ARCHIBALD JOHN MONTEITH: NATIVE HELPER AND ASSISTANT IN THE JAMAICA MISSION AT NEW CARMEL


EDITORIAL NOTE: When the Rev. Joseph Horsfield Kummer served New Carmel, Jamaica, he became well-acquainted with Archibald Monteith, a former slave who was then a prominent Helper in the Moravian Church on that island. The account of Monteith's life printed in the following pages is reproduced from a manuscript booklet in the Archives of the Moravian Church in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Dated 1853, the account is written in Kummer's own hand.

Archibald Monteith, a Helper in the Congregation at New Carmel, Jamaica, and a member of that church, often called on us, and during my official stay at that station during 1853 and part of 1854, I had many interesting and edifying conversations with him. He gave me at various times this account, or fragments of account of his life.—He was also a General Helper for all our stations in the islands, and at stated times, say once or twice a year made visits, to see and speak with the people, both in Churches and at their houses. He also frequently assisted me in the very large New Carmel Congregation by keeping the 2nd Meeting on Sunday, and always had something to say, to the point, in Monthly Missionary Prayer Meetings. I considered him a remarkable man. An eminent subject of divine grace; very humble; full of confidence in the Lord Jesus; believing with all his heart the glorious gospel, and delighting to make it known to his fellowmen. I was always much impressed by listening to his prayers & addresses.

—J. Kummer, 1853

I was born, as far as I can remember, taking into account the time when I left my native land, in the year 1799. I was born in Africa, and belong to the nation or tribe called Eboe's. My fathers name was ______. My mother was called Dirinejah; her father was a prince, and the daughter was named after the father. My name was Aneaso. Although my native land is a heathen land, and though my father was a heathen, and polygamy is generally prevalent, I can distinctly remember, that my father only lived with the above mentioned Dirinejah, with whom he had 4 children, three daughters, and myself was the only son. As an only son I was the favorite of my father with whom I generally labored in the field and provision ground, the yield of which is very much the same as here in Jamaica; yams, potatoes, Indian Corn, etc. etc. My sisters seldom went out of the house, but kept themselves within, according
to the custom of the land; and especially if any one of the male sex came to see us; they would closely conceal themselves.

The God or Being in whose existence every heathen believes, because the works of creation declare this, was called Tschuku, or Tschuku-damma. He makes the thunder and lightning etc., etc. We only prayed to him when we were sick, so that he should speedily make us well. Did we recover and get well again, then there was an end to the prayer. When death came, then every thing ceased to be, at least so we thought, and as is customary among the heathen, we did not trouble ourselves about futurity. As to what is called “pleasures,” I did not know much, for I was too young; Still the festival of Tattooing, is best remembered by me, for as the Son of a Prince’s daughter, I was soon to attain unto that honour, in view of which I very much rejoiced, but you know, my minister, that it was never performed upon me, for I left my native country before it could be done. I know however how it is done and have witnessed the process, young as I was. The process is as follows.

When a number of young people, of distinguished parents, have attained the proper age, the men who perform the tattooing are sent for; then a large place is cleared and cleansed, a mat is laid down, and a hole dug, to catch the blood. Then one after the other lays down on the mat, in order to have the operation performed whilst a numerous company stand in a circle around the place. The operation takes from half an hour, to an hour, to have it performed. Each tribe has its own special sign; that of the Eboe is one of the most difficult and painful, as the skin is so loosened from the head, that after the healing has taken place the skin hangs over the eyes for a considerable space. Although the operation is very painful and the loss of blood so great that those standing around can see and hear the blood running, the suffering subject, for the sake of his honour must not make the slightest noise, or give any token of feeling. When the cutting is accomplished, the wounds were rubbed with powder and salt, and to the one tattooed was given a piece of yam or corn cake which he must eat, and apparently enjoy, as though he felt no pain. After some time, when the wounds have been healed, and the lad comes for the first time into company, there is great rejoicing and festivity. He is highly honoured; receives many presents, and can obtain any rich woman whom he desires, for his wife. The operation, however often ends in death. If the one so wounded and martyred, does not remain steadfast, and unflinchingly goes through the whole process, but becomes weakened, or cries, or shows any feeling,—he will be derided and ridiculed as long as he lives. As painful as this process is, yet, for the sake of the honour, the most desire it and rejoice to have it performed.

