Emancipation*, p. 114; Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 103-108, 206; D. J. Murray, *The West Indies and the Development of Colonial Government* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp 187-189; see also Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 446-450.

returned to Britain, as well as the evangelical public in these developments, will be explored in the following two chapters of the thesis.

PART 3: THE PERSECUTION OF MISSIONARIES IN 1823.

From the previous chapter and the above overview of the development of the anti-slavery movement, the important role of evangelicals in the anti-slavery campaign is clear. Based on the evidence that will be presented in the next chapters, it will be argued that from 1831 much of this evangelical impetus was the result of the information about the persecution of those missionaries who worked with the enslaved people in Jamaica and later by those missionaries who returned to Britain and engaged in a national anti-slavery public speaking campaign. However, this was not a new development since, at the very outset of the campaign against colonial slavery in 1823, it was news of the persecution of missionaries in the Caribbean at that time which helped mobilise British public opinion against slavery. In order to interpret the impact of missionaries in the early 1830s, it is essential to have some knowledge of these earlier developments in other British Caribbean colonies. These will now be briefly outlined.

In 1823, following the despatch of the British Government's amelioration measures to the Legislative Colonies, the Governor of Demerara and the colony's administration, all of whom were slave owners, failed to take action to implement the Government's wishes. Rumours soon spread among the enslaved people that the colonial administration had not fulfilled the British Government's instruction which they had mistakenly believed was to end slavery. Frustration grew among the enslaved people and this culminated in an insurrection which resulted in much property damage and loss of life. Among the missionaries present in the colony at the time was the Reverend John Smith of the London Missionary Society who worked with the enslaved people. Because of a suspicion by the Governor that he was involved in the anti-slavery movement in Britain, and that the evangelical doctrines Smith taught could encourage discontent among the enslaved people, the missionary was arrested for plotting to instigate the insurrection. Smith was tried by a military court and,

although not found guilty of all charges, was sentenced to execution for not supporting the white planters in the uprising. The Governor decided to delay Smith's execution until approval had been received from Britain, but before the instructions that he should be released were received, Smith died in his prison cell from a medical condition.⁶² These events caused consternation in Britain, much of which was prompted by the press and the LMS's own publication, the *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*. So important was the Smith case that, apart from him being designated a martyr, during 1824 the missionary society's publication devoted about a quarter of its total print space to the matter. The *Evangelical Magazine* published a huge number of letters from individuals, local missionary associations and churches throughout Britain and abroad which were in support of the Directors of the LMS who resolutely defended Smith. In order to keep its readership informed, the magazine also presented details of Parliamentary debates on the matter and the progress of over 200 petitions supporting Smith that had been presented to the House of Commons.⁶³ Apart from the LMS keeping the general public informed of the events in Demerara by notices published in the secular press, *The Baptist Magazine* for 1823 and 1824 also regularly reported on the matter. The issue also motivated the Evangelical Anglicans' publication, *The Christian Observer*, to call upon everyone 'who has the fear of God before their eyes' to support Parliament in its efforts to gradually end slavery.⁶⁴

Within a few months of the events in Demerara, William Shrewsbury, a Wesleyan Methodist missionary in Barbados, became a victim of white colonial aggression. Events in Barbados had been prompted by those concerning Smith in Demerara, who had been termed a 'Methodist' and by a suspicion that Shrewsbury was involved in the anti-slavery movement. These fears drew on the colony's long-held opposition to religious nonconformity that was evident in a previous slave uprising in 1816 when 'Methodists' had been blamed for its instigation.⁶⁵ This opposition to religious dissent was related to the colony's history of opposition to nonconformity, as explained above. Following the events in Demerara, the white Barbadian's began their harassment of Shrewsbury.

⁶² Wallbridge, *The Demerara Martyr* and Chamberlin, *Smith of Demerara*.

⁶³ *The Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle*, 1824, p. 323.

⁶⁴ da Costa, *Crowns of Glory*, p. 281, 370.

⁶⁵ As stated in a footnote in the Introduction, 'Sectarians' was a sometimes a derogatory term use by those who opposed all Protestant Dissenting Christians. 'Methodists' was similarly used.

This escalated to such a level that Shrewsbury's Bridgetown chapel was completely destroyed and, in fear of being killed, the missionary and his wife were forced to escape to a neighbouring island.⁶⁶ Once again news of the hostilities towards a British missionary began to impact the public at home. This was achieved through the British press and the WMMS's own publication, the *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, which presented evidence of the anti-missionary hostilities in Barbados because of the white islanders' belief that Shrewsbury was in league with the British abolitionists. The *Magazine* also published Shrewsbury's own account of the events which depicted the white colonists as being hostile to religious nonconformity.⁶⁷ Collectively, the events concerning Smith in Demerara and Shrewsbury in Barbados influenced the British public's attitude towards the white colonists in the West Indies because of the opposition to the missionaries whose aim was to Christianise the enslaved population.

In bringing this chapter to a conclusion, the initial parts have offered an overview of the development of evangelicalism and the missionary movement together with a brief description of the advancement of the British anti-slavery movement. It was shown that the rapid expansion in evangelicalism coincided with growing anti-slavery activism. By outlining the persecution of the missionaries in 1823 and the anti-mission colonial culture, the final part of the chapter has provided a precursor for the remainder of the thesis which will explore how the missionaries in Jamaica, following a slave insurrection in 1831-32, had influenced British public opinion on colonial slavery.

⁶⁶ John V. Shrewsbury, *Memorials of the Rev William J Shrewsbury* (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1867), pp. 129-157.

⁶⁷ Johnson, *Missionary Writings*, p. 32.

**PART 2: MISSIONARY PERSECUTION AND PUBLIC OPINION
AGAINST SLAVERY: AFTERMATH OF THE JAMAICA SLAVE
UPRISING OF 1831-32**

CHAPTER 3

RESPONSES TO MISSIONARY PERSECUTION IN THE BRITISH PRESS AND PERIODICALS

Part 1 of this thesis has drawn on secondary source material to explore the relationship between evangelicalism, missions and anti-slavery in Britain over the period from the launch of the anti-slavery and foreign missionary movements in the 1790s through to the passing of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833. It has also noted the impact of missionary persecution following slave uprisings in the Caribbean in 1823 on the early stages of the campaign against colonial slavery. This chapter and the next will focus on a slave uprising in Jamaica during 1831-32 which coincided with the height of the anti-slavery campaign. It uses primary source material to explore how, and in what way, the persecution of missionaries following this uprising assisted the anti-slavery campaign at this crucial time.

This chapter discusses the reporting in Britain of the persecution in Jamaica of the missionaries, and the impact this had on public opinion. This will be done by exploring the press and missionary society and anti-slavery publications that disseminated information about the initial harassment of the missionaries and the developing anti-missionary situation on the island. The first part of the chapter will present an outline of the events leading to and following the slave insurrection which broke out at Christmas 1831 and examine how the missionaries were accused of instigating the event. The other parts will present evidence in support of the argument that the information about persecuted missionaries influenced British evangelical public opinion on slavery. It will be shown how this was achieved by the missionary societies exposing the anti-missionary sentiments published by part of the Jamaica press and then by the publication of continued anti-missionary activity which strengthened British opposition to slavery. The following chapter will then focus on the role of the missionaries who returned to Britain to disseminate information and promote anti-slavery activism.

PART 1: JAMAICA, MISSIONARIES AND THE SLAVE UPRISING AT CHRISTMAS 1831

At Christmas 1831 a major slave uprising broke out in Jamaica. It became known as the 'Baptist War' because of the immense hostility that was directed towards the Baptist missionaries working on the island by the white colonists who accused them of instigating the uprising. Drawing on the missionaries' nineteenth-century biographies and modern scholarship this part of the chapter will present the background to the insurrection, explain the contentious positioning of missionaries within Jamaican colonial society, explore the issues which sparked the uprising, and discuss the course of the uprising and the way in which missionaries became involved.¹

During the years immediately prior to the slave insurrection in Jamaica, the planter-dominated House of Assembly, like other Legislative Colonial Assemblies, resisted Parliament's request to amend the slave laws to accord with the amelioration recommendations of 1823, part of which had encouraged Christian teaching and worship. As little progress had been made after three years, the Colonial Secretary, Lord Bathurst, instructed the island's Governor to suspend the current Assembly and appoint new members so that the slave laws could be revised and sent to London for Royal Assent.² By December 1826 the new Assembly had been appointed and the necessary changes to the legislation sent to the Colonial Office. A letter accompanied the revisions expressing the Assembly's disappointment at what was seen as the unfair and prejudicial way Parliament had introduced the measures since, in Assembly's opinion, the amelioration recommendations had been based on evidence from 'tainted sources' (the abolitionists). After the Assembly had prepared the new

¹ John Howard Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb, Missionary in Jamaica*, (London: Houlston & Stoneman, 1849); William Fitzer Burchell, *Memoir of Thomas Burchell, Twenty-Two Years a Missionary in Jamaica*, (London: Benjamin L. Green, 1849); Edward Bean Underhill, *Life of James Mursell Phillippo*, (London: Yates & Alexander, 1881); James Mursell Phillippo, *Jamaica: Its Past and Present State*, (Philadelphia: James M. Campbell & Co. 1843); Henry Bleby, *Death Struggles of Slavery* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1853); author, *A Narrative of Recent Events connected with The Baptist Mission on this Island by Baptist Missionaries* (Jamaica: Edward Jordon & Robert Osborn, 1833); Mrs John James Smith, *William Knibb Missionary in Jamaica: A Memoir*, (London: Alexander & Shephard, 1896); Philip Wright, *Knibb 'the Notorious' Slave Missionary 1803-1845*, (London: Sidgwick and Jackson Limited, 1973); Gordon A. Catherall, *William Knibb: Freedom Fighter*, (United Kingdom: Janay Publishing Company, 1972); Mary Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, (Kingston, Jamaica: The Press University of the West Indies, 1998); 'A Calm and Authentic Review of the Causes, the Commencement, and the Progress to a certain period, of the Insurrection which is Reported Recently to have taken place among the Slaves in the Colony of Jamaica', *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 5.94 (1832: March), pp. 81-112; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publications Ltd, 2002).

² *Papers Presented to Parliament by His Majesty's Command, For the Melioration of the Condition of the Slave Population ... presented in the year 1826*. Vol. XXV Part I, (London: R. G. Clarke, 1827), pp.1-5.

legal revisions, several missionaries were imprisoned for infringement of them, one of whom was the Methodist missionary, Isaac Whitehouse.³ Almost a year after the revisions had been sent to London, the Governor received correspondence informing him that Royal Assent to the colony's new laws had been refused and this was because the Colonial Office considered certain clauses were attacks of religious tolerance. The disputed clauses related to the Assembly banning services of worship after sunset and the allowance of Sunday markets until 11 am, which conflicted with the Colonial Office's recommendation that Sunday markets should be banned in order to allow the enslaved people to attend religious services.⁴ In defence of the Assembly's proposed changes, the Governor informed the Colonial Office that, in his opinion, the proposed clauses relating to religious worship had been introduced because of the problems associated with the events in Demerara during 1823 since it was believed that it was at religious gatherings where the planning of the insurrection had taken place. In addition, the Governor stated that the Assembly was unwilling to modify the laws since in doing so this would not be in 'the best interest' of the colony and could endanger 'the safety of the island'. The only option open to the Assembly, therefore, was that the former slave laws of 1816 be retained. So strong was the resentment against Parliament that the Assembly threatened to declare independence from Britain and instead establish an allegiance with the United States.⁵

Suspicious that the Dissenting and Methodist missionaries were associated with the abolitionists, caused the Assembly in November 1827 to form a 'Sectarian Committee' to examine the work of these missionaries.⁶ This Committee immediately set to work in quizzing the missionaries and members of the various denominations about how the missions and chapels were funded. When published, the Committee's report concluded that missions had been set up to extort money from the black congregations. Furthermore, it was thought that the missionaries had been inculcating 'the doctrine of equality and rights of man' and 'teaching sedition' against the colonial authorities. The Assembly formally

³ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, pp. 133-134.

⁴ *Slave Law of Jamaica with Proceedings and Documents*, (London: James Ridgeway, 1928), pp. v-xiii, 140-158; Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb*, pp. 86-99; See also <http://www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com/Samples2/Mslavea4.htm> extracts of Colonial Office Papers 1816 - 1831 Amelioration, "improve the condition of the lower orders of society."

⁵ Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, p. 405.

⁶ *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, Vol. III, No. 17, 20th August 1830, pp. 354-356; Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, p. 407.

adopted the report and copies were sent to Britain. Upon learning of the Sectarian Committee's report, the missionary societies submitted objections to the Colonial Office which were published in missionary society and also abolitionist publications. In the *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter*, it was suggested that the purpose of Sectarian Committee's report was to denigrate the missionaries and enable 'the extinction of Christianity amongst the slaves.'⁷ In the opinion of Stiv Jakobsson, the Sectarian Committee's report, and its adoption by the Assembly was a major factor in bringing together the British missionary societies and the abolitionists.⁸ Certainly, there is evidence that the attitude towards missionaries in Jamaica was an important issue at the Wesleyan Conference in 1830, where a call was made for delegates to become involved in anti-slavery petitioning.⁹ In the following year, at the Annual General Meeting of the WMMS, further strong statements were made against the inhumanity of slavery and colonists' opposition to Christianity. One speaker suggested that it should be the Society's aim to give the enslaved people knowledge and raise their dignity, while another emphasised the importance of the missionaries in being 'instruments of promoting civilisation'.¹⁰

In 1831, a few months before the Christmas riot in Jamaica, Thomas Fowell Buxton moved that the House of Commons 'adopt the best means of effecting [slave] abolition throughout the British dominions.'¹¹ The Government, in response, decided to once again encourage the colonies to adopt the amelioration measures with the promise, on this occasion, to alter the sugar duties if they were compliant. By November 1831, as Parliament remained dissatisfied with progress, an Order-in-Council was issued to all colonies demanding the adoption of the amelioration measures but dropping a former proposal to alter the tariffs.¹² When news of this demand reached Jamaica, public meetings were held throughout the island in order to coordinate resistance to the 'interference' by the British Government. The island's

⁷ Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 407-417.

⁸ Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 416-417.

⁹ *Minutes of Wesleyan Methodist Church 1830*, pp. 613-615 available on <http://www.methodistheritage.org.uk/research-wesleyanconferenceminutes.htm> (07.01.19)

¹⁰ *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, June 1831, pp. 426-439.

¹¹ *Hansard*: HC Deb 25 March 1831 Vol. 3, cc 938-939; HC Deb 15 April 1831 Vol. 3, cc 1408-1469.

¹² It was only through pressure from members of the Commons who were concerned about the distress in the West Indies that the revised sugar duties took place in March 1832. D. J. Murray, *The West Indies and the Development of Colonial Government*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), pp. 189-190; Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 449-451.

Governor, Earl Belmore, also wrote to the new Colonial Secretary, Lord Goderich, expressing his concern that Parliament's action could generate unrest among enslaved Jamaicans as they might believe that freedom was being offered. The tension between planters and enslaved workers did indeed mount and, at Christmas in 1831 when the workers were informed that they would not be granted an extra day's holiday to compensate for Christmas falling on a Sunday, an insurrection quickly broke out. As the damage to property rapidly spread across the whole island, the Governor, on the 27th December, declared Martial Law. This uprising involved as many as 60,000 enslaved people and property damage amounted to about a million pounds. While 14 whites were killed and another 12 were wounded, over two hundred enslaved black people died and a further four hundred were executed or flogged as punishment. Control was eventually restored with the arrival of three hundred troops and in February, Martial Law was then lifted.¹³

While an obvious cause of the insurrection was the loss of the day's holiday and planters' ill-treatment, many whites on the island placed the blame on the English Baptist missionaries who worked with enslaved people. These missionaries had been invited to the island by black Baptist leaders who had previously arrived from the United States to establish local congregations. Among the English missionaries to arrive in the early 1820s were the Reverends James Phillippo and Thomas Burchell, together with Reverend William Knibb who came to fill a vacant post as teacher created by the earlier death of his elder brother, Thomas.¹⁴ By 1829, within five years of his arrival, William Knibb had become pastor of the Falmouth chapel and other missionary stations. By 1831, there were twenty-four Baptist chapels on the island, with 10,000 members and 24,000 inquirers.¹⁵ Other missionaries on the island at that time were Moravians, Wesleyans and Scottish Presbyterians. Also present in Jamaica were the 'Native Baptists', a sect that had evolved from the black Baptists to become a blend of Christian and African religions. It was within this

¹³ Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 451-456.

