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# THE CARIBBEAN'S RESPONSE TO THE GREAT COMMISSION HISTORY AND MODELS OF RESPONSE

by

*Las G. Newman*

## The Great Commission

**T**he Great Commission in the words of Canon Max Warren is Jesus Christ himself (1976). He is the model missionary, the representative and embodiment of the Great Commission (John 20:21). The fundamental affirmation of the New Testament is the centrality of Jesus Christ as God's missionary to humanity. However else it may be understood, the Great Commission was therefore not an agenda item among others for the Church. It was the agenda for the mission of the disciples and for the Church. There is no other commission given to the church. The Great Commission, Jesus himself explained, was an instructional, educational mandate, to go and make disciples, to baptize and teach God's commands (Mt.28:19-20). The Great Commission was to be understood as a universal mandate encompassing "all nations." This sense then of the instructionality, the totality and the universality of the Great Commission points to its all-embracing importance in the mission of the Church. To confirm this, Christ, in his post-resurrection appearance, gave executive authority to his agents to pursue the mission to the ends of the earth until he returns (Mt.28:18-19; Acts 1:8).

Inherent in the meaning of the word "mission" is the notion of agents being sent out to cross frontiers, to bear a message and to engage in a particular activity with clearly defined objectives on behalf of someone else. As Bishop Stephen Neil points out, the three great world religions -Buddhism, Christianity and Islam - have been missionary and universal religions in their structure and outlook from the very beginning (1964, 14). For the Judeo-Christian religion, mission has been a central theme throughout its history from the call of Abraham (Gen. 12:3), through its Hellenistic

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development and the establishment of the Church in the Graeco-Roman world.

It took a long time before any agents of the Church brought the message of Christ into the Caribbean region. In fact, the message of Jesus was not known in the Caribbean until a millennium and a half after his death and resurrection. The Church as an institution had by then been fully developed and was in fact on the decline (Southern 1970, 44-72). It was indeed in the wake of the discovery of the "New World" by Christopher Columbus 500 years ago that Christian missionaries first came into the Caribbean region (Bisnauth 1989, 11-30).

### **Christian Mission in the Caribbean**

The Caribbean area, as a distinct cultural zone and sub-region of the Americas, has now experienced five centuries of Christian Mission in the modern era. As that part of the "New World" which Europeans first encountered in the late 15th century, the region has been peopled ever since by great admixtures of Europeans, Africans, Asians, Middle Easterners and Orientals. This rich cultural pot-pourri of civilizations, along with the original Amerindian inhabitants, would normally have constituted a sharp cultural challenge to Christian mission. The first two centuries of European colonization of the region brought with it a type of Christian Mission which was largely unsuccessful in its objectives. Imbued with medieval notions of Christian civilization, the early Spanish conquistadors, acting with authorization of church and state, pursued three objectives. First, to extend the boundaries of Christendom to the extremity of the discovered New World. Second, to secure economic advantage through imperial conquest, arrogating to themselves whatever material culture in precious minerals, agricultural products, valuable lands, and artifacts they found. Third, to "Christianize" native peoples and thereby extend the benefits of Christian civilization to new peoples being brought into the fold of Christendom. Christian Mission then was an adjunct of imperial policy and the enterprise was often conducted with the coercive tools of the State. The missiological justification was Luke 14:23, "Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that my house might be full" (Bisnauth 1989, 18). The first Catholic missionaries, Franciscan and Dominican friars from Spain, pursued this policy of Christianization for over a century before Cromwell's English Western Design brought the first English colonizers to the region in the mid-17th century.

Protestant missions first came into the region in the 1730s with the arrival of the Moravians in St. Thomas (Furley 1965, 3-16). Throughout

the 18th century other groups, Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians, arrived. However, it was not until the beginning of the 19th century that the task of evangelizing the region began in earnest. In this regard, the work of the American and later the British Baptists among the African slaves in Jamaica and Trinidad, and the work of the Canadian Presbyterians among the East Indians in Trinidad, were outstanding in the extent of their impact and contribution to the welfare of the particular ethnic groups targeted. From 1783 four ex-slaves, African American Baptists from the USA -George Lisle, George Lewis, George Gibb, and Moses Baker preached throughout Jamaica and started Baptist congregations in several parishes (Clark, Dendy, Phillippo 1865, 3). When it became difficult for them to continue they invited the British Baptists to send missionaries to Jamaica, the first of which arrived in 1814. Between 1814-1843 the Baptist Mission in Jamaica grew from 1500 to 30,000 with 70 congregations and 41 pastors, 19 of whom were local preachers. Buoyed by such successful church growth, the Jamaican Baptists formalized themselves into a local jurisdiction and in 1842 ended formal dependent relationship with the British Baptist Society (Clark, et al. 1865, 121-122). They immediately set about forming their first local organization, the JBMS, i.e. the Jamaica Baptist Missionary Society (Russell 1973/74, 86-93).