When I was about 10 years old, a young man came frequently to see us; he wished to have my sister for his wife. One day he asked me to go with him to the market place. Knowing nothing about the distance to the place, I, at once complied, without saying anything to my father, who no doubt would not have given his consent. After we had walked for a whole day, we came to an acquaintance of the young man, and here we remained for several days. Then we all went together to the market which we soon reached. Here I saw a great many things I had never seen before, and which greatly astonished me; but most of all was I pleased with the great water, the ocean.
Then my companion and guide said, "Go nearer to the water, then you can see every thing better." I did so, and leaning on a Kenepp tree, looked around, and was filled with astonishment to see the boats floating on the water, and most of all to see the great water itself. A man said to me; "Come into my boat, and try how you like the sailing about." I said, "No, that I will not do." Then he suddenly came upon me took me up, and carried me to his boat, and put me in.—Now I immediately knew that I would be made a slave, for I remembered that during the whole day I had frequently heard, when my guide was asked;—"What are you going to do with boy; Sell him?["] say in reply; "Oh no; he is a great man's son!" But still when the right man came along, he sold me, and I could do nothing but to call to him; "tell my father where I am, and salute him." I was frightened and wept a little, but soon comforted myself, because I was fond of sailing in the boat. The other slaves screamed loud, and would neither eat nor drink. I however soon fell asleep. When I awoke I saw a large ship before me. I was not a little astonished to see such a beautiful house floating on the water; and when I was put on board nothing surprised me more, than to see the Captain with white face and hands, and with shining black feet without toes; (he wore boots) On the ship, there was scarcely any one else to be seen, as it was towards evening, and getting dark; hence I was not a little surprised the next morning, when various holes were opened to see 600 or 700 slaves brought up on deck, to whom yams were given for food, and rum for drink. Myself and 11 other boys were taken by the Captain into the cabin. We were happy; skipped about, eat and drank, and yet I felt very sorry when I saw the other slaves come up from the hold of the ship daily, into the air, and heard their heartrending cries of anguish; fathers & mothers longing for their homes and children, and often would neither eat nor drink, and were so strictly watched and held in such rigid confinement.—

We reached Kingston, Jamaica safely, and here the sale of the slaves began. We lay in the harbour about six weeks; as yet I had never got on shore, which I wished very much to see. I then said to the Captain; "Let me go on shore!" he answered, "No, you shall remain with me and be my servant!" I answered, "No! that I do not wish, I want to go on shore, if you will not let me go, I will jump overboard." In the afternoon the Captain consented, and immediately as I reached shore, a gentleman came and bought me, together with 11 other slaves, for our future master and drove us all into his yard. After 8 days, our new master, Mr. Monteeeth, to whom the Estate Kepp, which is near to New Carmel, belonged, sent for us. Having reached that place, we had one weeks rest given us; then the others went to the field-work, and me the manager of the Estate took as his servant in the house, and called me Tobi. In the course of a year Mr. Monteeeth took me as servant in his house, and I cannot but say, he always treated me the same as a father; Yes, minister, the Lord be praised, I had no cruel master like some other slaves. After 8 years my master went to England, and sent me with other children to Savannah La Mar to attend school. I however saw no use of learning or going to school & church, and I never heard, from those who had charge of us, a word about God, or about what was done in Church. I learned nothing; but we jumped, and danced and romped, and did pretty much as we pleased.—

After 3 years Mr. Monteeeth returned. We then went back to the Kepp. Not long
after, however my master died, and I then belonged to his son, and he made me “overseer.” When I was in my 20th year I lived with a young woman; I did not know that it was wrong and sinful. After some years, the Kepp was sold, and we moved to Dunbarken, where I became the head manager for Mr. Monteeth’s large property. Here one day Mr. Monteeth’s children were baptised, by the Parish Minister of the Church of England. On this occasion the minister said to me; “Come Tobi, in 8 days I will baptise you, gratis.” This minister however did not return, but another one came, and I was obliged to pay him 8/ (8 shillings) for the service. He baptised me, and named me Archibald John Monteeth. He also baptised many others at the same time; all done in the Church at Black River, without saying a word to us, as to why we were baptised, and what it meant; this no one told us. It had become customary to baptise, and we negroes thought, that if we are baptised, then when we died, we would come into a beautiful place. That there is a Saviour who died for us, and that we are to love and serve him; of this we heard nothing.