¹⁴ The missionaries arrived on the island after preaching licences had been issued in 1823, see Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, p. 21.

¹⁵ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 88.

independent sect that the planning for the slave revolt in 1831 had in fact taken place.¹⁶

Having heard rumour of an impending insurrection, Knibb had set about trying to dampen down the excitement amongst the enslaved people in his congregation and encouraged them not to become involved. He had also warned the other missionaries of the approaching conflict. After the insurrection had started, and following threats from the insurgents, several missionaries of the different denominations and their wives travelled for safety to Falmouth. Amongst those present were the Baptists William Knibb, Thomas Abbott and James Whitehorne, the Wesleyan, William Box, and several Presbyterians.¹⁷ Shortly after Martial Law had been declared, the missionaries were presented with papers requiring them to join the militia but, in the belief that they were excused military service, Knibb, Abbott and Whitehorne ignored the demand. This resulted in their arrest and transportation by canoe in the heat of the day to Montego Bay and it was only through the intervention of an influential customs officer that they were later released on bail on condition that they would not leave town.¹⁸ Meanwhile, accusations had spread amongst the island's white population that the missionaries had been arrested for instigating the insurrection.¹⁹ These had been encouraged by the local newspaper, the *Jamaica Courant & Public Advertiser*, which suggested that the shooting of the missionaries was 'too honourable a death for men whose conduct has occasioned so much bloodshed and loss of property'.²⁰

These accusations coincided with Thomas Burchell's return from Britain in early January 1832 when he was immediately transferred from the merchant ship on which he had travelled to a naval frigate where he was detained for a month. No reason had been given for the confinement but his papers were confiscated. On inspection of these documents, as no incriminating evidence was found, Burchell was taken ashore to a place of safety, where he was advised to leave

¹⁶ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, pp. 57, 98-102.

¹⁷ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, pp.1-2; 11-12; 39; 51-59. Phillippo, *Jamaica*, p. 43; F. A. Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, Vol. II (London: T. Ward & Co., 1842), pp. 1-77.

¹⁸ *A Narrative of Recent Events connected with The Baptist Mission on this Island by Baptist Missionaries* (Jamaica: Edward Jordon & Robert Osborn, 1833), p 33-37; F. A. Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, Vol. II, (London: T. Ward & Co., 1862), 86-88.

¹⁹ *A Narrative of Recent Events*, p. 25.

²⁰ W. F. Burchell, *Memoir of Thomas Burchell*, p. 184, 213; Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, p. 461.

for North America. However, upon discovering this plan, some white islanders persuaded the magistrates that he, together with a fellow Baptist missionary, Francis Gardener, should be detained. This was based upon an allegation that Burchell had told the enslaved people in his congregation 'that freedom was theirs ... and that they ... must fight and pray for it'. As no genuine evidence was produced to support this claim, Burchell was released, which enabled him to sail to New York on the 16th March. In respect of Gardener, at a Court of Assizes, he too was acquitted after the intervention of his defence lawyer. Similarly, the Attorney-General abandoned the case against Knibb and, following the intervention by the Governor, the trials of the other missionaries were abandoned.²¹

Three months after the insurrection, a Court of Inquiry was appointed by the Assembly to determine the causes of the riot. Most of the evidence came from Anglican clergymen who had obtained testimonies from slaves awaiting trial or execution.²² The Inquiry revealed that the ringleader was Samuel Sharp, an enslaved man who attended a Baptist chapel run by the British missionaries, although he was also thought to have strong connections with the Native Baptist sect that was behind the insurrection.²³ In the evidence, it was apparent that enslaved people had discussed an insurrection for some years and that at Christmas it had been triggered by a combination of factors. Among these was the dispute over the holiday and newspaper reports about the Anti-Slavery Society's campaigns in Britain which the enslaved people had been mistakenly believed to be the passing of emancipation laws by the British Government that was being ignored by the planters.²⁴ Despite these conclusions, the Jamaican press continued to blame the Baptist missionaries for instigating the insurrection, an accusation which the missionaries strongly refuted by claiming that they had attempted to prevent the unrest.²⁵ In a letter to a friend, Knibb had explained that, of the thousand members of his congregation in Falmouth, 'only

²¹ Burchell, *Memoir*, pp. 195-236; Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 436-457; *A Narrative of Recent Events* p 43-50; 64-73; Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb*, pp. 111-140; F. A. Cox, *History of the Baptist Missionary Society*, Vol. II (London: T. Ward & Co., 1842), pp. 78-190.

²² Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 456; Parliamentary Papers, *Jamaica: Slave Insurrection. Report of a Committee of the House of Assembly of Jamaica, appointed to inquire into the Cause of, and Inquiry sustained by, the recent Rebellion in that Colony*, together with the Examination on Oath, Confessions and other Documents annexed to the Report 1831-32. XLVII (561), pp. p. 1-39.

²³ Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 457.

²⁴ Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 457-458.

²⁵ Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 458-461.

three' had been found guilty of involvement in the riot and many others had 'defended their master's property'. To this Knibb added how the enslaved people in the Baptist congregations had always been taught obedience.²⁶ The Wesleyan and Moravian missionaries had similarly protested against the accusations on the grounds that they too had taught their congregations obedience and peace.²⁷

The public opposition to the missionaries came from two main sources. Firstly, from part of the local press, including the *Kingston Chronicle* and the *Cornwall Courier* and especially, the *Jamaica Courant & Public Advertiser*, the editor of which was Augustus Hardin Beaumont who had been described as a 'violent republican' and had apparently brought the Jamaican press into a 'respected condition'.²⁸ However, the views expressed in the *Courant* were often contested by *The Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, the editor and founder of which was Edward Jordon, a leading member of the Kingston Wesleyan church and of mixed free African and European ancestry.²⁹ These local newspapers, which reported on events in Jamaica also contained correspondence that expressed the opinions of the white islanders, became a major source of information for the British press.

The second source of hostility to missionaries came from an Anglican clergyman based in Jamaica, Reverend G. W. Bridges, who was a leading opponent of British abolitionists and the Dissenting and Methodist missionaries on the island. In 1823 he had published his *Annals of Jamaica*, in which he defended the right of the white colonists to maintain slavery.³⁰ In January 1832, Bridges delivered a sermon to his congregation accusing the missionaries of initiating the revolt and, at later date, was instrumental in the formation of the Jamaica-wide Colonial Church Union (CCU) which aimed to expel all Dissenting and Methodist missionaries from the island. The membership of the CCU included several prominent professional men and, at its initial meeting in

²⁶ Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb*, p. 136.

²⁷ Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 467- 469.

²⁸ *Monthly Review*, (May to August, 1844), Vol. II (London: Henderson, 1944), p. 148.

²⁹ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, p. 27, 123; After emancipation Jordon changed *The Watchman* to the more moderate *Morning Journal* - <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/jordon-edward> (11.01.19)

³⁰ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 101-102.

Falmouth during July 1832, formulated plans to prevent preaching by the missionaries and destroy missionary property. One outcome of this opposition was the tarring of a Wesleyan missionary and an attack on a Baptist missionary's home. While the CCU initially had no objections to the Scottish Presbyterian missionaries, within months of the Union's formation, this had changed and resulted in the Presbyterians receiving treatment similar to the other missionaries. However, the abuse of the missionaries resulted in strong opposition from the free black population of the island and this created fear amongst the white inhabitants that a civil war might break out.³¹

The persecution the missionaries experienced led to them making complaints to the Governor but, as will be seen in the next chapter, also sending representatives to London to acquaint their respective missionary societies of the hostile climate on the island. For this purpose, the Baptist missionaries chose William Knibb and the Wesleyans selected Peter Duncan and John Barry.³²

PART 2: INITIAL RESPONSES IN BRITAIN TO THE PERSECUTION OF MISSIONARIES IN JAMAICA

Developing an argument that the persecution of the missionaries and the anti-missionary sentiments expressed in local newspapers in Jamaica influenced British public opinion against slavery, this part of the chapter will explore the role of the British press and missionary societies in the dissemination of information about the developments in Jamaica.

Although the insurrection broke out at Christmas time in 1831, owing to the 5,000-mile sea voyage between Jamaica and Britain it was not until mid-February 1832 when *The Times* and other national and regional newspapers were able to publish information about the event. Initial reports indicated that about 35 black people and a small number of whites had been killed or injured

³¹ Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, pp. 469-476; Hope Masterton Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa*, (London: T Nelson & Son, 1863), pp. 74-76.

³² Jakobsson, *Am I Not a Man*, p. 476; Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, p. 171.

and that public order had been restored by the island's militia and the arrival of the military.³³ Shortly after, on the 21st February, allegations surfaced in the British press that missionaries had been accused of initiating the insurrection. These assertions came in the form of letters written by white colonists in Jamaica that were published in the London-based Whig supporting *Morning Chronicle*. One letter came from a worried un-named islander who, having read Jamaica newspapers, expressed fear that 'the whole superstructure of society [had been] subverted' and that the general white population believed the rebellion had been instigated by 'the sectarian preachers'. The letter added that three missionaries had been taken in custody, and in the writer's opinion, 'their situation [was] truly critical'. The writer recalled events in Demerara eight years earlier with the hope that there would be 'no repetition of Missionary Smith's ordeal' in Jamaica. However, the writer continued, despite the 'conflicting statements' among the population, it was believed that 'the sectarians' were not 'the active movers in these most disastrous scenes.'³⁴ Instead, the true cause was the abolitionists who in their debate in Parliament had caused the enslaved people to mistakenly believe that their freedom had been secured but that their release was being withheld by the planters (what Michael Craton called the 'rumour syndrome').³⁵

In support of the belief that the uprising had been caused by the abolitionists, a second published letter, also from an un-named writer, explained that fifty estates had been 'burnt to the ground' because some enslaved people had been 'deluded' by 'some evil-disposed persons', namely, 'the Saints' in Britain. The writer hoped that 'the hypocritical crew in England' would 'now see the necessity of ceasing with their injudicious interference, and let us alone.' The writer added the belief that the missionaries were the abolitionists 'emissaries' who were the cause of 'the mischief'. The writer of a third letter, that had been previously published in a local newspaper in Jamaica, referred to how two captured enslaved people had told of how 'agents' of a Baptist chapel at Montego Bay had preached to them 'that they were to take the country and be

³³ *The Times*, 20th February 1832, p. 2; reports also appeared in other newspapers throughout Britain including the *Evening Mail*, 20th February 1832, p. 4; *Caledonian Mercury*, 20th February 1832, p. 4.

³⁴ *The Morning Chronicle*, 21st February 1832, p. 2.

³⁵ Craton, *Testing the Chains*, pp. 243-244.

free'.³⁶ From these published letters from Jamaica, it is clear that white islanders had placed the blame for the insurrection on the abolitionist politicians in Parliament but, prompted by the colonial press, it was the Baptists missionaries as the abolitionists' agents who had initiated the event on the island.

However, while white colonists and the colonial press tended to attribute all or much of the blame for the uprising on the missionaries, the British press did not simply accept this. The editor of the liberal *Liverpool Mercury*, for example, expressed the belief that the missionaries had no motivation to encourage violence and consequently were not responsible for the insurrection. Furthermore, they knew that if such a course was pursued, they 'would pay for their temerity with their lives'. In addition, they would have recalled the persecution of Smith in Demerara, and this would have deterred them 'from pursuing a course which could only lead to their own ruin'. Concerned for the safety of missionaries, the *Liverpool Mercury's* editor warned of 'the ferocious terms' in which the island's local newspaper, 'the *Jamaica Courant* [had] denounced these men, before conviction' by stating 'that shooting would be too honourable a death for men whose conduct has occasioned such bloodshed, and the loss of so many properties'. In adding to the criticism of the colonial newspaper, the *Liverpool Mercury's* editor quoted the sentiments previously expressed in *The Times* concerning the language that would have inflamed 'the passion' of those in Jamaica 'who would be sitting in judgment' of the missionaries.³⁷ Apart from the criticism of the prejudiced island newspaper, the editor of the *Liverpool Mercury* in March repeated the belief that the insurrection was not the fault the missionaries nor was it the fault of the doctrine they preached. Commenting on the 'invincible reluctance' of the colonial Assembly to adopt Parliament's amelioration measures, the editor warned the islanders that should they continue to oppose the British Government, colonial order would be overthrown and that all the West India colonies could 'follow the example set them by the slaves of St Domingo' which in the 1790s became controlled by the black population.³⁸ So, as far as the editor of the *Liverpool Mercury* was

³⁶ *The Morning Chronicle*, 21st February 1832, p. 3.

³⁷ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 25th February 1832, p. 8.

³⁸ *The Liverpool Mercury*, 2nd March 1832, p. 8.

concerned, not only was the Jamaican press to be rebuked for its condemnation of the missionaries but so too was the colonial Assembly for its attitude towards the British Parliament.

Other British newspaper editors, however, were less sympathetic to the missionaries. The *Newcastle Courant* published an article based 'on the authority of letters from Jamaica' which stated that three Baptist missionaries, Knibb, Whitehorn and Abbott, had been taken into custody on a charge of exciting 'the slaves to rebellion'. The editor of the newspaper commented that it was 'to be feared, that the zeal of those who are sent out as missionaries, in too many instances exceeds their discretion.'³⁹ This editorial annoyed one local reader whose letter was published during the following week. The correspondent was John Fenwick of Newcastle-upon-Tyne who, apart from criticising the editor's comments, expressed his anger at the condemnation of the missionaries in Jamaica for instigating the insurrection. In Fenwick's opinion, there was not 'a single case where there was even the shadow of proof that any missionary ... was in any manner or form, directly or indirectly, connected with any West India insurrection, *except for the purpose of quelling it.*' Fenwick believed it was hard to accept 'that those excellent men' would be 'implicated in the recent disturbance' and asked the readers of the paper to suspend any judgement until sound evidence was available. He added that the missionaries had 'gone to the West Indies to humanise and Christianise the savages and heathen slave population' Therefore, if the missionaries had not taught the enslaved people, 'the entire race of the blacks might have perished without instruction' and would 'have cast from them the name, ... Christianity.' Fenwick's letter concluded by criticising the leading Jamaican newspaper, the *Jamaica Courant*, for its hostile attitude towards the Baptist missionaries and upon which the British press was basing its reports. As the victimisation of the missionaries during 1823 remained in the writer's mind, Fenwick anxiously added that what had happened to the Baptist missionaries in

³⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 25th February 1832, p. 4.

Jamaica, resembled the treatment of Smith in Demerara and Shrewsbury in Barbados.⁴⁰

Other British newspapers were more cautious than the *Newcastle Courant* about simply re-publishing information from Jamaica, and many expressed anxieties about the colonists' attitude towards the missionaries.⁴¹ Among these was the liberal *Sheffield Independent*, the editor of which criticised the colonists for blaming the insurrection on the Baptists. In February, the newspaper's readers were reminded of the earlier 'tearing down of the Methodist Chapel at Barbados, and the treatment of the unfortunate missionary Smith, in Demerara'. The editor also explained how the Baptist missionaries in Jamaica had been regarded with bitterness and hatred while the charges against them had been unfounded. The editor was also convinced that, if they had engaged in the insurrection, they would have been in danger of losing everything.⁴² Other local British newspapers similarly reported how, even before the missionaries had been put on trial, letters from Jamaica had suggested that they were 'guilty'.⁴³ Indeed much of the British press were disturbed by the white islanders' prejudicial accounts. An editorial in *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, for example, refused to accept that the missionaries had instigated the revolt since it was inconceivable that they would be 'foolish ... or wicked enough to instigate' enslaved people 'to acts of violence'. The editor added a quotation from the *Liverpool Times* concerning anti-missionary feelings in Jamaica, which stated that missionaries had been treated with 'the bitterest, hatred'.⁴⁴ The *Royal Cornwall Gazette* published a reassuring letter from Jamaica claiming that the accusations against the Baptist missionaries were 'being believed only by those who WISHED them to be true'. In fact, the writer had 'himself received an assurance [from an official source] that the Missionaries had been all acquitted, after a few hours' detention', and that not one charge had 'been

⁴⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 3rd March 1832, p. 2. The letter was dated 25th February 1832. (This newspaper cutting together with a similar letter of criticism about the Jamaica press, dated 24th February 1832, that was published in the *Portsmouth Herald* was included within a file on Knibb held in the Angus Library, Oxford)

⁴¹ The newspapers included the *Belfast News-Letter*, 24th February 1832; *Caledonian Mercury*, 23rd February 1832; and *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 27th February 1832.