In Trinidad, the Presbyterian mission work among the East Indian indentured servants who were imported from India, beginning in 1845, was spearheaded by John Morton from Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Morton arrived in Port of Spain in 1868 and spent 45 years in Trinidad, remaining until his death in 1912. On a visit four years earlier in 1864, Morton noted then that, "having nothing to do I wandered about the sugar estates, and was particularly drawn to the East Indian, of whom there were about 20,000 in the island" (Mount 1983, 59). He further remarked, "to think of these people living in a Christian community for years, making money, and returning to India without hearing the Gospel of Christ!" (Mount 1983, 59). He determined to do something about it. He visited the local Presbytery in Port-of-Spain and tried to encourage the Scottish Presbyterians there to send a request to the United Presbyterian Church in Glasgow, Scotland for a missionary to be sent to Trinidad. They accepted his idea. However, the request to Glasgow was unsuccessful. On his way back to Canada, Morton stopped in Philadelphia and tried to persuade the United Presbyterian Church of America to reopen its base in Trinidad for a mission to the East Indians. His timing was wrong. The UPCA was experiencing internal difficulties at the time and was in no mood to listen to Morton's plea. In any case, their previous experience in Trinidad had been disastrous (Mount 1983,

60). When he returned to Canada, Morton wrote to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church of Canada appealing for a missionary to be sent to the East Indians in Trinidad. The BFM accepted his plea and decided to send him as their missionary. He returned to Port-of-Spain on January 29, 1868 and set about his mission work. By March 23, he opened his first school. He and other Canadian missionaries engaged in language training, studying Hindi. Today there are over 60 Presbyterian congregations throughout Trinidad with over 40,000 members. The Presbyterian Mission work among the East Indians in Trinidad made its mark in the field of education with the Naparima College in San Fernando being perhaps the most outstanding example among others. The Mission provided opportunity for the East Indian population to achieve assimilation into mainstream Trinidadian society through education, cultural adaptation, and the transmission of its own ethnic identity in Trinidadian life (Vertovec 1992, 80-81).

## **Models of Caribbean Mission**

What is a model? A model is a representation of an idea or concept in concrete terms in such a way that that representation can then act as a clear standard or example. In this regard, given the legacy of Christian mission in the region, there are three models of Caribbean mission, in response to the Great Commission, which may be offered for such examination. These examples span different time periods in Caribbean history. They represent three different types of mission activity and also reflect the variety of concerns the Caribbean Church has had to face throughout its development.

### **Model # 1: Ethnic Model**

The first model is the ethnic model whereby missionary endeavours were focused upon people groups of particular ethnicities. This model was influenced by notions of race and ethnicity dominant in European hegemonic conceptions of the world at the time. When, for example, in the mid-19th century sub-Sahara Africa became a new mission field, the Caribbean as an evangelized field was seen as a source of missionary supply for this new sphere of western missionary activity. Within four years of the collapse of the slave society Black Christians of African ancestry in the Caribbean responded to the "call" to become missionaries to their "Fatherland" of Africa (Groves 1954, 23-44; Sanneh 1983, ch. 5). In the years immediately following Emancipation no less than five foreign missions to Africa emanated from the Caribbean. These Africa Missions were represented as the "earnest desire" of the African

population in the region to bring the blessings of the Gospel to their "fatherland." Led by the Moravians, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists and Anglicans almost every congregation was drawn into this missionary activity. The most elaborate effort was the Baptist Mission which took 38 Jamaicans on one journey to West Africa in 1843 (Clark, et al. 1865, 130-134). Perhaps the most enduring were the Presbyterians who initiated work in Calabar, Nigeria in 1846, led by Hope Masterton Waddell (Waddell 1970; see also *Dictionary of Scottish Church History* 1993, 574-576).