In the year 1824, the gentleman to whom Paynestown Estate belonged, Mr. Coke, returned from England. Soon after this, late one Saturday evening as I was returning from Lennox to Dunbarton, I met a woman coming from the spring (well) from where she was fetching water for Mr. Coke. I asked her, why she came so late to the well? She answered: “You see, tomorrow is Sunday, and then there is singing and prayer in the morning!” I said; “Is that so! I would like to know whether they would allow strangers to listen!” The woman said; “Oh yes! I heard Missus say, she wondered why no one from the Cottage came to the meeting which Mr. Coke keeps every morning especially for these people.” This answer went through me as though something had pierced my heart. I went home, thought the whole night about it, and concluded to go on Sunday to Paynestown. I told it to my companions, and invited them to go along; but they called me a fool, to think that I would go to white people whom I did not know; and they tried to persuade me not to go. I had however great uneasiness and felt restless the whole week, and when Sunday came, I dressed myself, said nothing to any one, and went, thinking to myself, they can do no more than to turn me off and send me back. When I drew near to Paynestown I thought: “What shall I say, if they ask me, why I came?” Still I fared better than I had thought. As soon as I stepped into the large garden that surrounds the house, the herdsman, who stood near the house, saw me, and called to his Missus; “Mrs. Coke, here comes Archie Monteeth, to say goodmorning.” Mr. Coke answered from within the house “That is good, I am glad to see him.” I waited a short time near the entrance; then a bell was rung, and we went in to morning prayer; I, for the first time in my life. Mr. Coke opened the Bible, and read. What he read I do not know, also, understood but little, for I knew of no Saviour, no salvation, no grace; nothing! but nevertheless, I shall never, never! forget that hour! What I felt I cannot express. I felt such a power, as of a chill seizing my whole body. I could say nothing, but went home and told the others, what I had heard and felt. “Good,” said they, “next Sunday we all go with you.”

On Monday I met Sister Elizabeth Dickenson on the street. (an aged Helper Sister of Carmel Congregation whom I also knew well J.H.K.) Her parents had belonged to the Congregation at Old Carmel, but at that time she was not yet awakened, had
however heard from her parents something about Jesus. I told her that I had been to Paynestown to prayers, and how I felt to hear God's word. She went the next day, and felt the same as I did; and after that we went every evening to Paynestown, where Mr. Coke had evening prayer.

Every Sunday a goodly number from our plantation, and also from other plantations accompanied me to Paynestown. I asked the people to go along, and many a one came. At this time there was no minister in the neighborhood, but Mr. Coke was a good religious man, and always read prayers in his family, and he allowed any one to be present, and was glad to see the people come.

On one Sunday Mr. Coke requested us to go to Hopeton with him; a minister was to keep a meeting there that day; we all followed Mr. Coke. Having reached Hopeton, good old Mrs. Senior came to me and said; "Now, Archie Monteeeth, I rejoice to see in you a negro who loves Jesus, and because you love Him, I also love you, and will lead you to an instructor, and physician for your soul." She then lead me to Br. Ellis, who spoke very kindly and affectionately to me, and put down my name as a Candidate. From this time forth we attended the meetings of the Brethren which were held every 8 weeks at Hopeton by Br. Ellis who came from Mesopotamia. Mrs. Cooper a pious white lady who also always went to Hopeton, asked me one day whether I could read, and on my answering, No! she offered to teach me to read. Although I had to bear with such mockery on this account, namely, that I wished to read the white peoples book, all this did not confuse me, and disturb or hinder me from going for instruction to Mrs. Cooper as often as possible; and Oh, how often have I already thanked my Saviour that I can read his word for myself.