⁴² *The Sheffield Independent*, 25th February 1832, p. 2.

⁴³ *The Hull Packet*, 28th February 1832. The letter had been written on the 6th January and appeared in the colonial press which was republished in *The Aberdeen Journal*, 29th February 1832.

⁴⁴ *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 1st March 1832.

substantiated against them'.⁴⁵ This letter had related to the Baptist missionaries being released on bail, having previously been taken into custody for their unwillingness to join the militia.

Further information about the missionaries appeared in British newspapers during March, including the news that a Wesleyan missionary had also been arrested. *The Times* published a letter from Richard Watson, Secretary of the WMMS who criticised the islanders' anti-missionary position and reported that a Wesleyan missionary had been imprisoned without charge in a 'most loathsome dungeon for five days.' The paper also published a letter from Jamaica announcing that the Governor had found no substantial information against the Wesleyan missionary and consequently he was 'immediately liberated.'⁴⁶

The BMS also sought to provide accurate information to the British press to counteract the viewpoints of the colonial press. A few days after the initial press reports on developments in Jamaica, John Dyer, the Society's Secretary, wrote two letters to the editors of various newspapers including *The Morning Chronicle*, *Evening Mail* and *The Times* in order to point out the anti-missionary stance of the Jamaican press and to defend the missionaries. In one letter Dyer referred to the *Jamaica Courant* and other Jamaican newspapers as sharing a long-term anti-missionary disposition and believed that no-one who knew about the 'violent prejudices' that had 'existed for many years ... in Jamaica' would have been surprised about the charges against the Baptist missionaries. Despite missionaries' 'blameless and inoffensive lives', there had been 'causeless hostility' towards them. Dyer stated that '[n]othing has ever transpired in the conduct or the character of the individuals accused, to warrant the slightest suspicion that they would act the part so unhesitatingly ascribed to them.' It was thus 'utterly repugnant to the known character of the men' that such blame was apportioned to them.⁴⁷ In a second letter, Dyer criticised the 'lamentable' writing by the editor of the *Kingston Chronicle* who had accused

⁴⁵ *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 3rd February 1832.; See also same newspaper dated 3rd March 1832 which published a letter from a writer in Truro emphasising complete confidence in the missionaries' conduct. On the 10th March 1832 the same newspaper published extracts from colonial press as a 'specimen of the spirit in which the controversy is carried on' in Jamaica. The news of Burchell's release is also reported.

⁴⁶ *The Times*, 10th March 1832, p. 6.

⁴⁷ *The Morning Chronicle*, p. 3, *Evening Mail*, p. 8, *The Times*, p. 3, and others local newspapers on the 22nd February 1832 and during the week that followed.

the missionaries of 'inculcating principles and doctrines hostile to the wellbeing and safety of the colony'. This, Dyer thought, was 'nonsense'.⁴⁸ A further letter from Dyer appeared in *The Times* during March in which he clarified the reasons behind the charges against the Baptist missionaries which, he stated, had nothing to do with any involvement in the riot but were related to their refusal to undertake militia duties. As Dyer explained, the missionaries had been under the impression that, as Christian ministers, they had an exemption from such duties. Fortunately, he continued, through the intervention of the government official, the missionaries had been released on bail. However, regarding the Baptist missionary, Thomas Burchell, who had returned to Jamaica days after the insurrection, the ringleader of the insurrection, Samuel Sharp, had accused him of having 'written encouraging letters to his deputies and black brethren' stating that the insurrection was 'the work of the Lord'. Dyer then explained how Burchell had been detained on a naval ship and that the hostile *Jamaica Courant* had lost no time to in accusing him of instigating the rebellion. Dyer added that, in Burchell's defence, *The Watchman and Jamaica Free Press*, which was a newspaper in Jamaica that was sympathetic to the missionaries, criticised the 'malicious falsehood' that had been published in the *Courant*. Furthermore, *The Watchman* accused the *Courant* of injuring 'the cause of Christianity' as it had not only opposed Baptists but also the Wesleyans and Moravians missionaries. Although Dyer's letter went on to explain that two Baptist chapels had been damaged, he also took the opportunity of expressing admiration for those converted enslaved people who, during the insurrection, had 'perished in defending their masters' property'.⁴⁹

In March, the BMS also began to publish its own version of the events in Jamaica in the form of reports in the Society's magazine, the *Missionary Herald*. This was partly done to counterbalance the prejudiced accounts from Jamaica and to exonerate the missionaries from blame for instigating the insurrection. The magazine informed its readers that three Baptist missionaries (Knibb, Abbott, and Whitehorne) had been taken into custody. While the editor was

⁴⁸ *The Times*, 25th February 1832, p. 5; *Evening Mail*, 27th February 1832, p. 3.

⁴⁹ *The Times*, 12th March 1832, p. 3; see also *The Manchester Times & Gazette*, 17th March 1832; *The Newcastle Courant*, 17th March 1832; *The Times*, 23rd February 1832, p. 3. *The London Gazette Extraordinary* on the 3rd March 1832 also reported on the events in Jamaica including the arrest of Missionary Box who it was claimed was a Baptist, pp. 627-638.

'entirely convinced of the groundlessness and absurdity of the charge', he stated that he was well aware of the white colonists' long-held opposition of missionaries, and expressed the view that in this context the islanders' accusations were unsurprising. The magazine contrasted reporting in the *Jamaica Courant* with that in *The Watchman*, showing how views of events varied even within the colony. The *Courant*, it explained, accused the missionaries of being 'bent upon the destruction' of the social structure of the island as they were 'paid by Anti-Slavery Society to hasten our ruin'; it was satisfied that 'all the Methodists', (by which the newspaper meant Dissenters and Methodists), preached 'sedition' and, therefore, should be hanged. In contrast, the *Missionary Herald* pointed out, *The Watchman* had proclaimed it was 'impossible' that these missionaries were 'guilty' and questioned why they would be 'instigators of this horrid rebellion' and 'what benefit would accrue to them...?' *The Watchman* had added that the opposition to the missionaries came from 'certain intemperate, ungenerous, and unjust editors' of local newspapers who had 'actuated ... feelings of animosity'. These local newspapers, continued *The Watchman*, had 'indulged in acrimonious tirades against missionaries' and had brought about 'results as hellish as they are detestable'. In addition, *The Watchman* had pleaded with the local community not to abandon 'their better judgement' nor to give 'themselves up to the direction of men of perverted minds who would rejoice in the knell of Christianity'. The editor of *The Watchman* had concluded that it was because they were Baptists, that the three missionaries had been arrested.⁵⁰ After presenting the extracts from Jamaica's newspapers, the editor of the *Missionary Herald* refuted the claim that insurrection was the fault of the missionaries and argued that the agitation was simply attributed to the planters disallowing the one day's holiday at Christmas. These reports published in the *Missionary Herald* were also republished in local British newspapers, and thus influenced the wider public.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Missionary Herald*, March 1832. CLIX, pp. 19-24. (Bound copies of the *Missionary Herald* are held at The Angus Library, Regent's Park College, University of Oxford). For more information about *The Watchman & Jamaica Free Press* see: <http://www.jamaicanfamilysearch.com/images/photos53.htm> (01.09.17)

⁵¹ One example is the *Nottingham Review & General Advertiser*, 9th March 1832, p. 4.

The Wesleyan Methodists backed up the Baptist's version of events as was evident in the March issue of the WMMS's *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*. The *Magazine* repeated how the editor of the *Jamaica Courant*, who was also a member of the Assembly, wanted the Baptist missionaries to be executed even before a trial. However, the *Magazine*, like the *Missionary Herald*, published extracts from *The Watchman* in which the islanders were cautioned about blaming the missionaries for instigating the insurrection as it was 'impossible' that they were guilty.⁵² A few weeks later, in April, the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine's* editor criticised the colonialists for depicting the slaves as 'barbarians', 'villains' and 'sub-human', and expressed concern that the white islanders' 'hostile feelings' had been 'fanned into flame' by articles in the island's newspapers. The *Magazine* also objected to the imprisonment of a missionary 'in one of those wretched dungeons'.⁵³ Furthermore, the *Magazine's* editor expressed the belief that it was the aim of some of the island's local newspapers to destroy the missions, contrasting this aim with the stance of *The Watchman* which was 'praiseworthy' for exposing 'the groundless and malicious attacks' on the missionaries by their 'enemies'.⁵⁴

British newspapers and missionary society publications continued to closely follow the events in Jamaica in relation to the Baptist missionaries' arrest and trial. During April *The Times* reported the imprisonment of the Baptist missionaries Burchell and Gardiner while they awaited trial for allegedly 'preaching sedition'. Also, as the situation in Jamaica worsened with some white islanders destroying missionary property, *The Times* reported how the *Jamaica Courant*, in ridiculing the damage to the chapels, had labelled these buildings 'as dens of infamy, sedition, and blasphemy'.⁵⁵ Also in April, the *Missionary Herald* published the latest news of Burchell and once again criticised the island's local press which 'was perfectly in character of the *Jamaica Courant*' as it affirmed 'that this worthy missionary was confined in double irons!'. The *Missionary Herald* also referred to the island's Kingston newspaper in which the malicious charges against the missionaries that had been published and how

⁵² *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, March 1832, pp. 225-232.

⁵³ *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, April 1832, pp. 293-306.

⁵⁴ *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, April 1832, pp. 297.

⁵⁵ *The Times*, 9th April 1832, p. 2.

these would be injurious to Christianity and could stop religious progress in Jamaica.⁵⁶ Further news about the apprehension of Burchell appeared in *The Times* later during April when it was reported that, as no criminal activity had been discovered, he had been released although, for his safety, advised to leave for the United States. However, once again, Burchell was arrested because of an accusation that he had instigated the riot. *The Times* also reported the arrest of the Baptist missionary, Gardiner, on a similar charge and, according to the report, both were expected to be held in prison for about a month until the date of the trial.⁵⁷

Further news about Burchell and a summary of the current situation in Jamaica appeared in the May issue of the *Missionary Herald* in which it was reported that correspondence had confirmed the harsh treatment he had received although adding that he had been released thereby enabling him to sail to New York.⁵⁸ In commenting on Burchell's situation, *The Bristol Mercury* published a letter from 'A Friend of Mission' to the editor of *The Patriot*, a new Dissent (Nonconformist) weekly, in which reference was made to the 'abortive attempts to implicate' the missionary. The witness against him had apparently confessed to fabricating the evidence as he was under pressure from some 'influential men' and this enabled the case against Burchell to be dropped.⁵⁹ Regarding the trial of the other missionaries, *The Times* in May reported that Gardiner and Knibb had also been acquitted of the charges made against them for exciting the slaved.⁶⁰

Of further concern to the missionaries was the formation of the Colonial Church Union (CCU). In April *The Times* reported that the BMS had received news that eight chapels and other property had now been destroyed, the total value of which was about £20,000. It was claimed that when the chapel at Montego Bay was being destroyed, 'four magistrates [had] actively assisted, and others were looking on'. While the Governor was attempting to obtain information about offenders, according to the *Jamaica Courant*, 'unions' were being formed for the

⁵⁶ *Missionary Herald*, April 1832, CLX, pp. 29-31.

⁵⁷ *The Times*, 11th April 1832, p.2; The BMS had recommend that all the churches in Britain, irrespective of denomination, should set a day aside to pray for the missionaries on the 20th April.

⁵⁸ *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, May 1832, pp. 380-381.

⁵⁹ *The Bristol Mercury*, 2nd June 1832.

⁶⁰ *The Times*, 22nd May 1832, p. 3.

'annihilation of sectarianism', expulsion of sectarian preachers and the destruction of more chapels.⁶¹ The *Wesleyan Missionary Magazine* similarly reported on the situation and how some whites in Jamaica had taken vengeance on the 'Sectarians' by demolishing more chapel buildings. The *Magazine* also informed the readers that the *Courant* had published one notice about the formation of the CCU and in a further had requested a meeting with the head magistrate in order to remove all Dissenting missionaries from the island. In response, the editor of the *Magazine* questioned why this element of the island's white population, some of whom were 'respectable in the district', had held such malice against the missionaries. It was the editor's opinion that the CCU would arouse 'intense feelings' at home and that the situation would demand 'the effectual interposition of the British government'.⁶²

At the end of April, after the Annual Meeting of the WMMS, the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* reported that, in opening the conference, the Chairman had emphasised that no member of the Wesleyan community on the island had taken part in the insurrection. Other speakers at the meeting then expressed their concern about the treatment of the Baptist and Wesleyan missionaries by the white colonists. By linking the persecution of the missionaries to anti-slavery, in one stirring, yet sarcastic speech, a delegate thanked the planters for being the 'noblest and most powerful auxiliaries' of the Anti-Slavery Society as their action had encouraged the people of Britain to believe the slavery should end. The speaker then accused the slave owners of building a dam and, while 'the waters' were 'swelling ... ere long, the torrent of freedom' would ensue. The barriers would be removed 'and sweep slavery away for ever!'⁶³ The events concerning the victimisation of the missionaries in Jamaica had clearly stirred the emotions of the missionary supporters in Britain.

A month later, in May 1832, the Anti-Slavery Society had its Anniversary Meeting at Exeter Hall in London and the details of this were published in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*. At the meeting, Thomas Fowell Buxton

⁶¹ *The Times*, 11th April 1832, p. 2.

⁶² *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, May 1832, pp. 380-381.

⁶³ *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, June 1832, pp. 451-465. The delegate, in judging the slave owners, he added that "Heaven is against you; for heaven is the parent of freedom and the friend of man! And the earth is against you; for England is against you; and England is the cherished depository of freedom for the whole world."

emphasised the important value of the missionaries and, after referring to ‘the martyrdom’ of Smith and the destruction of the Shrewsbury’s chapel, pointed to the ‘persecution of the shepherds of their flocks’ in Jamaica. He strongly asserted that the ‘religious public must fight’ on the missionaries’ behalf. Buxton added that ‘if religion and slavery were incompatible ... the people of England [should] ... say on which side they were’.⁶⁴ Even though Buxton had expressed his support for the missionaries, Richard Watson, the Secretary of the WMMS, later in the meeting expressed concern that the abolitionists in Parliament appeared ‘to have thought that the only thing for which Christianity was designed, was to render the slaves well contented with their bondage; to teach them how to bear injury and oppression with patience....’ In commenting on the missionary society’s instructions to missionaries to avoid involvement in civil matters and criticism of slavery, Watson, who was also a member of the London Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, suggested that this silence about slavery in order not to prejudice the mission had not applied to the people at home. It was ‘through assemblies like this’, he continued, where the British people and politicians should speak their minds. After commenting on the hostility towards the missionaries in Jamaica, Watson proclaimed that the problem of slavery could only be addressed by the action of the religious public of Britain in motivating political action.⁶⁵ This statement clearly demonstrates how the evangelical public was being encouraged to voice its indignation against colonial slavery through reference to the persecution of missionaries.

Meanwhile the BMS, according to the *Missionary Herald*, had sent a deputation to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Goderich, who gave an assurance ‘that Government would use every means to discover and punish parties who [had] thus set at defiance all law and justice’.⁶⁶ In continuing its dialogue with Westminster, in August the *Missionary Herald* was able to report that the BMS had made an application to the British Government for compensation for the demolition of the Baptist chapels in Jamaica. The response appeared in an extract from a letter from the Colonial Secretary to the Governor in Jamaica which stated that the Baptists should be reimbursed for the cost of repairing

⁶⁴ *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, June 1832, pp. 443-448

⁶⁵ *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, June 1832, pp. 451-465.