Between 1842 and 1897 over one hundred Caribbean missionaries went to western Africa as part of this new missionary thrust. Recruited in the pioneer corps of Christian agents, they served as evangelists, catechists, Bible translators, school teachers, agriculturalists, Christian colonists, and settlers right across the Bight of Africa. The stated object of the mission was to plant Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa and, through Christianity, bring about such change in the social and economic condition of tropical Africa that would bring Africa itself into the concourse of modern nations. Legitimate commerce and Christianity were seen as the vehicles to liberate Africa out of its "darkness" and bring it into the light of modern civilization (Buxton 1940).

That there should be a missionary consciousness in the Caribbean Church in the middle of the nineteenth century, so soon after the collapse of slavery, is in itself a matter of some significance. That this Church should send participants to the African enterprise is worthy of investigative research and careful analysis. Several reasons have been suggested as to why these circumstances should have occurred at that time. Among the reasons put forward are (a) the need on the part of European missionaries in the Caribbean for a new project following the collapse of slavery, (b) the links between Protestant missions in the Caribbean and the Parliamentary Anti-Slavery lobby in the British Parliament in Westminster prior to Emancipation, (c) the motive of repatriation back to Africa on the part of newly liberated Africans, and (d) the need of Europeans for making restitution and recompense to Africa for wrongs committed during the slave trade and throughout the long rape and pillage of Africa.

There were some basic assumptions behind this participation of missionaries from the Caribbean in the missionary task in Africa. These included the arguments that (a) Africans in the Caribbean would have great historical and cultural affinity with western Africa, (b) constitutionally, they would be more resistant to tropical diseases than Europeans, since Africa had become the "white man's grave", and (c) the advantage of Caribbean missionaries having an opportunity to

demonstrate their gratitude for the liberty from inhuman slavery achieved through a merciful God and sympathetic influential Europeans, particularly in the British Parliament (Russell 1973/74, 86-93).

The results of these efforts were mixed. Certainly factors internal as well as external to the various missions, including the extraordinary climatic conditions of tropical equatorial Africa, resulted in most of the Caribbean Missionaries returning within four years. Some died on African soil in the torrid equatorial conditions. A few had long careers, two serving over thirty years and one up to forty-three years. Some Caribbean missionaries like Joseph Merrick, Alexander Fuller and his son Joseph Jackson Fuller (Baptists), Thomas Keith, Edward Miller (Presbyterian), H. J. Leacock, J. Dupont, T. E. Douglas, W. A. Thompson and Archdeacon Lennon (Anglicans), have received notable mention in West African mission histories (Ellis 1913; Groves 1954; Neill 1964; Ajayi 1965; Wong 1973; Bauer 1994). Thomas Keith was a remarkable individual whom BMS missionary William Knibb reported as having worked his way from Jamaica to Africa, to be a missionary to the place where he believed he had come from originally as a boy-slave. Joseph Merrick spent six years in Cameroon, West Africa and translated the Gospel of Matthew (1846), Genesis (1847), and selections from John's Gospel (1848) in the dialect of the Isubu people in the Cameroons before he died at sea in 1849 at age 31 on his way from the Cameroons to England for medical treatment (Clarke 1850). Joseph Jackson Fuller who spent 43 years in the Cameroons (1845-1888) as a BMS missionary, is credited with the survival of the Baptist Missionary Society's work in the Cameroons over four decades up to the time of the German annexation of the Cameroons in 1884 (Stanley 1992, 109). W.A. Thompson spent over thirty years in Nigeria where he worked on the translation of the Bible and the Prayer Book into the Nupe and Hausa languages. He was made Superintendent of the CMS Mission at Ibori and Warri (Ellis 1913). Lennon also spent over thirty years as a Caribbean missionary in Nigeria where he had a remarkable career. He was made Canon of the Lagos Cathedral in 1929 and Archdeacon of Ondo in 1944. Lennon went to Nigeria to be tutor at St. Peter's College, Oyo and later built schools and churches in several parts of Nigeria. It is said that many of his former pupils rose to important positions as college heads, ministers of state, and university lecturers. He was awarded the MBE and CBE for his missionary work in Nigeria, where he also served for a time as member of the Legislative Council in Lagos (Ellis 1913).