One Sunday Mrs. Coke asked me, "Archie, who is the woman who always comes with you to prayers?" I said, "That is Elizabeth Dickenson." Upon this she called Elizabeth to follow her, while I, at the same time remained below, in company with the white nurse, who in the course of conversation said; "The people here in Jamaica are so wild; never keep Sunday, but dance and carry on the whole day." I asked her; "Is it a sin to dance?" and was not a little frightened when she said, "Yes!" for I was passionately fond of dancing. She also spoke of bad living, namely, that some men were living with several women. This also struck my conscience, for I was living with 4 women, without thinking it was sin to do so. In Africa this was done, and here in Jamaica we saw many white men, who were called gentlemen, and seemed to be respected, do the same. Although I had heard God's commandments and my heart went out after Jesus Christ, the blessed Saviour, and I wished to follow him, yet you must remember, minister we were in great darkness and ignorance. There was so much that I did not properly understand, and I had no clearness to distinguish between what was right and wrong. The difference or contrast between Master and slave, between white and black, was so great, that I did not venture to ask. I was timid and backward to do so. I was so much the more thankful, when soon after this conversation with the nurse, Mr. Coke called upon me to come to him, and ask him, if there was any thing I did not understand. Many such opportunities I afterwards made
use of, and gained blessing for my heart, and especially by this means, by the blessing of the Lord, I gained much selfknowledge.

The whole time since I had become acquainted with Jesus my Saviour, and was in my first love to him, Mr. Monteeuth my master, was very hard towards me. If I was sick, or if every thing on the plantation did not go according to his wish, he said, “This comes from your walking to Paynestown to pray!” he could not bear to think that I should become pious, and as his riches seemed to dwindle down more and more, & grow less and less, and he had many debts, it came so far last that we were no more allowed to go out of the place in the evenings, as it would have been easy for the creditors to catch us up, and sell us. The keeping away from the meetings of the awoken made my heart cold; I did not any more feel the love and warmth in my heart as before, but this did distress me. I complained of my distress to a dear Christian friend, who once came on the plantation. He said; “Archie, you are now placed in the school; you are tried; pray fervently that the Saviour may let the Sun, which is behind the clouds to you, shine forth again.” And so I found it; through persevering prayer, my Saviour granted me deliverance from this cold state, and my heart felt again as it had before.

The following circumstance was very remarkable to me soon after I passed through this spiritual dryness. The woman before mentioned, whose name was Christina, and who at first showed me the way to Paynestown, lived near that place. Being the first person through whom I was incited to seek the gospel salvation, I always since that time had a particular affection for her, and visited her every Sunday. One Sunday I came to see her as usual, and found her very sick. I asked; “Christina, do you pray? and what do you pray?” She answered, “I pray, if I have done sin, Jesus forgive me.” I told her, “You must not say, if I have sinned. You have sinned, and we all sin and are the cause of the death of Jesus, and so also you; say rather, Lord Jesus have mercy upon me and forgive my sins.” I moved nearer to her bed, and said, “say this after me Christina.” She said it; “Lord Jesus etc. etc.["] “Oh, say it again!” she did so, but had hardly finished the last word, when she sank back, and expired! Her soul was gone!—

I thanked my Lord that I could still in the last hour show the soul the way, who first showed me the way to the place where I could hear about and learn to know Jesus!

In those times Saturday and Sunday was given us to work for ourselves. Sunday was also market day. When there was no Church here, there was some service every 8 weeks at Paynestown or at Hopeton, and always morning prayer, at other times on these Sundays we worked in the field in our grounds. When I was once busily occupied on a Sunday digging holes to plant my yams, the thought suddenly came into my mind! “How is this; a commandment of God says; Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy etc. etc. and how do you keep that commandment, missing the morning prayer, and doing work you might do on Saturday?” While I was thinking over this, and reflecting, I felt the presence of God so powerfully, that I threw down my hoe, and seemed to be necessitated and could not do otherwise than fall down on my knees in the hole I had dug, and earnestly prayed my Saviour, to let me find his way and
will, and begged him to counsel and help me! He heard me. I arose with a feeling and strong conviction that my laboring on Sunday was displeasing to him, for the Sabbath was given to be kept holy, and he gave me the firm assurance, that if I would follow him, he would supply my needs, and provide for me that I should never want. And this the faithful Saviour has done until this day. I never again from that day to this touched my hoe on Sunday, but rose up very early on Saturdays and labored diligently, and this the Lord has blessed much more than when I labored on Sunday. Oh, its wonderful how I have been prospered! In every thing that concerns temporal things too. Why only think! I now own 15 acres of good land right around my house, that is more than any other negro in this whole neighbourhood, and all good land, and brings forth wonderfully! I have been richly rewarded!