⁶⁶ *Missionary Herald*, May 1832. CLXI, pp.36-40.

their property losses and that, if necessary, the colonial authorities should introduce legislation to provide for such compensation.⁶⁷

In concluding this part of the chapter and in support of the argument that the persecution of the missionaries had influenced British evangelical opinion on slavery, it is clear from the reports published in missionary societies' publications and British newspapers that the press, missionary societies, abolitionists and the missionary public were generally united in support for the missionaries whose work amongst the enslaved people of Jamaica was highly valued. What is of significance, was how the political abolitionists and missionary societies, by providing information about the persecution of the missionaries in Jamaica, had actively encouraged the evangelical public to become politically involved in the campaign to end colonial slavery.

PART 3: REPORTS ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE COLONIAL CHURCH UNION

This part of the chapter will show how the growing anti-slavery sentiment was strengthened in Britain by reports in the press and missionary society periodicals of the recently founded Colonial Church Union's (CCU) activities. This Jamaica-wide body, that had been founded by an Anglican resident clergyman, Reverend G. W. Bridges, included several influential professional men, who collectively aimed to expel all Dissenting and Methodist missionaries from the island because of a suspicion that they were linked to the abolitionists and had instigated the insurrection. This part of the chapter will also present evidence of the hostile anti-missionary climate as witnessed by an independent visitor to the island and who later used the situation as anti-slavery propaganda.

Following reports of damage to Baptists chapels and other property, it was claimed that, when the chapel at Montego Bay was being destroyed, 'four magistrates [had] actively assisted, and others were looking on'. While the Governor was attempting to obtain information about offenders, according to the

⁶⁷ *Missionary Herald*, August 1832, CLXIV, p.60.

Jamaica Courant, 'unions' were being formed for the 'annihilation of sectarianism', their expulsion and the destruction of more chapels.⁶⁸ The *Wesleyan Missionary Magazine* similarly reported on the situation and how some whites in Jamaica had taken vengeance on the 'Sectarians' by demolishing more chapel buildings. The *Magazine* also informed the readers that the *Courant* had published one notice about the formation of the CCU and in another had requested a meeting with the head magistrate in order to remove all Dissenting missionaries from the island. In response, the editor of the *Magazine* questioned why this element of the island's white population, some of whom were 'respectable in the district', had held such malice against the missionaries. It was the editor's opinion that the CCU would arouse 'intense feelings' at home and that the situation would demand 'the effectual interposition of the British government'.⁶⁹

In the September 1832 issue of the *Missionary Herald*, extracts from the *Jamaica Courant* were published which responded defiantly to the Colonial Secretary's instruction to the Governor that action should be taken against those who had destroyed missionary property. The *Missionary Herald* also made reference to an incident where the home of the Wesleyan missionary, Henry Bleby, had been entered and how he and his family had been assaulted. In response to this incident, the editor of the island's pro-missionary periodical, the *Watchman*, strongly criticised the lack of action of the Grand Jury in Jamaica for ignoring the criminal acts. The editor of the *Missionary Herald* was also dismayed that not only had the colonists defied justice, but had 'avow[ed] their unchanged determination to oppose the "Sectarians" to the utmost'. This was demonstrated at a public meeting on the island in June 1832 which was chaired by an officer the militia who was also a magistrate and member of the Assembly. At this meeting it was 'resolved ... to use all means in their power to expel the Sectarian preachers' and to 'hazard their lives in fulfilling an object so necessary'. Nine days later a similar meeting was held and this too was chaired by a leading militiaman who was also a magistrate and judge.⁷⁰ *The Times* also kept its readers informed about the activities of the expanding CCU and how the

⁶⁸ *The Times*, 11th April 1832, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, May 1832, pp. 380-381.

⁷⁰ *Missionary Herald*, September 1832, CLXV, pp. 69-70.

new Governor, Lord Mulgrave, having been appalled by its activities, had met the Baptist missionaries to assure them that it was his duty to give protection from further atrocities. True to his word, the Governor, following an incident against a Baptist missionary, sent troops to the scene and offered the missionary and his wife safe accommodation.⁷¹ In October, the editor of the *Missionary Herald* informed its readers that the CCU was being motivated by 'inconceivable baseness and folly' of the island's *Cornwall Courier*. In this, it was reported that a well-attended general meeting of the CCU had been held at which the chairman reminded the audience that it was the Union's policy to support the Established Church and expel those 'clothed in the garb of religion' who 'were promulgating treason and rebellion'. The editor of the *Missionary Herald* also referred to comments published in *The Times* on the increased bitterness that was held against the missionaries. In the opinion of *The Times*, these men in the CCU were 'raving mad' and questioned what lawful power they had to 'expel the meanest human being from its territory'. *The Times* continued by warning the CCU, 'Expel all sectarians from Jamaica! Try it, gentlemen; but prepare for a trial of strength, the next moment, with people and reformed Parliament of England, and see who will first be "Expelled"- the missionaries or their hateful persecutors'.⁷²

The editor of the *Missionary Herald* continued his attack on the white colonists by publishing an extract from the *Morning Herald*, which reported that the CCU had 'attempted the lives, and destroyed the property of innocent men - for innocent they were of everything, except the crime of religious instruction.' The *Missionary Herald's* editor was convinced that the missionaries required protection from island's authorities which he claimed was 'unfitted for command'.⁷³ In continuing to oppose the CCU, the *Missionary Herald* also published a letter from the Baptist missionary, Reverend Thomas Abbott. In this Abbott explained how, after beginning a Sunday morning prayer meeting in premises for which a license application had been made, constables informed him that they had been instructed by magistrates to ban the meeting and that, if it should proceed, he would be arrested. Having sought legal advice, Abbott

⁷¹ *The Times*, 20th August 1832, p. 2; 15th September 1832, p. 2, 12th October 1832, p. 2; 15th October 1832, p. 2.

⁷² *Missionary Herald*, October 1832, CLXVI, pp. 74-78.

⁷³ *Missionary Herald*, October 1832, CLXVI, pp. 74-78.

dispersed the meeting and told the constable that he would like a meeting with magistrates in order that they might explain why the prayer meeting was illegal. On the following day, the meeting took place and, even by presenting the necessary documents, the magistrates showed determination that the prayer meeting should be banned. According to the published letter, Abbott was unsurprised, since a 'great proportion' of the magistrates in the parish 'were members of an anti-Christian, seditious, and illegal' CCU. At the meeting with the magistrates, Abbott argued that the prayer meeting was not illegal but this was met with 'violent and abusive language' from his opponents. The magistrates adamantly disagreed with Abbott and, after further heated exchanges, the missionary was instructed to attend the next Court of Quarter Sessions. For a week, during June 1832, attempts were made to expel Abbott from the island and placards were posted announcing that, if he refused to leave, there would be consequences. As Abbott ignored the notices, a meeting of the CCU was held which was chaired by a magistrate who stated that Abbott 'should be driven out of the parish'. However, some of those present reminded the meeting that, as Abbott was a British subject, he could not be expelled and, as a result, attacks on him and his dwelling house did not take place. Despite this, Abbott cancelled future prayer meetings in fear of promoting civil war and endangering his congregation.⁷⁴ Here again, was a demonstration of the desperate anti-missionary situation on the island.

The October 1832 issue of the WMMS's *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* continued to influence its readership by expressing concerns about the anti-missionary sentiments in Jamaica by publishing letters from the island. One referred to the 'greatest outrages on our religious rights' which had been committed by the missionaries while another suggested that they were unsafe because of the danger from the CCU. This letter 'alluded to the determination of the free people of colour ... to defend the Missionaries from personal assaults' and 'to protect the remaining chapels.' In order to prevent civil unrest, the editor of the *Magazine* hoped that the Governor would soon establish law and order on the island.⁷⁵ However, in expressing opposition to the action of the CCU, the

⁷⁴ *Missionary Herald*, October 1832, CLXVI, pp. 78-79.

⁷⁵ *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, October 1832, pp. 756-760.

editor showed how a local newspaper on the island had reported that at one of the organisation's meetings 'every man seemed bent on ... the expulsion of the canting crew who have so long preyed upon the very vitals of this community.' Furthermore, the editor added, the CCU comprised 'the most respectable inhabitants' who, in order to 'preserve the peace of the country', would remove 'the peace-breakers, the fomenters of sedition, the base spies and emissaries of the Anti-Slavery Society – the Baptists and Methodists Parsons.'⁷⁶

Further 'outrageous animosity' against missionaries were reported in the November 1832 issue of the *Missionary Herald* causing the editor to express the belief that 'unless strong and decisive measures are adopted by the local government [of Jamaica] to put down the Colonial Union, all missionary operations' outside of Kingston and Spanish Town 'must be suspended'. Nevertheless, there was optimism that the Governor would take heed of the missionaries' appeal.⁷⁷ Although further opposition to missionaries' activities was presented in January 1833 issue of the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, the editor was pleased that the matter was gaining publicity in Britain.

'The more this is done, the more fully will it appear to be the absolute duty of all who do not desire to throw an unanswered suspicion on their Christian profession, to employ all their influence, in the most energetic manner, for the removal of the [slavery] system, which is not only a deep and foul stain on our character before man, but an occasion of heavy heart before God.'

This statement reinforced the need for the missionary public to engage in opposition to the continuation of colonial slavery. The hostile activities of the CCU against the missionaries simply added to the missionary society's anti-slavery message and that, in the belief that Britain was being Divinely judged, the editor considered it a responsibility upon 'the Christian public' not to fail 'in their duty'.⁷⁸

As there was some scepticism in Britain that Caribbean slavery was worse than the 'poor factory children at home', a representative of the 'respectable West

⁷⁶ *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, October, 1832, pp. 760-820.

⁷⁷ *Missionary Herald*, November 1832, CLXVII, pp. 81-82.

⁷⁸ *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, January 1833, pp. 27-32.

India House in London' was sent to Jamaica by in order to judge the situation.⁷⁹ In early September 1832, Henry Whiteley arrived on the island where he was met by a member of the Colonial Assembly who expressed great disappointment with the abolitionists in Britain for their condemnation of slavery. Shortly after this Whiteley visited a plantation and was shocked by witnessing the punishment to enslaved females. In a discussion with a slave overseer, Whiteley was told that, despite what he had seen, the condition of the slaves on the island was more comfortable than that of English labourers. After witnessing further punishments, including the whipping of enslaved men, women and children, Whiteley was sickened by what he had seen. To make the situation worse, the overseer appeared to think this treatment of enslaved people was 'normal' behaviour. Apart from witnessing more floggings, Whiteley also discovered the white islander' hatred of the missionaries and how the CCU had destroyed Methodist chapels. In his pamphlet, which was published upon his return, Whiteley explained how, during an interview with an attorney on the island, he had been in danger from the CCU should he not become a member and renounce the 'sectarians'. Furthermore, Whiteley had been accused of breeding discontent among enslaved people, and that as a Methodist himself, he was suspected of being sent to the island by supporters of overseas missions. As a punishment, he would have been tarred and feathered or shot had not an overseer intervened. After further warnings by the CCU, Whiteley sailed home in early December 1832. Apart from the CCU's hatred towards the missionaries, Whiteley claimed that 'between the cases of the factory child and the plantation slave there can be no just comparison. The former is very bad: the latter in INFINITELY WORSE'.⁸⁰ According to the minutes of the Anti-Slavery Society Committee on the 20th March 1833, it was reported that Whiteley had indicated his willingness to contribute the manuscript of his visit to Jamaica to the Committee as a means of promoting 'the course of negro emancipation'. The Committee agreed to accept the document and thanked Whiteley for this 'valuable and timely aid and to get it printed and circulated extensively' without delay.⁸¹ On the 10th April, the Secretary of the Committee

⁷⁹ Henry Whitely, *Three Months in Jamaica in 1832: A Residence on Seven Weeks on a Sugar Plantation* (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1833), p. 1.

⁸⁰ Whitely, *Three Months in Jamaica*, p. 22.

⁸¹ (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, 20th March 1833, pp. 13-14.

reported that 'about 5,000 copies of the cheap edition' of the pamphlet had been printed 'and was going out to the Country as fast as they came in'.⁸² So popular was Whiteley's 24-page pamphlet that as many as 200,000 copies had been sold within a fortnight.⁸³

In this part of the chapter, it has been demonstrated how reports of the activities of the CCU against the missionaries, because of a suspicion that they were somehow linked to the anti-slavery movement, had motivated the missionary societies to place a responsibility upon 'the Christian public' to engage in anti-slavery politics in fear of being Divinely judged. In addition, Henry Whiteley's first-hand account of what he had witnessed of slavery in Jamaica and the hatred shown towards the missionaries, became valuable anti-slavery propaganda. Therefore, collectively, the publicity of the missionaries' persecution, the continued victimisation by the CCU, the abolition propaganda, and the concurrent public anti-slavery speaking tour by missionaries who returned to Britain (as explored in the next chapter), strengthened the British evangelical's opinion that the enslaved people in the colonies should be immediately liberated.

⁸² BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, 10th April 1833, pp. 22-23.

⁸³ See David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Emancipation*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2015), p. 266; C Duncan Rice, 'Missionary Context of Anti-Slavery', in James Walvin (ed.), *Slavery and British Society: 1776-1846*, (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd, 1982), pp. 160.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF THE RETURNED MISSIONARIES ON THE ANTI-SLAVERY CAMPAIGN

Building on the discussion in the previous chapter of how news of the persecution of missionaries in Jamaica had influenced British public opinion on slavery, this chapter explores the impact on the anti-slavery movement of the missionaries who returned to Britain from Jamaica and who took part in a national public speaking anti-slavery campaign. By exploring the published reports of numerous public meetings at which William Knibb and the other returned missionaries were the principal speakers, it will be argued in the first part of the chapter that they had influenced the general and evangelical public that slavery should be brought to an immediate end. In the second part of the chapter, by exploring minute books and the published reports of public meetings organised by missionary societies and abolitionists, it will be argued that the persecution of missionaries was used as a means to encourage the evangelical public to support the anti-slavery cause. In addition, it will be argued that missionaries had attempted to directly influence the minds of politicians on the slavery question by the evidence they presented to Parliamentary Select Committees.

PART 1: WILLIAM KNIBB AND THE ROLE OF THE RETURNED MISSIONARIES IN GENERATING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ANTI-SLAVERY

The persecuted missionaries themselves sought to directly inform and influence public opinion in Britain, rather than leaving this to the leadership of the missionary societies by whom they were employed. The Wesleyan missionaries in Jamaica selected Peter Duncan and John Barry to represent them in Britain, while the Baptists chose William Knibb. Upon his arrival back in Britain on the 19th June 1832, Knibb was informed that the Parliamentary Reform Act had received Royal Assent. This gave him optimism that colonial slavery might be abolished soon as the Whig Government, which was growing in popularity and

had promoted the Reform Bill, also supported anti-slavery.¹ Within days of his arrival, Knibb attended an Open Committee meeting of the BMS at which he 'made a lengthened statement of what had occurred to him and others during the late insurrection'.² According to his biographer, John Howard Hinton, before the Committee meeting, Knibb had met leading members of the missionary society who had attempted to persuade him to be prudent in respect to his experiences in Jamaica. However, in the words of Hinton, Knibb was determined to 'walk barefoot through the kingdom ... [to] ... make known to the Christians of England what their brethren in Jamaica are suffering.' This resolve so impressed the BMS Committee that any opposition was soon overturned.³

Within two days of the Committee meeting, on the 21st June, the Annual Meeting of the BMS took place at Spa Fields Chapel in London and a month later a record of the debate was published in the *Missionary Herald*, thus enabling the proceedings to be read by the wider missionary public. Among the speakers was James Phillippo who had returned to Britain from Jamaica prior to the rebellion because of a health issue. In supporting a motion for a sustained overseas mission to Jamaica, Phillippo asserted the need to rebuild the destroyed missionary chapels and for more missionaries to be sent to the island. He claimed that among the various denominations in the colony, fifty to sixty thousand enslaved people had been converted to the Christian faith and between eighty and one hundred thousand had made inquiries. William Knibb then took the floor to give a powerful and emotional speech in which he expressed his willingness to 'forgive those who would have killed him' and stated that 'the Society's missionary stations could no longer exist in Jamaica without the entire and immediate abolition of slavery.' For eight years he had 'trod the burning soil of that island, and [had] often ... been gratified with the tidings of success' amongst the enslaved people. However, the situation had changed with the recent demolition of chapels, for which Knibb blamed the island's anti-missionary organisation, the CCU. This group had threatened to destroy the mission and was being led by 'infidels, clergymen, and magistrates'

¹ Turner, *Slaves and Missionaries*, p. 171.