By all accounts these missions from the Caribbean were essentially Caribbean initiatives. They emerged out of a context of rapid church growth just before the collapse of slavery. They represented the earliest

participation of missionaries from the margins of the British empire in a project which was generally regarded as the purview of metropolitan centers. These missions from the Caribbean had the effect of causing significant strategic adjustments within mission societies at the centre of empire (such as the Baptist Missionary Society, the Scottish Missionary Society, and the Church Mission Society) by not only being coopted in the Caribbean-initiated cross-Atlantic ventures, but also in presenting those western mission societies with the problem of having to construct an African policy in the mid-19th century (Russell 1973/74, 86-93).

Since the mid-19th century, it is evident that African Caribbean Christians have been responding to the Great Commission in ethnically marked ways and have been taking the Gospel to Africa and other parts of the diaspora. Today the tradition continues. Mention must be made of Ronnie and Heather Yearwood from Trinidad who were recently commissioned in Port-of-Spain for missionary work with New Tribes Mission in Guinea, West Africa. His story is interesting. Ronnie was a student on the St. Augustine campus of the UWI when his campus roommate attended an Urbana Student Missions Convention at the University of Illinois, put on by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship USA. His roommate returned from the Convention with a lot of literature on Christian mission. Ronnie read some of the literature and responded to a call to serve in Africa. He went to the mission field instead of his roommate. Also, Barbadian Dennis White and his Trinidadian wife, Esther, are now missionaries to Kenya. Guyanese Compton Blackburn and his family are serving in the Cameroon. A recent letter from the Blackburns laid bare their "earnest desire" that more of their brothers and sisters from the Caribbean would join them in French-speaking Africa. Hortense Salmon, a Jamaica nurse, recently retired after many years of service in a remote part of Haiti. The late George Beckford of Jamaica did outstanding work as a missionary and Bible translator in Bolivia, South America.

This model of ethnic mission to the Mother/Fatherland was by no means exclusive to continental Africa and its diaspora. There were others who also felt the Caribbean to be a good place from which a mission strategy could be developed to reach other ethnic-specific groups in other metropolitan centres. For example, while on furlough in Nova Scotia in 1889, Canadian Presbyterian missionary John Morton, argued that Trinidad might present the key to the conversion of India. He thought it was relatively easier to reach the Hindu and Moslem indentured labourers in Trinidad, some of whom would return to convert the masses in India (Mount 1983, 59-60). Alexander Falconer, also a Canadian Presbyterian missionary to Trinidad supported Morton's view

and urged that more missionaries be sent to Trinidad for the strategic purpose of reaching India. Falconer's view was that it was more effective to concentrate work in Trinidad given the fact that (a) the population of Trinidad was much smaller compared with the large masses in India, (b) the caste system in Trinidad was not as strong as in India, and (c) East Indians in Trinidad came under direct and constant christianizing influence day by day. The reality, however, was that more and more East Indian indentured labourers from the sub-continent chose to stay in Trinidad at the end of their contract rather than take the option of returning to India. And conversion to Christianity was not as easy as initial optimism suggested. It took years of hard labour in the field to achieve success in the mission among the East Indian population. Nevertheless, Christian mission to India and its diaspora from the Caribbean remained a live concern. In the last two decades, two Guyanese of Indian descent, Philip Mohabir and Patrick Sookhdeo, found a needy and open mission field in Britain among migrant Caribbean folk, as well as Asians and native Britons. In 1984, after years of missionary labours in Guyana and Great Britain, Mohabir founded The West India Alliance of Churches in the UK and pioneered an effective mission work (Caribbean Evangelical Communicator 1984, 6; see also Mohabir 1992; Sookdeo 1991).

Caribbean Christians from other ethnic backgrounds have also responded to the Great Commission and found ways to institutionalize their call to the mission field. They have made outstanding contributions to the Church in foreign lands. For example, Linda Lowe, a Jamaican Chinese, has spent over twenty years as a missionary in Hong Kong and China; Plymouth Brethren missionary Joseph Dainty, of Guyana, spent over 25 years working among the Amerindians in the Rupunnuni area, 300 miles into the interior of Guyana. His work among the Wai Wai tribe was recognized by the Government of Guyana in 1986 with the award of the Order of Service in the field of religion (Dowding 1994, 36-37).

## **Model # 2: Mission to Caribbean Youth**

The second model is from a different time period in Caribbean history. It is the mission to Caribbean youth. This model emerged at the end of World War II, in the context of a Caribbean in search of self-determination, decolonization and preparation for devolution of Empire. While nationalist sentiments were developing at full speed throughout the region and political leadership was charting a course for state control, emerging leadership of the church in the region began thinking

about the future of the Caribbean Church. That future, it was perceived, lay in the development of Caribbean youth (Jay 1962, 471-478).