On one occasion when I attended the religious service at Hopeton, Mrs. Cooper asked me, whether I did not wish to become a Communicant, (we then had no church here at Carmel, and persons were confirmed at Black River in the Parish Church) and she advised me to go to the Superintendent of the Parish Church at Black River. This I did. However he asked me, how I lived, and said, I must be lawfully married, he did not allow any one to come to Communion, who was living with a woman without being thus married. I would gladly have complied with this, but the person with whom I lived in one house, hated the gospel and scolded as often as I went to the meeting. I prayed a long time that the Lord would change her heart, but her hour was not yet come. I could not persuade her to go with me to the Church, and as I had a desire for the Communion I part ed entirely from her, and lived half a year alone, and can testify before God, that in that time I did not think of nor follow after sinful desires and inclinations. I was at that time so happy in my Saviour; he was so near to me, whether I walked, or labored, or rested, just as though he were at my side. I could speak and pray to him so confidentially.

In Paynestown I had seen a young person who loved the Saviour and visited the meetings regularly. Her name was Rebecca Hart, and I thought she would be a good and suitable wife for me. I made this known to my mistress Mrs. Monteeth, but she dissuaded me from marrying any one except a person from the same Estate as myself. This I could not do, and so gave up the idea for some time, but endeavoured to persuade other believers, who were living together as man and wife, to be married in the church. For example Elizabeth Dickenson and her husband. When my Master & Mistress heard their bans published in the Black River church, God changed their minds, and they allowed me to be married; and this took place. On Sunday the 8th of January 1826 we were married in Black River. As it was also market day, the church was quite filled with people, the most of whom laughed at us, and mocked us, that we, black people would thus be married. The minister saw this and spoke to them so earnestly and sharply; set before them their own sinful way of living so forcibly, that at once the greatest silence prevailed. After we were married we attached ourselves to the church at Black River, and so remained, until 1827 when it was concluded to build a Brethren’s Church here, and which became the New Carmel church. Until the house was erected and finished, our new minister Brother Scholefield lived at Hopeton. Oh! how we rejoiced now to have our own minister. The first sermon of Br. Scholefield
was preached on Good Friday, and was from the text I Cor: 2,2. “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

It made a deep impression on us all, and this was increased, when on Easter morning, the Easter morning Litany was prayed, on the open place before Hopeton house. We were all quite overcome. It was as if we could see before us, the Saviour who also died for us, and for us rose again. We felt his presence very sensibly.

On the first Sunday after the New Carmel house was finished, I, together with some others was received as a Candidate. This took place in the hall of the house, and 8 weeks later, I was received as a Congregation Member. We now visited our dear Carmel every Sunday; Br. Scholefield preached and conducted service in the hall. At that time there were 12 Congregation Members.

Soon however the faithful Saviour deemed it good, in this time of spiritual refreshing, to visit me with severe trial and affliction. He laid me upon a sick bed, on which I suffered and lingered for 10 months. Rheumatism had so seized upon me, that I was quite contracted and crippled, so that I could neither move, nor use either hands or feet, and had to be fed like a little child. No one thought it possible that I could recover. All counsel, advise, and means of various kinds seemed useless, though I had the best nursing and attention from my Master and Mistress and Mrs. Cooper. All seemed unavailing, until at last a coloured man gave me something to drink; a tea prepared from a bush that grows here. That made my mouth so sore, that I felt very bad, but when the mouth got better, I also felt better otherwise, and was able to walk, and again received the use of my limbs. The Lord be praised for his blessing!

As soon as I got better I was confirmed at Carmel, and appointed and accepted as a Native Assistant or Helper. For the perfect strengthening of my body and limbs, Mr. Monteeth advised me to go and bathe daily in the sea; to this also the Lord added his blessing, and I became well and strong. But not only did I become healthy in my body; the Lord also did good to my soul. My heart burned with love to the Saviour, who redeemed me the Chief of sinners by his precious blood, and delivered me from darkness and the power of the devil. And this blessedness I sincerely and earnestly wish may be given to all other people. Whenever I could, I made known to them my Saviour as the friend of sinners. For instance, I once spoke with a man about Christian marriage—a third person was listening, and he was persuaded to come to Carmel the next Sunday, where the proclamation of the gospel he heard, made such an impression on him, that he and his wife immediately had their names entered as Candidates & asked me to come to Petersvale to keep meetings; this I did, and the consequence was, that on the next Sunday, all from there soon came to New Carmel and many soon became Congregation Members.