² *BMS Committee Minutes*, 19th June 1832, p. 119. The minutes of the meeting indicate that James Phillippo was also in attendance.

³ Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb*, pp. 143-145.

who 'had combined to banish Christianity from the island.' Knibb informed the meeting that enslaved people would never be permitted to worship God 'till this greatest of curses were removed' and that, even if the missionary society discontinued, he alone would campaign for the ending of slavery. He criticised the whites in Jamaica who treated the laws made in Britain with contempt and who after the insurrection had compelled him to join the militia, had imprisoned him and made him suffer. He then questioned, 'if a white man was thus treated, what might the slaves expect at such hands?' After Knibb had described the details of his own trial, at which evidence had been cruelly extracted from enslaved people, he informed the audience how Thomas Burchell had suffered for twenty-four hours in a hot room where he had been told by his persecutors that 'he should taste hell before he got there'. Knibb ended his address by proclaiming that he stood on the 'platform as the feeble advocate of 20,000 Baptists, who would be flogged if they dared pray... [and] ... that he would not return till slavery was destroyed'. So stirring was Knibb's speech that the *Missionary Herald* reported how it had roused the whole assembly. The Wesleyan missionary, John Barry, then took the platform and agreed with Knibb that 'the whole truth in reference to Jamaica must now be told; and that a crisis had arrived in its history'.⁴ This summary of the BMS Conference clearly demonstrates that Knibb, in his speech to an evangelical audience, was not just focusing on his own persecution but also arguing directly that slavery must be immediately abolished if the enslaved were to be properly Christianised.

Following the Annual Meeting, the London Committee of BMS assembled on the 25th June and, according to the minutes, resolved that it 'be desirable that Mr Knibb should visit Bristol, Birmingham, and Liverpool in the next month to diffuse information respecting the state of our Jamaica Mission'. It was further resolved that three members of the Society, together with the Secretary and Knibb, form 'a deputation to confer with the Committee of Deputies from Dissenting Congregations [a group set up to represent Independents, Presbyterians and Baptists] in and about London at their meeting' which was to be held on the following day 'with a view to interest them as much as possible in the subject'. The BMS Committee also agreed to the formation of a Sub-

⁴ *Missionary Herald*, July 1832, CLXIII, pp. 49-56; Hinton: *Memoir of William Knibb*, 145-152.

Committee to include representatives of the various missionary societies together with Buxton in order to determine whether there was agreement that a public meeting be arranged in Exeter Hall. This would then give the opportunity of 'bringing the subject before the public generally, with a view to encourage them more earnestly in efforts to obtain, to its full extent, religious liberty for the negroes of Jamaica, as well as security for their instructors'.⁵

Having received approval by the BMS Committee to engage in a public speaking campaign to expose the problems experienced by the Christian mission in Jamaica, according to Hinton, Knibb began his series of talks which extended 'over the whole of the United Kingdom ... through a term of more than two years'. Local newspapers throughout the country reported on Knibb's speeches, which were presented to well attended public meetings, the audiences at which comprised both chapel-goers and the general public. Thus, during the summer of 1832, Knibb visited Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Norwich, Reading and other principal towns in England and later spoke in Edinburgh and Glasgow. In January 1833 he addressed audiences in Newcastle and Durham and by the summer of that year, had visited the West of England. In January 1834 Knibb spoke in Dublin and other parts of Ireland. During this long campaign, Knibb was sometimes accompanied by his fellow Baptist missionaries, James Phillippo and Thomas Burchell, and by the Wesleyan missionaries who had also returned from Jamaica.⁶

One of Knibb's early presentations was at Counterslip Baptist Chapel in Bristol. Here, on the 9th July 1832, he spoke 'in strong and forcible language [about] the persecution which he and other religious missionaries experienced [in Jamaica] during and subsequent to the insurrection'. The Wesleyan missionary, William Box, who had recently arrived home, also attended the meeting in Bristol and confirmed Knibb's statements.⁷ Knibb then spoke in Liverpool, and *The Liverpool Mercury* published a full-page report of the speeches. This report explained how the speeches had been presented to a packed meeting that had been organised by the Liverpool Auxiliary Baptist Missionary Society. The

⁵ *BMS Committee Minutes*, 25th June 1832, pp. 124-125.

⁶ Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb*, p. 153.

⁷ *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 19th July 1832.

newspaper also reported on Knibb's masterful delivery, which had energised the audience, in front of which he claimed to have been 'sent as an advocate for the suffering, the degraded, the persecuted British slave, who had been robbed of everything'. Although Knibb had declared to be speaking on behalf of the enslaved people, he also spoke at length about his own experiences in being taken into custody by the authorities for alleged crimes of which he was innocent. After Knibb had finished, John Barry, the Wesleyan missionary, gave his thoughts on the opposition to Christian missions by the island's white planters.⁸ While in Liverpool, Knibb also spoke at a meeting of the British and Foreign School Society in the Music Hall in Bond Street. In this speech, he informed the audience about the progress being made in educating the enslaved black people in Jamaica and that, of the 300,000 who lived on the island, as many as 290,000 remained uneducated.⁹

Knibb's next major speech was in Manchester on the 30th July. This was to 'a very numerous and highly respectable meeting' of the Manchester Auxiliary Baptist Missionary Society at Grove Street Chapel, Piccadilly. Knibb again spoke about the treatment of the enslaved people and how the missionaries had been persecuted after the insurrection. He also referred to the criticism that had been made by the pro-slavery British West India Committee about the Anti-Slavery Society's use of a naked and chained enslaved person depicted on propaganda placards. In supporting the use of this image, Knibb claimed that every day he had seen men, women and children in chains being flogged. In relation to part of British industry being dependent on Caribbean produce, Knibb criticised those who had suggested that manufacturing at home would end if slavery was abolished. 'This,' Knibb claimed, 'was utterly false'. In concluding his speech, Knibb expressed the hope that the now ailing William Wilberforce 'might hear the delightful words uttered in his presence before he departed, "Africa is free".' After Knibb had ended his address, and following his plea at the BMS Annual Meeting on the 25th June 1832 for 'the entire and immediate abolition of slavery', the agents of the Anti-Slavery Society made 'energetic speeches' to persuade the audience to vote in the forthcoming election

⁸ The *Liverpool Mercury* 27th July 1832.

⁹ The *Liverpool Mercury*, 27th July 1832.

beginning in December for candidates of the new reformed Parliament who would give support for the *immediate* abolition of slavery.¹⁰

By summer 1832, the missionaries were taking a major role in the anti-slavery campaign and, according to the minutes of the Anti-Slavery Society Committee meeting held in August, a meeting of the religious bodies concerning the missionaries' persecutions in Jamaica had been held and a report of the proceedings would be published in newspapers.¹¹ This resolution was an indication of the Society's adoption of the missionaries' persecution as anti-slavery propaganda. Also, in August, at packed Anti-Slavery Society public meeting in London's Exeter Hall, Knibb was the principal speaker and, on this occasion, was accompanied by the Wesleyan missionary, Peter Duncan. Knibb again spoke about 'the hardships he had personally undergone in being arrested during the rebellion and confined in prison for several weeks.' This speech was reported in *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* which stated that in Knibb's opinion, the blame for the insurrection was the fault of the slave-owners and the misbelief by enslaved people that their emancipation had been granted by the king.¹² The *Missionary Herald* also published a report of the Anti-Slavery Society meeting which in so doing disseminated information to the supporters of the Baptist mission. In this report, a comparison was made between the Wesleyan Peter Duncan's dispassionate speech and his avoidance of controversy to that of William Knibb which 'powerfully excited the audience'. In this, he spoke about 'the enmity' that was 'cherished by the great body of planters against the religious instruction of their slaves'. Knibb was convinced that Christian instruction could not succeed in Jamaica 'while slavery is suffered to continue' and argued that 'immediate emancipation' was, therefore, necessary. In the opinion of the editor of the *Missionary Herald* this address was so well received, it could not fail to have aroused 'the sympathies of every heart'. The editor added that the chairman, Lord Henley, who was a supporter of both mission and abolition, was so impressed with the presentations that he 'avowed himself ... [that] ... nothing but total, universal, unequivocal abolition

¹⁰ *The Manchester Times and Gazette*, 4th August 1832; *The Morning Chronicle*, 18th August 1832; *The York Herald*, 18th August 1832.

¹¹ (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, 29th August 1832, p. 161..

¹² *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 1st October 1832, Vol. V, No. 12, pp. 274-283 and *The Times*, 17th August 1832, p. 3

would suffice' and considered it the duty of everyone who could vote for a representative in Parliament, to choose a candidate who would pledge to the immediate ending of colonial slavery.¹³ In commenting on the meeting, the editor of the *Missionary Herald* observed that, until now, friends of missions had focused on spreading the Gospel to the enslaved people and had left the political question of slavery to others rather than recognising that it was affecting 'the eternal interests of its victims' and was consequently a matter of concern for all Christian in Britain.¹⁴ This statement clearly demonstrates that it was the wish of the missionary society for the evangelical public to now engage in the politics of anti-slavery as otherwise the Gospel could not be spread.

The close relationship between Christian mission and abolition, and the need for immediacy with respect to the ending of slavery, was manifested in the resolutions made at an Anti-Slavery Society public meeting in August 1832. The first motion related to the 'cruel and determined opposition made to the religious instruction of the negroes' by the planters and the 'disgraceful outrages lately committed [in Jamaica] on the persons and property of innocent and unoffending Missionaries'. These were considered to be in 'open violation of the laws of the British Empire, and in direct contravention of the Divine commandment to preach the gospel to every creature'. The presenter of this motion was 'convinced that no appeal made to human beings ever found a warmer response than the present' and proposed that all Christian denominations should unite in supporting the resolution. The seconder of the motion illustrated the 'spirit of the Jamaica public' by reading extracts from colonial newspapers and argued that it was an 'imperative duty of all Christians to do their uttermost to protect their fellow Christians from renewed persecution by the most earnest and resolute efforts for the abolition of slavery altogether'. A second motion stated that slavery was 'utterly repugnant to the spirit and precepts of the gospel of Christ' and that, while it remained, persecution would continue. Speakers of the different denominations then took the opportunity to criticise the damage to missionary societies' properties that had taken place and the need to abolish slavery altogether. A third motion was presented by the

¹³ *Missionary Herald*, September 1832, CLXV, pp. 70-71.

¹⁴ *Missionary Herald*, September 1832, CLXV, pp. 70-71; *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, September 1832, pp. 676-683.

Secretary of the BMS, John Dyer, who proposed that it was the duty of the meeting to urge the Government to adopt 'all suitable means for the complete and immediate extinction of slavery throughout the British dominions.'¹⁵

Following his attendance at this Anti-Slavery Society, Knibb continued his tour by travelling to Scotland where he addressed meetings of both anti-slavery and missionary societies at which his speeches were later reported in both the local and the national press. In these talks, he wove together reports of the terrible treatment of missionaries with a message of support for the immediate emancipation of enslaved people. In October, the weekly liberal newspaper, *The Scotsman*, reported Knibb's address to a meeting of the 'Edinburgh Society for the Abolition of Negro Slavery' held in Brougham Place. Here Knibb spoke with 'considerable force and fluency' in support of immediate emancipation and suggested that one cause of the insurrection was the rejection by the House of Assembly to the British Government's demand that the flogging of female slaves be stopped. Knibb then explained how 'not one of the 70 estates' where rioting took place involved anyone 'under his religious instruction' and that the 'slaves who had embraced Christianity ... had been rewarded by the Assembly for their exemplary conduct during the insurrection'. Knibb then spoke about the 'efforts made to implicate the missionaries in the guilt of the late disturbances' and how large rewards had been offered to the enslaved people 'to induce them to bring charges against the missionaries, and yet, notwithstanding of this bribe, and the threat of death held out to them on refusing to do so, they could not be brought to give evidence against the preacher.'¹⁶

During the following month, *The Scotsman* published a report of another speech by Knibb, to the male branch of the Huntly Missionary Society. This article explained how Knibb, after giving some general observations, 'proceeded to relate the fearful obstruction' to the mission with which he was connected. He stated that the insurrection 'had been, most unjustly, directly attributed to the instruction and intercourse of the missionaries' whereas 'this deplorable event had been produced by the violent and unguarded conduct ... of the planters

¹⁵ *Missionary Herald*, September 1832, CLXV, pp. 70-71.

¹⁶ *The Scotsman*, 20th October 1832.

themselves.’ Knibb added that ‘the very general impression which existed among the slaves ... that the King of England had ordered ... their emancipation, contributed much to bring about the insurrection, because ... the planters had determined to resist such measure.’ According to *The Scotsman*, regarding emancipation, Knibb proved to the satisfaction of the audience, ‘that, under proper regulations, the instant and complete emancipation of the slaves might be effected without danger, either to themselves or their self-designated proprietors.’ Knibb then posed the question, ‘why should a system so unholy, so pregnant with evil, so wasteful of human life, and which so darkens and degrades the undying spirit, be allowed to continue?’¹⁷ By presenting these questions to audiences, few evangelicals would have opposed the continuation of slavery.

In December, Knibb attended a meeting of the Edinburgh Anti-Slavery Society in South College Street Chapel at which, according to *The Scotsman*, he ‘rose amid loud cheers’ and began by claiming to be speaking ‘on behalf of the sons and daughters of Africa’ and advocated that they were as much ‘entitled to liberty as [all] beings that dwell on the face of the earth’. Knibb then spoke about his eight years in Jamaica which involved ‘giving religious instruction to the poor enslaved Africans’ and claimed that, ‘whatever progress the slaves had made in the acquaintance with the glad tidings of salvation, it was not owing to the encouragement they had received from their masters. For’, Knibb continued, ‘the planters knew that Christianity and slavery can never subsist together’. Knibb continued by defending the need for the immediate ending of slavery since, in his opinion, the ‘system degrades and demoralises the proprietors as much as it does the victims of their tyranny’. He then questioned how this might be achieved ‘since everyone who sought to teach them had been prevented’ from doing so. Knibb then challenged the argument by the pro-slavery lobby ‘that the slaves would not work’ if liberated to which Knibb claimed that this was ‘hypothetical reasoning at best ... for it could not be known what they would do until they were free’. Another argument Knibb challenged was that the enslaved people were happy in their present condition. This, in Knibb’s opinion, was

¹⁷ *The Scotsman*, 1st December 1832.

untrue since they lived in 'haunts of misery and wretchedness'. He then addressed an opinion that the 'slaves don't want freedom' to which he strongly disagreed since it was his belief that the enslaved people would continue to seek liberty. He also supported the opinion that immediate emancipation was necessary since the institution of slavery was 'a sin'. Before finalising his speech, Knibb shocked the audience by presenting an instrument of punishment that was designed to prevent an enslaved person from lying down.¹⁸ As one historian has recently observed this demonstration of the enslaved peoples' chastisement both emotionally impressed and Knibb's horrified audiences.¹⁹ By means of Knibb's masterful oratory skills, he once again galvanised his audience into believing that there was no justifiable reason by slavery should continue and repeated that it should immediately end.