The mission to Caribbean youth had several sources of origin. Just before the war ended, C. Stacey Woods, then Secretary General of InterVarsity Canada and the USA was marooned in Jamaica in 1944. He was on his way from Colombia, South America, to the US mainland when his "flying boat" broke down and was under repairs in Kingston harbour (Lowman 1983, 291-295; Woods 1975). He lost no time in making contact with local pastors in Kingston and learned of plans to open a University College of the West Indies in 1948. Woods went back to Canada and made arrangements for a Canadian staff member at McGill University, Cathie Nicoll, to visit Jamaica at the opening of the UCWI. Out of the first batch of 37 Nichol organized a Bible Study with seven students. Among the seven was a Barbadian medical student, Kenneth Standard, now Sir Kenneth Standard, retired Professor and head of the Department of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at the UWI. This was the beginning of the evangelical Christian mission to students, the InterSchool/InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in the Caribbean. West Indian students at the UWI, such as Trinidadian Ruby Bruce (Thompson), Guyanese Alvin Thompson and Barbadian Winston Crokendale, and Jamaicans Peter Morgan, Anthony Williamson, and others, helped develop this ministry in countries throughout the region. This ministry was seen as a model of indigenous mission, capable of generating its own local leadership. Others, such as Richard Roper and Alfred Sangster (Jamaica), Robert Quyntine, and Angela Badley (Barbados) played outstanding parts in shaping this model in Jamaica and Barbados.

But students are only a small specialized percentage of the youth population. The ministry of Youth for Christ, coming from the USA in 1947, took hold also in Jamaica and later spread throughout the region. The YFC movement, with its dynamic evangelistic activities brought the Christian message to a wide cross section of Caribbean youth. George Forbes, Roderick James, Gerry Gallimore, Stephen Sandiford, John Lewis and others helped pioneer this aspect of the youth ministry model throughout the region.

Another link in the emergence of this model was the development of Bible training institutes and theological seminaries in the immediate post-war period. This not only provided the local mechanism for training of Caribbean youth but also helped to deepen the process of indigenization and consolidation of the mission to Caribbean Youth. Such institutions include the Jamaica Bible College, the United Theological College, and the Jamaica Theological Seminary. Although founded earlier, the West Indies College and the West Indies School of

Theology (WIST) became integral to this mission vision. Likewise, the radio ministry of the Back to the Bible Broadcast with Jamaican William "Billy" Hall as the "Voice of Mission" for more than a decade also had its impact in building local missionary vision and action.

One particular institution which should be noted in this regard, is the now defunct International Missionary Fellowship (IMF) Training Centre in St. Ann, Jamaica. The IMF boot camp for the recruitment, practical training and commissioning of Caribbean missionaries came out of a missionary visit to Jamaica in 1962 of G. Christian Weiss from the Back to the Bible Broadcast of Lincoln, Nebraska, USA. Before coming to the Caribbean, Weiss had travelled in North Africa and saw the great needs of the mission field. On his return to the USA he helped raise US\$1 million for world missions. His visit to Jamaica in connection with the Back to the Bible mission was also used to explore ways in which Caribbean missionaries could be recruited, trained and deployed throughout the world. With Leonard Bewick, local head of Back to the Bible, and others, a local group (which included Dave Ho, Richard "Dickie" Bell, Alfred Sangster and others) was set up to plan a way forward. The outcome was the formation of the IMF, whose slogan was *"At the end of the age ... To the ends of the earth"*. Mr. Lloyd Cooke, Jamaica missionary, was appointed to coordinate the activities of the organization. Later, under American missionary Tom Nothern, the missionary training camp was set up in St. Dacre, St. Ann. For more than 10 years the IMF recruited, trained, sent and supported Caribbean missionaries until the organization went into decline in the 1970s. By the end of the 1970s, more than 27 missionaries had been sent out by the IMF, including George Beckford (Bolivia), Hortense Salmon (Haiti), Hermerde and Phyllis Thomas (New Guinea/Zimbabwe), and Charles Cropper and his wife (Nigeria) as reported by Jamaica's *Sunday Gleaner* on 6 July 1975. The Thomases are currently serving as missionaries in Russia.