I also often went to Woodlands, to invite the people there to come to church; kept meetings and read the Bible, which they liked very much. But the manager soon forbid this to be done in future. Still, the desire to hear of Jesus was so great, that only few allowed themselves to be kept from the meetings by the threatenings of the man-
ager. Among them was one man, who always excused himself for staying away, by lying, and to this day, that man is a poor wandering sheep who does not know nor love Jesus.

In Hampstead also, the home of my wife, I often held meetings. And there the first one I held after my severe sickness, remained especially impressed upon me. The house was crammed full of people. I first read the Bible, then I spoke, and while speaking, there came over me such a feeling of the presence of our crucified Saviour, and I felt so powerfully that I was not redeemed with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, that it caused me to rise up (for I was seated while I kept the meeting) and my mouth overflowed with that which I felt in my heart. What I felt and experienced in that meeting, I cannot express. It appeared to me, that so near before my spiritual eyes, and before my heart, I had never yet felt my Saviour, my Jesus, and I thought I could understand something of what Paul said, when he was caught up into the third heaven. All present were deeply moved, and all went home so quietly and silently, that they showed what they felt. One brother pressed my hand with deep emotion and said; “Brother Archie, the Lord has not raised you up from your sick bed for nothing, you shall help to strengthen others.”

In the year 1832, one morning, Mr. Monteeth told me that the slaves around Montego Bay at the North side, were revolting, and setting fire to properties, in order to become free. I could hardly believe it, but alas! it was too true. Very soon sentinel posts were placed in various localities, and on Sundays there were often 50 soldiers to be seen at New Carmel, who were placed there to observe how the people would behave; whether they would take part in the rebellion etc. etc. Many negroes allowed themselves to be frightened from coming to Church, yet, as regards the most of them, so great was their hunger to hear the word of God, that the fear of man, and the red coated soldiers could not keep them away from Church. This state of affairs, however, did not last long, as the magistrate saw that this whole district kept quiet and orderly and the soldiers were ordered away.

Soon after this, the preparation time for freedom began, that is, children under 6 years were free. House servants were to work 4 years, and field laborers 6 years, and then full freedom was to take place. This arrangement Br. Scholefield read to us in the Church; but it did not excite general joy, for the people did not suppose that freedom was so far distant.

In many respects however we had cause enough for thankfulness. Many who formerly were hindered by hard treatment of their masters, from going to church, could now go unhindered, and to many who had grown cold and unconcerned and indifferent freedom gave a new impulse to attend the house of God. Even the old and weak, who were excused from hard field labor, came now to church from miles around Carmel, and although angry managers told them “if you can go to Carmel to church, you can also work,” and again employed them in the field; yet even this did not keep them from Church. Carmel church filled up more and more, the number was so great that outside of the church, under 3 separate trees, meetings were held by Br. Laslie
and Hamilton and myself. As often as my time allowed I visited among the people, read to them the Bible, and kept meetings. I knew nothing more blessed than to show poor sinners to Jesus, and the faithful Saviour let it become true in me poor sinner, that He was strong in the weak; he often so evidently blessed my visiting among the people, that in eternity I shall not be able to thank him enough.

Just now a very remarkable circumstance comes to my mind, which verifies what I have just said.

I often visited the places now belonging to the New Hope district; and here the people were particularly hungry to hear of Jesus Christ. At Mount Edgecomb there was a married overseer, who continually sought to draw the young people into sinful ways and doings; and now, they were not any more willing to do such things, for, as they said, “Archie Monteeth had told them, and read to them out of the Bible, that such life is sin, and they would be excluded from the Congregation, if they would not renounce these things.” This made the overseer so angry, that he complained to the Inspector of the plantation, that I, as he said, kept the people from 6 to 12 O’clock in the night, and therefore made them unfit for work the next day. The Inspector wished to see me, and I went to him to Savannah La Mar. He asked me, why I kept the people up so late etc. etc. I said “that I dont do; we sing and pray, but at 9 O’clock each goes to rest etc.” Then he asked about many things and we had a long conversation; at the end of which he said to me; “Good; Archie Monteeth, I give you full permission, on the 7 Estates over which I am inspector, to teach the people as much as you like. I see you dont do any harm with it.” Then he reached out his hand to me and continued, “Upon my word, Monteeth, the more I speak with you, the more I like you.” and then he asked all the people on the Estate whether I should continue to teach them, and all begged him; “Yes Massa, let him teach us.” Upon this repeated before them all the permission he had already given me.