While the missionaries were successfully generating support for anti-slavery, Knibb's contributions had raised resistance from those with interest in the West Indies as was evident in a published letter that appeared in the *Morning Post* in August 1832. This came from 'a Jamaica Proprietor' which, in referring the Anti-Slavery Meeting, had declared that 'if any proof were wanting of the unfitness of the sectarian missionaries for the office of preaching and teaching the word of God to the negros in the colonies, it would be found in the proceedings of the meeting.' The writer had claimed that Knibb was 'labouring under the influence of the Evil Spirit' and criticised him for calling the whole white population of Jamaica as 'the greatest scoundrels on the face of the earth', when, in fact, it was the 'white inhabitants ... from whom he [Knibb] has received so many favours' while he was on the island.²⁰ This opposition to Knibb and abolition had come in part from an organised campaign by the pro-slavery lobby in Britain which also engaged speakers with the aim of gaining public support. The principal agent for the West India Committee was the member of Parliament, Peter Borthwick, who had frequently spoken at public meetings in opposition to the missionaries.²¹ When Borthwick debated the slave question in Liverpool during August 1832 with the anti-slavery Agency Committee's principal agent,

¹⁸ *The Scotsman*, 5th December 1832.

¹⁹ For more on the effectiveness of Knibb's public speaking programme, see Christer Petley, 'Emancipation and the Creole World View of Jamaican Colonists, 1800-1834', *Slavery & Abolition*, 26:1, (2005), pp. 93-114.

²⁰ *The Morning Post*, 21st August 1832.

²¹ *Liverpool Mercury*, 31st August, 14th, 21st September 1832.

George Thomson, who was arguing for the immediate ending of slavery, this had generated numerous newspaper editorials and letters being published in the press.²² During one meeting, Borthwick had stated his wish to publicly challenge Knibb on his claims about the ill-treatment of slaves and, because of the missionary's involvement in the slave uprising, to directly accuse him of 'treason'.²³ Knibb was in Scotland when Borthwick spoke in Liverpool where he faulted Knibb for his unwillingness to take part in a public debate. This was corrected and arrangements were made for both meet. This took place on the 15th December 1832 in Bath in front of a large audience. Knibb initially denounced the accusation made by Borthwick that he had refused to meet him and questioned why he had not travelled to Scotland where Knibb had been speaking. After a lively debate during which Knibb provided evidence against Borthwick's various claims, a vote was taken which, according to Hinton, resulted in a 'decided majority ... in favour of Knibb'. Apparently, Borthwick's 'attack on Knibb left no injurious impression on the public mind' and certainly did not obstruct Knibb's progress with the anti-slavery campaign.²⁴

At the same time as Knibb and the other missionaries were engaged in the public speaking programme, the *Missionary Herald* announced the publication of a 42-page independently published pamphlet entitled *Facts and Documents* that aimed to inform the British public of how the missionaries and enslaved people had experienced 'violation of civil and religious liberty' as a result of the insurrection.²⁵ The pamphlet contained a letter to the Governor of Jamaica signed by thirteen Baptist missionaries which had been written before Knibb had left for England in April 1832. The letter had complained about the destruction of mission property and had requested the Governor's protection. The *Missionary Herald* pointed out that the pamphlet had criticised 'the conduct and sentiments of the colonists towards the British Government and the Sectarians', and the 'illegality of summary proceedings against the slaves during the martial law'. The editor of the *Missionary Herald* agreed that slavery was a 'great impediment to the propagation of the Gospel' and hoped that the

²² *Liverpool Mercury*, 7th, 14th September, 12th October 1832; *The Bristol Mercury*, 8th September 1832; *Morning Post*, 13th September 1832.

²³ *Manchester Times*, 29th September 1832.

²⁴ Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb*, pp. 160-168.

²⁵ *Facts and Documents Connected with the Late Insurrection in Jamaica and the Violation of Civil and Religious Liberties arising out of it*, (London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1832)

pamphlet would 'rouse all the friends of humanity, freedom, and religion, to vigorous and persevering efforts for [the] extinction' of slavery. Furthermore, the editor continued, 'the conviction [was] gaining ground' in Britain 'even among the holders of West India property themselves' who recognised that the present system could not be maintained. In fact, according to the editor, Governor Belmore, in his parting address to Jamaica's Assembly, had stated that '[t]he cause of the present distress' was the result of a 'policy by which slavery was originally established' and that while slavery continued, the island could 'never develop the abundance of its resources'. The editor of the *Missionary Herald* then encouraged the continuation of an anti-slavery policy by every legitimate means, without hostility, towards those who held an opposite opinion. However, the editor continued, while emancipation may take time to achieve, he was convinced that it should not be deferred 'a single day than is required' for the welfare of enslaved people.²⁶ Therefore, at a time as the missionaries were engaged in their speaking tour, the BMS was also encouraging the evangelical public to become involved in anti-slavery in a call for immediate abolition.

At the beginning of 1833, Knibb continued his tour of Scotland. On the 19th January, he spoke at a meeting of the Edinburgh Society for the Abolition of Slavery in George Street which was well attended and, on this occasion, 'included some hundreds of ladies'. At the beginning of his talk, Knibb stated that the institution of slavery 'was one of the most disgraceful to Christians of any he knew', and that he would 'never rest until he had the happiness of seeing the sons of Africa free'. Perhaps, in attempting to appeal to the females in the audience, Knibb spoke about how slavery had split families with children and parents being forcibly separated. After explaining the ill-treatment and poor conditions in which the enslaved people lived, Knibb concluded his talk by once again advocating the necessity for 'immediate emancipation'. Because of Knibb's eloquent delivery and being thought a reliable witness, the audience supported the need for 'immediate interference by the British Parliament' to end colonial slavery.²⁷

²⁶ *Missionary Herald*, August 1832, CLXIV, pp. 58-60.

²⁷ *The Scotsman*, 19th January 1833.

After leaving Scotland and throughout 1833, Knibb continued his national public speaking tour reports of which regularly appeared in local newspapers.²⁸ By January 1834, and after the emancipation legislation had been passed, Knibb, accompanied by Burchell, visited Ireland where the *Cork Constitution* announced that the missionaries would speak at a meeting of the BMS with the view of collecting funds for the rebuilding of chapels and school buildings in Jamaica that had been destroyed by the insurrection.²⁹

The information published in various pamphlets, secular and religious publications, together with newspaper reports and attendance at public meetings had motivated both the general public and, in particular, missionary supporters to become actively involved in anti-slavery. Of significance was the action taken by women who played a major part in the anti-slavery campaigning and, following the founding of first women's anti-slavery society in Birmingham in 1825 and the success of the Female Society for Birmingham, a whole network of women's anti-slavery associations had sprung up over the whole country.³⁰ Among these was the Sheffield Ladies Anti-Slavery Society, a founding member of which, in 1825, was a highly respected middle-class and devout Christian, Mrs Mary-Anne Rawson (née Read). The Sheffield Society's aim was to inform the local population about slavery by means of pamphlets and publications and, after collecting a series of poems and short articles by prominent writers and abolitionists, in 1834 Mrs Rawson published an anthology of anti-slavery writings.³¹ Included in this four-hundred-page volume, entitled *The Bow in the Cloud or Negro's Memorial*, was a short article by Reverend Eustace Carey, who sometimes accompanied Knibb on his speaking tour. This article concerned the insurrection in Jamaica and pointed to William Knibb as being a victim of 'lawless violence'. Impressed by the public speeches delivered by the missionaries from Jamaica, including those of Knibb, Mrs Rawson's collection included three contributions by Knibb. These were extracts from his letters and essays concerning the abuse he had received in Jamaica as well as

²⁸ A financial statement presenting the location of BMS public meetings throughout Scotland and England was published in *Missionary Herald*, April 1833, CLXXII, pp. 39-40; See also Douglas C. Sparkes, 'These Chains ...', *Baptist Quarterly*, 40:7, July (2004), pp.412-420.

²⁹ *Cork Constitution*, 11th January 1834, p. 3.

³⁰ Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*. pp. 43-51.

³¹ N. B. Lewis, *The Abolition Movement in Sheffield. 1823-1833* (Manchester: The Manchester University Press, 1934), pp. 4-16; Twells, *The Civilising Mission*, pp. 99-100.

one on the life of persecuted enslaved people.³² The collection had been sensitively edited so as not to offend plantation owners who lived in Britain and, as Moira Ferguson has pointed out, the book became a powerful piece of anti-slavery propaganda. Ferguson added that, although the book mainly comprised contributions by men, it became an effective aid for the Sheffield women's anti-slavery campaign.³³

In summary, by exploring the press, secular and religious publications and other documents, it has been argued that Knibb and his fellow missionaries at the public meetings organised by missionary societies and abolitionists held throughout Britain had at these events generated enthusiastic support from the general and religious public for the immediate ending of slavery. This was achieved by presenting evidence of the missionaries' ill-treatment at the hands of the white islanders and disturbing information about the conditions experienced by enslaved people and how punishment was brutality inflicted. In addition, because of the planters' opposition to Christian teaching, this added to the evangelicals' determination that slavery should end. By educating and shocking audiences, the missionaries, and Knibb, in particular, had motivated the evangelical public to become politically active in abolition part of which involved the signing of anti-slavery petitions to Parliament. Furthermore, because of Knibb's focus on the breakup of families and the cruelty to slave women and children, this had particular resonance with women in audiences. Despite the strong opposition by the West Indies Committee to Knibb, he and his fellow missionaries were clearly successful in encouraging the public to support the immediate ending of slavery. Perhaps, in ending this part of the chapter, it is appropriate to quote Knibb's biographer who commented on Knibb's persuasive talks at public meetings. Despite the hagiographic emphasis, Hinton had claimed, the missionary's eloquence made a

³² *The Sheffield Independent* on 13th October 1832 p. 2 published parts of speeches by Burchell, Duncan and Knibb. The University of Manchester Library's Rawson/Wilson anti-slavery collection contains the original manuscripts of verse and prose contributions for this powerful anti-slavery anthology. The book can also be read on-line at <https://archive.org/details/bowincloudorneq00bartgoog/> (01.10.18)

³³ Moira Ferguson, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 265.

'distinguished contribution ... that commanded excitement of the public mind, before which British colonial slavery at length cowered and fell'.³⁴

PART 2: THE ANTI-SLAVERY COMMITTEE AND THE USE OF MISSIONARY TESTIMONY IN PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEES.

This part of the chapter aims to present evidence which supports the argument that the abolitionists used the information about the anti-missionary action in Jamaica, and the public testimonies of the returned missionaries, as a means to forward their objective of bringing about the immediate ending of colonial slavery. The debates on the treatment of missionaries within the complex decision-making and political maneuvering both within the London Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society and at Parliamentary level will be explored. Although the eventual separation from the cautious London Committee by the more dynamic and radical Agency Committee which called for the immediate ending of slavery was an important development, rather than become embroiled in internal politics, this part of the chapter will instead focus on how the information about the missionaries assisted in bringing about the emancipation legislation during 1833.

As the London Committee's minute book shows, the original 1823 membership of forty included five Members of Parliament, four ordained ministers, as well as lawyers, bankers and businessmen.³⁵ When compared to the composition of the Committee a decade later, it appears that about a third of the original members remained active. Thus, a substantial proportion of the 1832-33 Committee was familiar with the earlier persecutions of missionaries Smith in Demerara and Shrewsbury in Barbados. A particularly significant feature of Committee in this latter period was the inclusion of leading members of the missionary societies or their relatives: namely, Reverend Francis Cunningham, the father of the Reverend John William Cunningham, Governor of the CMS, Reverend J Ivimey

³⁴ Hinton, *Memoir of William Knibb*, pp. 173-174.

³⁵ Included in the 1823 Committee were William Wilberforce MP, James Stephens, Zachary Macaulay, George Stephens, Thomas Clarkson, Thomas Fowell Buxton MP, William Smith MP [Chairman], William Wilberforce Jnr., Henry Thornton, and Reverend Jabez Bunting, national leader of Wesleyan movement and WMMS.

of the BMS, who also was the author of a pamphlet on the abolition of slavery, Reverend Jabez Bunting, the national leader of the Wesleyan community and editor of the WMMS publication, the *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, and Reverend Richard Watson, Secretary of the WMMS.³⁶ The members of both the BMS and the WMMS clearly had a good knowledge of the events in Jamaica concerning the missionaries and the victimisation they experienced.

Just as the press was beginning to inform the British public about the slave insurrection in Jamaica and the accusations against the Baptist missionaries, on the 27th February 1832, the London Committee met to consider this matter, and Watson and Ivimey were among the thirteen members who attended. After 'much conversation' it was resolved to appoint a deputation to meet Thomas Fowell Buxton, the abolitionist party leader in the House of Commons, in order to inform him 'that the Committee considers it highly desirable that such steps ... be taken by Parliament as may enable him and the other friends of the Abolition of Slavery immediately to offer the House their views on the late disturbances in Jamaica'. The Committee also decided to delay any 'public meeting, or ... adopting other measures ... until the report of the deputation to Mr Buxton be received'.³⁷

A few weeks later, on the 4th April, when more information about the missionaries was made available by the press and missionary society publications, among the twenty-one men attending the Anti-Slavery Society's Committee meeting were Watson and Ivimey together with Buxton and another Evangelical Anglican and abolitionist member of the House of Commons, Dr Stephen Lushington.³⁸ The politicians explained the 'substance of [a] motion' which was to be presented to Parliament, namely:

³⁶ The Anti-Slavery Society Committee's minute book in 1832/33 does not list the membership of the Committee but, from those attending meetings, four ordained ministers have been identified as presented in the above text. Also included in the minutes in 1832 was the abolitionist parliamentarian Dr Stephen Lushington MP whose name did not appear on the original list of 1823.

³⁸ In addition to the press and missionary publications, *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* of March 1832 published information about the missionaries being suspected of inciting the insurrection, thus at the time of the meeting on Committee meeting on the 4th April, those present would have been aware of the situation. See *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 10th March 1832, Vol. V., No.3, pp. 106-108

1. 'That it is contrary to the spirit and principle of the Christian Religion, to the plainest dictates of justice, and to the principles of the British Constitution, that man should be considered as a property of man.
2. That it is the duty of Parliament to proceed forthwith to adopt such measures as may secure the immediate emancipation of all persons held in Slavery in British dominions.
3. That it is the opinion of this Committee (but without prejudice to the right of every person now a slave to immediate freedom) that after this present session of Parliament every child born in His Majesty's Colonies shall be free,¹³⁹

At a further meeting of the Committee on the 11th April, Buxton explained that he had postponed his motion to Parliament until the 24th May because of further news from Jamaica concerning 'the persecution of the Missionaries and the destruction of their chapels'. It was also decided that a public meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society should be held in Exeter Hall on Saturday 12th May.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the House of Lords had decided to set up a 'West India Inquiry' Select Committee and, on the 21st April, with the knowledge that this would delay progress towards slave emancipation, the Anti-Slavery Society's Committee agreed to draw up the 'strongest possible protest' against the Lord's proposal.⁴¹ The Committee believed that the Lord's Select Committee was established to review the Order-in-Council issued to the colonies regarding the treatment of slaves but that this would 'do little more than to give the slaves more effective protection of the law'.⁴² However, four days later the Society's Committee, having received information concerning the Lord's Select Committee, decided not to directly pursue its opposition but instead to provide helpful information to any member on the Select Committee who might be sympathetic to abolition. It was also resolved that a petition be prepared concerning the issue and that this should be sent for signature to all anti-slavery associations and 'influential friends' throughout the country. At this same

³⁹ (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, 27th February 1832, pp. 122-123. Note: At the meeting on 4th April 1832 a proof sheet of the new publication, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, was submitted and approved (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, pp. 129-130; The Anti-Slavery reporter became the principal means by which public opinion was influenced: The *Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 28th April 1832, Vol. 95, p. 136.

⁴⁰ (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, 11th April 1832, p. 135.

⁴¹ (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, 21st April 1832, p. 137.