Mention should also be made of the presence of Youth with a Mission, which, for the past 25 years, has been recruiting, training and sending young Caribbean missionaries to other regions of the world (Youth with a Mission 1985).

While intentionally constructed as "Home Mission", the mission to Caribbean youth was at all times not only conscious of its strategic role in building the Caribbean church but also playing its part in the worldwide task of Christian mission. This model has consistently maintained good reciprocal working relationships with the local church in which the local church supports and encourages this missionary outreach to the region's youth and directly benefits from it in its own training, development, and liturgical programmes.

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### **Model # 3 Mission to the New Urban Poor**

A third model of Caribbean mission in response to the Great Commission is the contemporary model of a mission to the new urban poor. In one sense, all the missionary thrusts in the Caribbean have been missions to the poor. The Baptist Mission among the enslaved Africans in Jamaica was a mission to the poor. The Presbyterian Mission to the East Indian indentured servants in Trinidad was a mission to the poor. Except perhaps the mission to students, which in effect, was a mission to create a Christian elite (working as it did among those privileged to have access to higher education), the mission to youth was in the main a mission to the poor. These missions have all been engaged in conditions of poverty, marginality, and social deprivation.

Within the first three decades of post-Independence, however, the Caribbean Church, in response to the new social and economic order, and in response to the Great Commission, has been engaged in developing new models of ministry to the poor. Despite structural adjustment programmes (or indeed because of them) a new class of the poor has emerged. This class is semi-educated, young and urban. Concentration of development activities in urban centres increased rural/urban drift and intensified urban poverty. The impact of these developments has caused increased marginalization, deeper destitution, and other social problems for the urban poor (Le Franc 1994; see also Smith 1989). As a General Secretary of the Jamaica Council of Churches argued,

the Church's missionary cannot ignore the suffering of the poor, the weak, and the voiceless . . . The failure of many national development policies and economic strategies has resulted in bad housing, hunger, malnutrition and unemployment. The Christian Church cannot ignore this challenge in the name of the crucified and risen Christ and in the cause of justice. If the Church is faithful to the demands of the gospel of Jesus Christ it must challenge any social order which deprives God's children of their dignity and worth (Davis 1988, 51).

What therefore is new about the mission to the new urban poor is its intense social focus, its multi-dimensional approach to and demand upon Christian mission, its strong rootedness in community matters and its need for a new theological understanding of mission.

Four examples of this model can be cited from the environs of metropolitan Kingston, Jamaica. These examples are taken from four separate Christian denominations.

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## **St. Andrew Settlement**

Since 1962, the Anglican Parish Church of St. Andrew has been engaged in mission work among some 30,000 residents on the fringes of the urban core of the city. This community of the poor emerged along the track of the Kingston railway and settled near Three Miles. It was called "Moonlight City" because of its derelict condition as well as the fact that most of the activities of the residents took place nefariously at night. The church established a mission house, St. Thomas Mission, which is now the centre of the community. The mission is engaged in all aspects of the life of the community—housing, sanitation, basic education, health care, day care, job placement, skills training for employment opportunities, library service, night literacy classes, Sunday school, catechism, baptism, confirmation, evangelism, etc. A summer mission, "Operation Fresh Air," has been developed to take the children from this inner city community on day trips to visit other parts of the island. Although conceived and developed by the Anglican Church, other churches, organizations and individuals from other denominations have been involved in the work of the St. Andrew Settlement. Mr. John Levy has spent over 30 years working as the church's director of the mission.

## **The Mel Nathan Institute**

The United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman has several major social projects within its churches. Perhaps one of the largest is the Mel Nathan Institute (MNI). This project is located in Hannah Town, a depressed community of about 20,000 people in the inner city of western Kingston. Pioneered by United Church minister, Rev. Maitland Evans, the MNI has for the past two decades served as the focal point of the community. In this very politically tribalized, violent and economically depressed community, the church runs a basic school, a skills training centre for the development of local handicraft, dressmaking and woodwork. It has more recently developed an ambitious programme of providing service and training for the tourism and hospitality industry. The MNI operates a Christian guest house and conference facility in Upper St. Andrew, as well as a commercial store to merchandise its manufactured products. The St. Johns United Church which is attached to the mission carries out the pastoral and evangelistic work of the mission.