A short time after, the master of several plantations returned from England. On his other plantations not situated in this locality; the negroes had received and welcomed him with dancing, and noisy demonstrations of joy. I had heard of this, and warned the people in this neighbourhood, not to receive and welcome their master in such a heathenish manner. The Master came with the above mentioned Inspector to this Estate, and was not a little surprized and astonished, to find the people so silent and quiet. He said to the people, “Come up to my house this evening, then you can dance and play.” Upon which all answered him. “Massa we are Christians, we will not play and dance before you, but we will pray for you.” “Good,” said he, “then come up and pray for me!” The people did so in all simplicity; went up to the residence, and sang hymns, and then Br. Pinnock a Helper, read the Bible, made an address, and kneeled down and prayed. The Master and Inspector also kneeled down with them, and afterwards all went quietly home.—I was present on a neighbouring Estate, in order to hear how the people would behave, and I was filled with thankfulness when I heard that they had remained firm, and kept the promise they had made.

On the next morning I visited the Estate. As soon as the Inspector saw me, he said to the Master; “Mr. Weddesburne, see here, this is the man who keeps the people from dancing!” Upon this he called me into his house, and placed a chair for me to
be seated. He asked, “Why do you keep the people from dancing?” [“]Mr. Wedduburn,” said I, “not I, but the Bible forbids it.” Dr. Gilpin, another gentleman present said; “Did not David and Solomon dance, and had not Solomon 300 wives?” and Mr. Weddburn said, “show me a passage in the Bible where dancing is forbidden? You must tell me why you forbid this!” “That I will sir;” answered I, and said further, “Mr. W. you ask me a question, but pray allow me to ask you something first?” He said “Ask me whatever you wish!” I then said, “Mr. W. does not this property belong to you?” “Yes!” said he: “Did not your father give it to you, as your property?” Mr. W. said, “Yes, it is all mine.” I said, “suppose now you call one of your house-servants or slaves, and tell him, “go and do your work and make it thus and so, just as I tell you!” Now what would you do with him if he would answer; [“]No, no, so I will not do it, for so I did not do it for your father!”[”] Mr. W. answered, “Why I would throw him out of the house, and show him that he has to listen to me, and not to the father who is dead!” “Good,” said I, “now I have you where I want you Mr. W.” God has given all into the hands of his son who died for us and rose again, and is now seated at the right hand of God, and governs all. Him, we have to follow and obey, and therefore pleasure of that kind we must let alone, as is written Galatians 5, v. 19.20.21 “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envynings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.”—and we must seek after and follow that which is written in V. 22. to 24. [“]But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its affections & lusts.”

When I had said this Mr. W. arose, shook my hand, and permitted and exhorted me to visit and teach on all his plantations as much as I could, or would desire to do. Soon after he got into his carriage, called me, once more shook my hand, and drove off. Through this permission a clear way was opened to me, to have access to a number of Estates. I made known what had taken place to Mr. Dodridge, first magistrate in Black River, who was a dear Christian man, and always showed himself as a friend of the Mission, and as my friend. He often dissuaded me when I told him that I wished to buy myself free, because he thought, that as a free man, I would sooner be hindered from keeping meetings on the properties, than as a slave. But as I now had permission from most of the owners to visit their plantations without let or hindrance; —I longed to be free, the sooner the better. Mr. Dodridge advised me to have myself appraised or taxed by my Master Mr. Monteeeth, rather than by the law or court; as in the latter case it would come too high for me. The estimate he thought would be too high a payment for me to make. —That same evening I went to Mr. Monteeeth and made my request known. He tried in every possible way to bring me off from my plan and desire; promised me all possible liberties if I would remain just as hitherto etc. etc.—Still I longed for liberty, and although I knew that in 3 years, apprentice time would be over, and my freedom would come, my spirit still longed for immediate liberty.