⁴² *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 28th April 1832, Vol. V, No 95, pp. 135-136.

meeting of the Society's Committee, Buxton agreed to request the House of Commons to form its own Select Committee in order to 'decide the best means of effecting the total abolition of slavery without delay'.⁴³ On the 2nd May, Buxton reported to the Anti-Slavery Society Committee that West Indian proprietors had asked that their interests be presented to the proposed House of Lords Select Committee. As a consequence, the Anti-Slavery Committee proposed and resolved that it was 'expedient ... to move for a Committee of Inquiry in the House of Commons, with the view of neutralising any false impression that might be produced in the public mind by the [Select] Committee approved by the House of Lords'.⁴⁴

On the 12th May, the Anti-Slavery Committee met once again to consider the issues to be presented at a forthcoming General Meeting of the Society, and among these was that proposal that slavery should be declared as being 'wholly repugnant to the spirit of Christianity, of humanity and the British Constitution'. In addition, and in recognition of the persecution of the missionaries in Jamaica, the Committee considered that it was 'the duty of the Government to proceed without delay' to abolish slavery and to take measures to end the 'unnumbered evils ... which have recently affected Jamaica'. Regarding the Lord's Select Committee, the Anti-Slavery Committee considered that this was 'not for devising the means of abolishing slavery but for ... inquiring into the nature and effect of slavery' and consequently the Committee agreed to send a petition of objection.⁴⁵ These events took place as more information about the persecuted missionaries in Jamaica was being published in the press and in missionary society publications.

The General Meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society was held in London on the 12th May 1832 and this was chaired by Lord Suffield, a leading advocate for abolition in the House of Lords. Suffield, who, in recognising that some people were apathetic on the slavery question, suggested that 'it was the object of the Anti-

⁴³ (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, 25th April 1832, pp. 138-139.

⁴⁴ (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, 23rd May 1832, pp. 140-141. The Minutes of the 9th May, pp. 142-143 show some refinement in the matters to be investigated by the proposed Committee of the House of Commons. See also Hansard: House of Lords, 17th April 1832 Vol 12, cc 596-631.

⁴⁵ (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, 12th May 1832, pp. 147-149.

Slavery Society, by holding public meetings [and] by and distributing tracts ...' to dispel the 'cloud of darkness which veiled the deformities of the system'. Buxton then rose to express the hope that slavery must end and referred to his motion in 1823 which recommended the introduction of the amelioration measures and how this had regrettably resulted in the persecution of the converted enslaved people and the victimisation of the missionaries sent by the 'religious public of England'. Buxton then suggested that it was now the turn of 'the religious public ... in this country' to fight for the slaves, remarks that generated enthusiastic applause from the audience. He continued by suggesting the '[t]he missionaries had borne the utmost pitch of endurance' and, that if he were one, he would have relinquished his post if the religious public of England had not expressed their support. 'But', he continued, and in referring to the missionaries in Jamaica, 'where were the missionaries that had been sent to the West Indies? In jail! ... Where were the chapels in which they minister? Levelled to the earth or consumed by fire.' Buxton then set about criticising the Colonial Church Union in Jamaica for destroying the chapels and 'the banishment or murder of the missionaries.' Being convinced that slavery and Christianity 'could not go hand in hand', Buxton suggested that it 'was incumbent on the people of England to stand forth and chose their side - to select between the word of God and the capricious cruelty of man.' He concluded his speech by stating that it was a duty of everyone in Britain to be united in demanding 'the total abolition of slavery as the only way of accomplishing the moral, religious, and intellectual improvement of the Negroes.'⁴⁶ The meeting continued with other speeches including an emotional address by Dr Lushington in which he criticised Jamaica's Anglican clergy for their aversion of the Baptists and Wesleyans and before ending, urged the candidates at a forthcoming election for the reformed Parliament to pledge support for 'the immediate and total abolition of slavery.'⁴⁷ Buxton and Lushington, by emphasising the persecution of the missionaries, had encouraged the religious public at this General Meeting to engage in the politics of abolition in order that colonial slavery could be brought to an early end.

⁴⁶ *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, May 1832, Vol. V. No. 96. pp. 137-150.

⁴⁷ *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, May 1832, pp. 154-162.

About two weeks after the General Meeting, Buxton did recommend to the House of Commons that a Select Committee be appointed in order to consider the measures which 'may be expedient to adopt, for the effecting the extinction of slavery throughout the British dominions, at the earliest period compatible with the safety of all classes in the Colonies.'⁴⁸ In calling for this he once again highlighted the situation with the missionaries and referred to the unwillingness by the planters in Jamaica to allow the enslaved people to be taught Christianity. He also explained how one missionary, upon being refused a license, did preach but was later committed to prison where, in the extreme heat and filth, he died. In addition, Buxton made reference to the 'atrocious language' of colonial newspapers against the missionaries and formation of the CCU in Jamaica which aimed to expel all Dissenting and Methodist missionaries from the island and destroy all missionary chapels. As fourteen buildings had been destroyed, Buxton questioned the conduct of magistrates, several of whom had been present during the events.⁴⁹ A week later Buxton attended the Society's Committee meeting and reported that his recommendation for a Select Committee had been favourably received in the House of Commons (which was dominated by members of the Whig party who supported the abolition of slavery).⁵⁰ In order to gain support for a Select Committee, Buxton had used the missionaries' persecution as a means of persuading the members of the House of Commons

In the summer of 1832, the Select Committees of both the Houses of Commons and Lords started work. This coincided with the participation of William Knibb and the other returned missionaries in the public speaking programme.⁵¹ Both Select Committees invited Knibb and the Wesleyan missionaries, Peter Duncan and John Barry, to give evidence on colonial slavery. The composition of the Commons' Committee comprised twenty-six members and was well balanced in terms of attitudes towards slavery and abolition, whereas the Lords' Committee had ten peers with interests in slavery and, apparently, only one who supported

⁴⁸ *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, May 1832, p. 176.

⁴⁹ *Hansard*, HC Deb 24 May 1832, Vol. 13 cc. 34-98.

⁵⁰ (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, 30th May 1832, pp. 149-150.

⁵¹ *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 15th November, 1832, Vol. V. No. 103, pp.314-406, SEE ALSO *Report of the Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery throughout the British Dominions with Minutes of Evidence and General Index*, The House of Commons, Ref.721 (1832), 11th August (London: J. Haddon, 1833); *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, February 1833, Vol. V. No. 105, pp. 473-557.

abolition.⁵² It was the aim of the latter Select Committee to inquire into the conditions and treatment of slaves in Jamaica, and among the witnesses who presented evidence were those who supported the plantation system. The evidence presented to the Lord's Committee was contained in a 1,100-page report.⁵³ The Commons' Committee, on the other hand, was set up to investigate whether 'the slaves, if emancipated, would be industrious and disposed to acquire property by labour' and whether 'the dangers' were greater for with-holding their freedom. The proceedings of this Select Committee were recorded in a 600-page report.⁵⁴

The missionaries who attended the Select Committees were subjected to searching questions. Both Duncan and Barry gave evidence about the conditions and treatment of the slaves and the planters' obstructions to giving religious instruction to the enslaved people which, in the opinion of the missionaries, would prepare them for immediate emancipation. They also spoke about the moral state of both the whites and the enslaved people, the causes of the insurrection, and the destructive actions of the CCU. They also confirmed that missionaries in Jamaica had not promoted opposition to slavery.⁵⁵ Knibb's evidence concerned his own and that of his colleagues' arrests and harassment by the authorities when required to undertake militia duties. He also spoke on the causes of the insurrection, the enslaved peoples' loyalty to Britain and their ability to earn a living after emancipation.⁵⁶ Regarding the 'Native Baptist' sect, Knibb was keen to point out it was not associated with the Baptist chapels ministered to by British missionaries. This sect, he explained, comprised many thousands of enslaved people who had their own chapels and ministers, and that they opposed the British Baptist missionaries with 'the most perfect hate'. Knibb added that, most importantly, it was within this sect where the plans for the rebellion had been made.⁵⁷ Knibb also confirmed that, after the insurrection, Baptist and other missionary properties had been destroyed by white islanders,

⁵² Wright, *Knibb*, pp. 116-117.

⁵³ *Report from the Select Committee on the State of the West India Colonies together with Minutes of Evidence*, The House of Lords, Ref: 127, (1832).

⁵⁴ *Report from the Select Committee on the Extinction of Slavery throughout the British Dominions: with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index*, The House of Commons, Ref.721 (1832).

⁵⁵ *Lords*, pp. 412-422, 423-433, 434-437, 446-447, 513, 648-651; *Commons*, pp. 6-68, 75-76, 111-112, 130-132, 142-143, 480-485

⁵⁶ *Lords*, pp. 723-734, *Commons*, 234-246.

⁵⁷ *Lords*, pp. 744-745.

some of whom were magistrates. They had also terrorised the missionaries including one who had been tarred and feathered, and set on fire. Included in his evidence to the Committees, Knibb commented on the CCU which had published reports in the local press stating that the Assembly should prevent the ‘Sectarians’ from teaching ‘their dangerous tenets amongst our slave population’. He also explained that the colonial press had wanted religious instruction to be given only by the Established Church and that licences should be withdrawn from Dissenting preachers. Furthermore, the CCU had aimed to protect the island’s interest from the ‘diabolical machinations of the anti-slavery party in England, and their emissaries [who] were the sectarian preachers in this island’. Knibb added that it was the local newspapers which had hardened the ill-feelings of the population of Jamaica against the white Baptists missionaries.⁵⁸ In respect to the missionaries’ religious teaching, Knibb admitted that liberty had been taught but claimed that this was spiritual freedom as presented in the Bible, rather than physical liberty. He also thought that the doctrine that was taught could not have been misunderstood by the enslaved people and this had been confirmed in conversations he had had with his congregation.⁵⁹ In answer to questions about involvement in anti-slavery, Knibb confirmed that while in Jamaica he had avoided any involvement in local politics and had never communicated with the abolitionists nor had he received anti-slavery reports.⁶⁰ The missionaries’ evidence presented to the Select Committees was clearly aimed to directly influence the opinions of the politicians in Westminster

About the time the Select Committees were collecting information, at a meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society’s Committee held on the 29th August it was reported that religious bodies had arranged a public meeting on the ‘subject of the persecution in Jamaica’ and that this had taken place on the 15th August.⁶¹ The details of this meeting, which had been held in Exeter Hall, were published in *Anti-Slavery Reporter* and the report included extracts from the speeches made by the missionaries Duncan and Knibb. It was noted that 3,000 people had

⁵⁸ *Commons*, pp. 256-260; *Lords*, pp. 732-736.

⁵⁹ *Lords*, p. 736.

⁶⁰ *Commons*, p. 318: See Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 107-115 for further comments of the missionaries’ evidence to the Select Committees.

⁶¹ (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, 6th June, 4th July, 7th July, 18th July, 25th July, 1st August and 29th August 1832, pp. 150-160.

attended the meeting where they 'listened with breathless interest' to the 'mass of information' that was presented. *The Anti-Slavery Reporter's* report added that there was 'regret and indignation at the cruel and determined opposition of the colonists to the religious instruction of the slaves, and the disgraceful outrages committed by them on the persons and property of Missionaries, in violation of the laws of God and man'. Finally, because of the opposition to the missionaries in Jamaica, an appeal was made that the people of Britain should adopt 'all suitable means for the complete and immediate extinction ... of that crying evil' of slavery.⁶² This is further evidence that the missionaries played a significant role in encouraging the religious public to support the immediate ending of slavery.

For much of the remaining months of 1832 and into 1833, the separation of the Agency Committee from the Anti-Slavery Committee dominated the latter's time.⁶³ However, in September 1832 the Anti-Slavery Committee stated that the nation ought to be 'praying for the immediate extinction of slavery' by the selecting candidates who supported abolition for the newly reformed Parliament. In addition, unless slavery was entirely removed, 'hostility ... between the slaves and the slave-holders' would lead to a 'common calamity'.⁶⁴ Following this, in the November 1832 issue of the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, a letter from a member of the Anti-Slavery Society was published that encouraged readers to vote in the forthcoming election for candidates who supported the abolition of slavery. The writer thought that this was a 'great moment' for the Anti-Slavery Society and encouraged the signing of petitions to the Parliament by 'every city, town and considerable village' in order to demonstrate 'that the nation is unanimous and determined' to disallow 'the persecution, of fellow-subjects and Christian brethren, and that slavery must cease forever' in British colonies with 'least possible delay'.⁶⁵ The electorate did respond and as a consequence the composition of the newly reformed Parliament resulted in a huge Whig majority. According to Higman, the number

⁶² *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 1st October 1832, Vol. V. No. 101, pp. 274-283.

⁶³ (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/4 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, pp. 168-182 and s20E/3/4, pp. 1-4

⁶⁴ (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/3 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, 19th September 1832, pp. 164-165; *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, Vol. V. No. 101, p. 292.

⁶⁵ *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, January 1833, pp. 52-53.

of politicians with interest in the West Indies had effectively been halved which enabled the legislation for the abolition of slavery to progress.⁶⁶ In January 1833, the editor of the *Missionary Herald* expressed delight about the 'enlightened and able men' who had entered the new Parliament and was pleased that the nation was praying for the 'Mission in the West Indies' which would benefit from legislation that would abolish slavery.⁶⁷

As a result of the anti-slavery campaigning, on the 2nd April 1833, a Special General Meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society was held at Exeter Hall at which Lord Suffield the chairman spoke of how 'the force of public opinion' had resulted in the Government's promise 'to produce a plan [concerning slavery] suited to the state of all parties concerned.'⁶⁸ On the same day as the General Meeting, the Society's Committee met and resolved that 'in common with the Public at large', the members should look forward to a plan for the abolition of slavery which the Government would present to Parliament.⁶⁹ On the 14th May, the Government presented its plan which proposed that the enslaved people be given freedom but only after a twelve-year transitional period so that they would be ready for emancipation. In addition, a compensation sum of twenty million pounds would be paid to the planters for their losses.⁷⁰ CHUNCKY REWRITE Regarding the transitional arrangement, the so-called 'apprenticeship' scheme, as the period of twelve years was considered 'unsafe' as it could cause unrest among the enslaved people, the period was reduced to six years for agricultural slaves and four years for others. The Slavery Abolition Act was given Royal Assent on the 28th August and became effective on the 1st August 1834.⁷¹ While the editor of the *Anti-slavery Reporter* critically commented on the large compensation figure, the 'only lament' was that the slaves would not be immediately given their freedom.⁷² While beyond the scope of this thesis, the 'apprenticeship' scheme, which was just another name for slavery, following a

⁶⁶ Barry Higman, *Slaves, Population and Economy of Jamaica, 1807-1834* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), p. 231

⁶⁷ *Missionary Herald*, January 1833, CLXIX, pp. 5-7.

⁶⁸ *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 18th April 1833, Vol. VI, No. 108, pp. 1-20; Also referred to (BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/4 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, pp. 14-18.

⁶⁹ BL-O) Ref: MSS Brit Emp. s20E 2/4 Minutes of the Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, pp. 16-18; 22-23.

⁷⁰ Stephen Hobbhouse, *Joseph Sturge, His Life and Work*, (London: J M Dent & Sons Ltd. 1919), pp. 32-38. £20 million in 1834 represented 40% of the government's annual average income and would today be equivalent to over £2 billion.

⁷¹ *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 26th December 1833, Vol. VI, No. 110. Pp. 181-226.

⁷² *The Anti-Slavery Reporter*, 26th December 1833, Vol. VI, No. 110, pp. 226-232.

campaign led by Joseph Sturge, who received evidence from Knibb and other missionaries, came to an end in 1838.⁷³

In concluding this part of the chapter, by exploring the minutes of the Anti-Slavery Society Committee, official reports and other documents, it has been shown that the publicity given to the persecution of missionaries was an effective means of encouraging the missionary public to engage in anti-slavery politics in order to promote the immediate ending of colonial slavery. This was reinforced by the argument that slavery and Christianity could not co-exist. It was also shown how the missionaries had attempted to directly influence politicians by presenting evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committees. Their evidence included information about their own persecution as well as the harsh treatment of the enslaved people they had witnessed. As a whole, this chapter has shown how William Knibb and the other missionaries who returned from Jamaica had influenced the evangelical public and politicians in Britain that colonial slavery should be brought to an early end.