## **The Catholic Missionaries of the Poor**

The Roman Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Kingston has

major projects in the urban inner city which minister to the poor and destitute. The Mustard Seed Community run by Trinidadian priest Gregory Rankisoon and the St. Patrick's Development Foundation, run by Msgr. Richard Albert are two of the major Catholic projects in western St. Andrew, in metropolitan Kingston.

Significant for Catholics in Jamaica is the apostolate ministry of Jamaican Chinese Catholic priest, Fr. Richard Ho Lung. The singing priest, as he is popularly referred to, founded the Brothers of the Poor as counterparts of Mother Theresa's Sisters of Charity. The Brothers of the Poor and Sisters of Charity are striving to receive favourable dispensation from the Pope to establish a new order of workers called Missionaries of the Poor. These Catholic missionaries of the poor work among the city's abandoned and destitute street people, the lepers, the infirm and the mentally disturbed. They operate centres for care, training, worship, bread-making and other self-supporting ventures. Jacob's Well and the Laws Street Trade Training Centre in downtown Kingston were points of special interest for the Pope when he visited Jamaica in 1993.

### **Holistic Healing Ministry**

The Jamaica Baptist Union supports an important project of the Bethel Baptist Church in Half Way Tree, in the centre of metropolitan Kingston and St. Andrew. Established in the 1970s as a counselling service of the church, the increased demand for the services offered led to the development of a three-pronged ministry involving Counseling Services, Medical/Pharmaceutical Services, and Community Outreach to nearby Ambrook Lane where social work, basic health education and a Sunday School ministry are conducted by the church.

The healing Ministry was developed by Jamaican Psychiatrist, Dr. Anthony Allen, and developed over the years under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Burchell Taylor. Some 5000 persons a year make use of its services.

These community-based projects of the church emerged from recognition of the need of the poor to have access to basic health care and other social services, someone to listen to their stories of anguish and pain, and for the church to be actively engaged incarnationally in the life of the community. They provide a new pro-active role for the laity and often attract professionally trained lay members to give part or full-time service to direct these projects.

The increasing marginalization of the urban poor from mainstream society by economic and other factors has not only dislocated the enlarged urban inner city but has also created new social conditions

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which declining state resources are unable to address. As was the case in Jamaica in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of slavery in the mid-19th century, the church is once again in the decades of post-independence, stepping in when the state is unable to adequately address the social needs of the poor.

## **Conclusion**

As a sub-region of the Americas, the Caribbean, with its multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural background, has been a mission field for the past 500 years. Varieties of Catholic and Protestant missionaries have sought to "Christianize" and evangelize the populations of the sub-region, although it was not until the beginning of the 19th century that full-scale evangelization of the region received extensive and concentrated efforts. In the process the Church was successfully planted and a foundation laid for the eventual rise of a native Caribbean Church.

There are those who argue that the time has come for the Caribbean church to grow up and take its place in the world mission of the world church. I have tried to show in this paper that the Caribbean Church has been contributing to world mission since the very beginning of the modern missionary movement. Indeed, it must be noted that a decade before William Carey the so-called "Father of Modern Missions," set sail for India in 1793, missionary work was being done in the Caribbean by black missionaries such as George Lisle. Lisle also sought to make missionary connections with the black Diaspora in Halifax, Canada and London, England. In fact, it could even be argued that it was Lisle's initial contacts with British Baptists in England which, among other factors, spurred on the Baptists in Britain to establish the Baptist Missionary Society in 1792, the first Protestant body to be set specifically for the recruitment and supply of missionaries for mission fields.

The Caribbean Church has not only been responding to needs in foreign fields by recruiting, training and sending Caribbean missionary personnel to foreign lands, but also responding to needs at home, developing a strong sense of mission to its own people. The "Jerusalem" model in the Great Commission of Acts 1:8 has been evident among the Caribbean Church. As primitive as conditions were in the post-Emancipation period and indeed throughout the 19th century, the missionary vision of the Caribbean Church included the matter of theological and academic training and established theological and academic institutions to produce native clergy for the local church as well as for foreign fields.

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The response in the post-Independence period required new models of mission according to the new social and economic order. The impact of economic structural adjustment programmes and other social changes in Caribbean society evoked a new model of mission to the urban poor. The Caribbean's response to the Great Commission may have ebbed and flowed over time according to prevailing economic and social conditions. But from the fullest impact of the Gospel upon the sub-region in the 19th century the native Church has responded in ways which demonstrate its full awareness of the missionary obligation of the Church in response to the Great Commission.

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