

MORAVIAN MOMENT #14... AT THE CROSS ROAD

The Moravian Church, Eastern West Indies Province faced problems over the years not only from external sources, but from within as well. The abolition of slavery on the 1st August, 1834, while it brought freedom to the slaves, brought with it also, the demons of jealousy and suspicion, which hindered the work of the Church. The fact that the majority of the population was former African slaves, who came from different countries and tribes in Africa, exacerbated the problem. The West Indian Ministers were exposed to this jealousy and suspicion from their own people and some congregations felt that a West Indian was not good enough to be their Minister, thus helping to further discourage potential native Ministers. A real need existed, therefore, to raise the people to the point of appreciating and accepting their own talented men and women. The Church insisted that a good education was one of the bases of a good native ministry, and much was done through the schools and church towards this end. In addition, there was also the need for a deepening of the religious life among the people, for the climate of opinion and culture was full of superstition and low views of religion and morality.

The geographical isolation, the conditions of the plantation system in which the slaves were deliberately separated in order to destroy any sense of unity was carried over long after slavery and also impacted the Church. The destruction of self respect among the slaves, the lack of cohesiveness, the suspicion and jealous towards one another, all combined to create a formidable obstacle to the building up of a West Indian ministry, self respecting and looked up to by its own people. There was a need for a national consciousness and a Christian one at that, for a people whose mental and spiritual horizon was narrow and limited could produce individual Ministers of good ability, but would never bring forth a native ministry which would transcend political, geographical and insular prejudices and weld the people in various Islands into one Church, in one Province.

Those who began the Missionary work began with childlike simplicity, having no idea of the many difficult problems which they would pass on to their successors who inherited such a gigantic task. It is important to note however, that it is the responsibility of each generation to take up the far reaching tasks handed down and to solve the contemporary problems. The members of the Church grew up in the midst of these demoralizing and poisonous influences, it was extremely difficult to preserve ones walk with God in the midst of such an environment. In spite of the many difficulties, the Church has not only survived, but it has grown by leaps and bounds. It is to the credit of the Church and members, that so much has been accomplished in the midst of such circumstances.

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