Finally, and in recognising the importance of the missionaries in the ending of colonial slavery, at the Annual Meeting of the BMS in June 1833 at which Knibb was present, Buxton congratulated him and his fellow missionaries who, despite their suffering, 'had roused the sympathy and the prayers of the Christians in the country'. In response, Knibb expressed the hope that, upon returning to Jamaica, he would no longer see enslaved people. He also thanked 'his fellow countrymen for their kindness', stating that while in Britain, he had travelled '6,000 miles in the feeble advocacy of his cause, [but] he had triumphed.' He ended by stating that he and his fellow missionaries 'would leave England with regret, for they greatly loved it; but they loved Jamaica far more; and with their churches there, they hoped to live and die.'⁷⁴ Local branches of the BMS also acknowledged the role played in the abolition of slavery by Knibb and his fellow missionaries, one example being an Annual Meeting of the Bristol Missionary Society in September 1834 where the Chairman in his opening address, spoke of the freedom that had been given to the 800,000 'suffering fellow subjects'. He

⁷³ Joseph Sturge, Thomas Harvey, *The West Indies in 1837*, (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1838); Alex Tyrell, *Joseph Sturge and the Moral Radical Party in Early Victorian Britain*, (London: Christopher Helm, 1987).

⁷⁴ *Missionary Herald*, July 1833, CLXXV, pp. 57-64.

challenged 'anyone to deny that it was not the work of Christianity ... that ... this great event has been attributed' for which he thanked 'labours of the missionaries'.⁷⁵

In this chapter it was firstly argued how Knibb, by dramatically illustrating his own, his colleagues and the enslaved peoples' ill-treatment by the planters and those who supported slavery, had effectively demonstrated that an uncivilised culture existed in the Caribbean that had been caused by slavery and that this dehumanised institution should be brought to an immediate end. Secondly, by adopting the persecution of the missionaries and the anti-missionary culture in public debate, abolitionist politicians and missionary societies were able to demonstrate to evangelical audiences that the Christianisation of the enslaved people could not be effectively fulfilled unless slavery be abolished. The chapter also showed how the missionary societies and abolitionists at the numerous public meetings at which Knibb and missionaries spoke, had jointly sought to end slavery. Also, it was shown how Knibb, his fellow missionaries and the missionary societies, together with the Agency Committee, had collectively joined forces in the demand for the early ending of slavery. The evidence presented by the missionaries to the Parliamentary Select Committee added to the claim that colonial slavery should be brought to an immediate end.

⁷⁵ *Bristol Mercury*, 27th September 1834, p. 3.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the influence of the persecution of Methodist and Dissenting missionaries in Jamaica by the white colonists as a major factor in motivating the British public in 1832-1833 to support the abolition of British plantation slavery. It is argued that, by highlighting the brutality of the colonial plantocracy towards the missionaries, as well as towards enslaved people, and the blatant disregard by the colonial authorities of imperial Britain, the public at home demanded that plantation slavery should be brought to an immediate end. This conclusion reviews the argument developed in the thesis that missions played a central role in promoting the plantocracy's ills to the British press and missionary public, and that during the crisis of colonial power in the 1830s, the British public became increasingly inclined to listen to the missionary perspectives. It raises the possibility that slavery became particularly controversial when it outraged or hurt white middle-class respectability – both through attacks on respectable missionaries but also through highlighting the problematic extent of 'white savagery' in the Caribbean which was in itself a threat to British moral legitimacy.

In Part 1 of the thesis, secondary sources are explored to present the scope and breadth of abolition scholarship over the past hundred years, with particular focus on the development of evangelicalism, overseas mission, and the abolition movement. Regarding abolition historiography, this spanned from the early British historians' emphasis on the humanitarian drive of the elite abolitionists, the later challenge of economic determinism and the role of the enslaved people themselves in emancipation, through to the scholarship of social and 'new imperial' historians. Amongst the important observations by scholars were the unification of missionary and anti-slavery organisations and the influence of evangelicals on British public opinion that resulted in slavery being brought to an end in 1833.¹ This thesis builds on this scholarship by arguing that the information about the persecuted missionaries in Jamaica

¹ Davis, *Slavery and Human Progress*, pp. 168-226; Rice, 'The Missionary Context', pp.150-163; Walls, *The Missionary Movement*, pp. 251-252; Turley, *The Culture*, pp. 17-46; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 292-295.

following the insurrection in 1831 united evangelicals and abolitionists in creating public pressure for change.

Chapter 2 shows how, by the early nineteenth century, evangelicals, although representing a relatively low proportion of the national population, became a major influence on cultural values and moral standards.² In this respect, and leading the change, were the members of the elite Clapham Sect, a group of highly influential Anglican Evangelicals (known as 'the Saints'), who sought to improve the ethical standards of Britain, supported Bible societies, Christian mission at home and overseas as well as opposing the continuation of slavery. In 1823 several leading members of the Clapham Sect formed the Anti-Slavery Society, the intention of which was to gradually prepare the enslaved people in the Caribbean for eventual emancipation. To achieve this objective, the London Committee of the Society relied on its members of Parliament at Westminster to put pressure on Parliament to bring about abolition legislation. Aware of the powerful West Indies lobby in Parliament and sympathetic to the abolitionist cause, the Government attempted to persuade the planter-dominated colonial authorities to voluntarily accept amelioration measures to improve the conditions of the enslaved people. Included in these recommendations was the promotion of Christian teaching for the enslaved. These recommendations were so strongly opposed by the colonial authorities that Methodist and Dissenting missionaries became victims of colonial hostility because of a suspicion that they were connected to the British anti-slavery movement and, therefore, a major threat to the lucrative Caribbean export trade.

In Part 2, the thesis focuses on how the news of the victimised Methodist and Dissenting missionaries following the slave revolt in 1831, and the engagement in a public speaking tour in the following year by missionaries who had returned home, impacted British public opinion on slavery. The main influences on public opinion came from public meetings, church sermons, newspapers, and magazines, and other published material. Based on Hannah Barker and Denise Bates' argument that newspaper editorials, the style of reporting and published

² Hinton, *Age of Atonement* p. 219.

correspondence represented public opinion, the thesis has explored the local and national press.³ Other sources include the missionary society and anti-slavery publications that also reflected the opinion of the respective editors, and missionary biographies which, although hagiographic, can be studied collectively to further explore evidence. Other sources included minute books which, although often brief and lacking in detail, provide helpful summaries of debates and the anti-slavery and missionary society resolutions. By examining records of Parliamentary proceedings, political reactions to the information about the missionaries can be seen.

After outlining the persecution of the missionaries in Jamaica following the insurrection in 1831, Chapter 3 shows how the British press responded in support of the missionaries to the negative sentiments expressed in the colonial newspapers. The London-based BMS and WMMS joined in the criticism of the white colonists by publishing articles in the societies' magazines, some of which were republished in newspapers thereby influencing a wider public. In these articles and at anti-slavery public meetings, the religious public was encouraged to become actively engaged in abolition politics. A national network of local missionary support and anti-slavery groups had emerged by the late 1820s and the membership of these often overlapped since many abolitionists were church- and chapel-going evangelicals who supported overseas missions. Also, at local level, evangelical women made a major contribution to anti-slavery politics.⁴ It was, therefore, through this national network of local missionary society support and anti-slavery organisations that audiences throughout Britain subscribed to the campaign to end colonial slavery.

By the time of the slave uprising in 1831, a history of anti-mission feeling had developed in the Caribbean colonies because of a suspicion by many white colonists that Dissenting and Methodist missionaries were agents for the despised abolitionist movement in Britain. Furthermore, the planters believed that the evangelical doctrine taught by the missionaries encouraged the enslaved people to think about freedom. Similarly, as missionaries also taught

³ Barker, *Newspapers*, pp. 11-28, Bates, *Historical Research*, pp. 23-56.

⁴ Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*, pp. 62-63.

literacy to enable the Bible to be read, this also allowed enslaved people to read British newspapers and learn about their support in Britain. In the previous decade, during 1823, immediately after the British Government had tried to persuade the colonial authorities to accept the amelioration recommendations, the Reverend John Smith of the LMS had fallen a victim to anti-mission hostility in Demerara. During the same year and for the same reason the Wesleyan missionary, Reverend William Shrewsbury, had been forced to leave Barbados in fear of losing his life. After 1823, anti-mission expressions became a phenomenon in Jamaica so that by the time of the slave insurrection at Christmas in 1831, the white colonists quickly blamed the Methodist and Dissenting missionaries for initiating the event. As Chapter 4 shows, when news of these accusations reached Britain, the British press and missionary societies could not accept the colonial allegations. So powerful and were the threats by the Jamaican press, that the newspapers and the missionary societies in Britain responded by condemning the persecution of the missionaries. Even when the missionaries were eventually found not guilty of instigating the insurrection by the island's judiciary, the CCU continued to attack the missionaries mainly because of the belief that they were connected with the abolition movement.

This colonial opposition to the mission created a response by British evangelicals since the missionaries had been sent to the Caribbean by their respective missionary societies to fulfil the 'Great Commission' of converting the world. These missionary societies were supported by the evangelical churches and chapels throughout Britain and the hostile reaction in Jamaica to the missionaries was perceived as an affront to Christianity. As the missionary society magazines informed the readership of the punishment inflicted on the missionaries, this created an identification of the plight of the missionaries. Additionally, as the British supporters of mission shared the same beliefs and values as the missionaries, it is argued that a sense of identity was created, raising questions about the significance of attacks on respectable white missionaries in abolition politics. While propaganda can often exaggerate, the information imparted by the missionaries in the form of letters was generally considered honest and trustworthy. Furthermore, as was evident in the published correspondence, when news of the persecution of the missionaries in

Jamaica had reached Britain, there was a recollection of the victimisation Smith and Shrewsbury almost a decade earlier. Also, news from the West Indies about the continued anti-missionary expressions and the contempt for British Government's amelioration recommendations, in the minds of the supporters of mission and abolition, demonstrated a blatant disregard for imperial power. As the evangelicals and abolitionists in Britain increased their opposition to the colonial authorities, in 1832 when information about the colonists' ill-treatment of the missionaries in Jamaica this simply added to the British unease and a perception that the plantocracy was an opponent of Christianity. Thus, while the British public had demonstrated its openness to anti-slavery in the 1820s, it was pushed to action by the treatment of missionaries during the 1831 rebellion. During this crisis of colonial power, the British public became more inclined to listen to missionary perspectives on slavery and abolition.

In Chapter 3, consideration is given to a visit to Jamaica in 1832 by Henry Whiteley, himself a Methodist and one who had originally doubted claims of cruelty to enslaved people. There he was horrified by witnessing the savage ill-treatment of the enslaved people as well as the strong opposition to Methodism. Upon his return to Britain, Whiteley published a tract which added to anti-slavery propaganda.⁵ However, as demonstrated in Chapter 4, it was the Baptist missionary, Reverend William Knibb, and some Methodist missionaries who returned home in 1832 who made a major impact on British public opinion. Upon arrival in Britain, these missionaries initially reported to their respective missionary societies on the events they had witnessed in Jamaica. This was followed by involvement in a national anti-slavery public speaking campaign. In his numerous speeches, Knibb proclaimed the need for the immediate abolition of slavery, a policy that had been adopted in 1830 by the Agency Committee, an ambitious, energetic group within the Anti-Slavery Society. The Agency Committee's policy contrasted with that of the more conservative-minded Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society which had relied on Parliament to facilitate legislative change. However, in Westminster, they met opposition from the aristocratic ruling class, many of whom had financial interests in the slave economy. An explanation for the cautious nature of the Society originally related

⁵ Whiteley, *Three Months in Jamaica*, pp. 1-22

to fear of revolutionary ideas from continental Europe and later to the growth of radicalism. This caution by members of the Society extended to the fear that anti-slavery action in Britain could lead to slave revolts in the Caribbean. With the recent passing of the Parliamentary Reform Act in 1832, which challenged the power of the former ruling class, the Agency Committee sought public support for the immediate ending of slavery. This policy was supported by Knibb who, by taking part in a public speaking tour, sought to influence public opinion.

As Chapter 4 indicates, the public meetings at which Knibb and other missionaries spoke were extremely well attended. This was not just the result of good local advertising, but also because of press reports of earlier packed meetings at which audiences demonstrated enthusiastic support for immediate abolition. At these meetings, Knibb spoke with eloquence about the ill-treatment he and fellow missionaries had experienced and the punishment inflicted on enslaved people. He reinforced the plight of the enslaved by displaying instruments of torture which shocked audiences and therefore contributed to a perception of 'white savagery' among the Caribbean plantocracy. Knibb pleaded with audiences to become actively engaged in the campaign to end slavery rather than merely sympathise about the plight of the enslaved people. He also reminded evangelicals that the converted enslaved people were fellow Christians. Knibb's speeches were also sometimes aimed at females in audiences when he described the brutal treatment of enslaved women and children. At these, often emotional, packed public meetings, the need for the immediate ending of slavery was powerfully emphasised. Support for Knibb's message at the meetings was evident by the huge number of petitions sent to the Queen and her Government.⁶ As well as influencing public meetings, Knibb also motivated local groups, such as the Sheffield Anti-Slavery Society, as referred to in Chapter 4. This group aimed to inform the local population about slavery and one of its publications was a collection of anti-slavery writings assembled by the founder of the Sheffield women's society, Mary-Anne

⁶ Anti-slavery petitions peaked in the early 1830s, See Walvin, 'The Rise of British Popular Sentiment for Abolition', pp. 155, 158-160 and Drescher, 'Two Variants of Anti-Slavery' pp. 45-49.

Rawson. This book became a powerful piece of anti-slavery propaganda and contained articles and extracts of letters written by Knibb.⁷

Despite the popularity of the anti-slavery meetings, there was opposition from those had an interest in the West Indies economy. The West India Committee, which represented the plantation owners and merchants, continued to support the status quo by also engaging in a programme of public meetings. At one of these, a face-to-face debate between William Knibb and the Committee's leading speaker and Member of Parliament, Peter Borthwick took place but here, the supporters of slavery became well aware of the public's growing opposition to the continuation of slavery. Similarly, at Parliamentary Select Committee meetings, those with interest in the West Indies recognised the strong anti-slavery opinions expressed by Knibb and other the missionaries. Collectively, the work of the Agency Committee and the nationwide speeches by the missionaries brought huge public pressure to influence Parliament and this eventually resulted in the passing of the abolition legislation in 1833.

In summary, this thesis has argued that information about the persecuted Methodist and Dissenting missionaries in Jamaica, and their subsequent involvement in a national public speaking campaign, motivated the British public to support the immediate abolition of slavery. The abuse shown to missionaries in 1832 following the insurrection in Jamaica was understood in the context of the earlier persecution of missionaries Smith and Shrewsbury in 1823 and the continued anti-mission expressions in the colonies between then and the early 1830s. This, it is argued, was augmented by a perception in Britain of colonial 'white savagery' among the plantocracy because of the manner in which they persecuted missionaries and enslaved people, their opposition to Christianity, and a general amorality and dissolute lifestyle which not only conflicted with the expectations by the British evangelical middle-class but was seen to undermine British moral authority and imperial power. Regarding the anti-slavery campaign, whereas speakers had been engaged by the Agency Committee to attack slavery, Knibb and the other missionaries were able to speak with more

⁷ Twells, *The Civilising Mission*, pp. 99-100; Ferguson, *Subject to Others*, p. 265.

authority because of their first-hand experiences and their close relationships with converted enslaved people. Therefore, the cruelty of the colonists towards the missionaries contributed to public support for the immediate ending of the system. As Walbridge stated in his biography of John Smith, the 'vile persecution to which *Knibb* and others' had experienced, had enabled the 'friends of religion' to succeed 'in obtaining from the British Parliament the Act of Emancipation, which embodied a legal recognition of the *right* of the slave to be free.'⁸ The overwhelming focus on the wrongs done to the white missionaries, however, suggests that the mission abolitionism, while certainly more radical than the gradualist strategy of the original Anti-Slavery Society, adhered to conservative ideas about cultural and racial hierarchies. These findings contribute to discussions within the historiography concerning the issue of 'whose abolition?' and raises questions that could be the focus of future research. For example, bringing together responses to the unrest in Barbados and the rebellion in Demerara, both in 1823, with the events in Jamaica in the early 1830s, would enable further exploration of the development of mission abolitionism in these decades and its relationship to the agency of the enslaved people and the 'savagery' of the plantocracy, and to discussions of race, culture and difference in the wider abolition movement.

⁸ Walbridge, *The Demerara Martyr*, p. 189.

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