The next morning my master came to me in my house, (I was not well) he said to
me, “Archie I have spoken with my family about your wish to become free. We always loved you, and you have been of great service to us; hence we will give you your freedom for £90. Sterling.” —I gave no answer. He said further; “You see, your services in one year are of more value to us than £30. that makes in 3 years £90.” I was still silent & thoughtful, for I had not expected that he would ask so much, and I was disappointed, and felt grieved! My master went away. —Next morning he came again and said, “Archie we have thought over the matter still further. You shall be free for £50. Hardly had my master left me, when I took £40. that I had ready[,] went to Mr. Montee and bought my liberty. The remaining £10. I paid soon after. He gave me my free paper, and herewith my slavery had an end. Oh, how full was my heart of thanks and praise that at length I had attained unto the blessing of Liberty. This day always remained to me a holy day. It was the 1st day of June 1837. Soon after I had come from my masters presence, I dressed myself in my Sunday clothes, and rode to Carmel, where Br. Collis as our minister lived and labored. All at Carmel were surprised to see me thus on a week day; all the people present looked at me with astonishment, as I stepped near the house; I took off my hat and waved it about my head, and cried out with a loud voice. THANK GOD! I AM FREE! —All rejoiced with me but especially my dear minister Brother Collis!

Several remarkable and honourable offers were soon made to me to become overseer on several plantations, but I did not feel inclined to accept any; till Br. Collis made me a proposal, to become a Helper for all the Mission Stations, and for my services to receive a salary of £12. a year. I immediately felt in my heart a cheerfulness to accept this and looked upon it as a call coming from my Lord; and since then I have been engaged in this office, visiting from Station to Station among the people as opportunity offers.

My dwelling place I bought in Rosehall, where I still live with my wife and daughter, whom the Lord gave us after 11 years, and I cannot wish this daughter, as well as another daughter born in the time of ignorance, and who is married to a teacher of one of our schools, anything better, than that they may learn to know & love and follow the Lord Jesus, as their highest good, more & more, and be preserved unto their end and brought to his everlasting kingdom.

On the 1st of August 1838 universal and entire freedom was proclaimed.

How often I have sincerely rejoiced, when I have heard from one and another, formerly slaves, whose overseer I myself a slave, was, that they would ever thank me, that in their state of slavery, I would not allow them to do certain things, which slaves on other places were not hindered from doing, for instance, I would never allow them to take or appropriate any thing that belonged to the Master which many slaves on other plantations were accustomed to do, hence as slaves they were not in the habit of stealing and much less did this enter into their minds, now since they were free. Many slaves brought upon themselves severe punishments by thinking that what was the property of the master, was also theirs. I taught the people very different! Oh! the yoke of slavery! how it oppresses the poor negro in many ways, how difficult in that
degraded state to avoid the bad, and to follow only Jesus. Oh, that all my black brethren and sisters, may soon hear the precious word of God, and follow its teachings, and Oh might all, and myself also, make good use of the opportunities we have to hear the precious gospel proclaimed in all its purity, and to take it to heart, and that our great concern and care be, to repent and believe, so that in the great day when we must render an account how we have made use of the precious word of God, our fathers in Africa who are still living in darkness and the shadow of death may not rise up in judgment against us. May we all obey and follow and love him through whose blood shed for us we may obtain eternal salvation.

What I feel, after having from time to time told you some fragments of my life and experience, I cannot express. That the faithful Saviour took me, a poor African negro slave, who was living in ignorance and sin, and taught me to know and love my Redeemer, and to be the means of teaching others also; that by his blessing I have learned to read, and even to write the English language, and done so much for me,—all this makes me so happy, that I cannot describe my feelings. How often I feel deeply abased at the affectionate manner, and the friendliness and esteem with which I am met by my dear ministers. How deeply am I humbled, when at Conferences one after another puts to me the question; “Br. Archie can you not soon go to this or that place.” Oh how I then feel myself unworthy of all the Lord has done for me, and that he permits me, to tell to others that glorious message which alone makes us blessed for time and for eternity. What the young and now sainted Br. North once said to me, when he shook my hand, remains indelibly impressed upon my heart; “Br. Archie your office is great, but your responsibility is much greater.”

If the Lord should ask me like Peter, “Whom do you say that I am?” I can answer with full assurance of faith, “Thou art Christ the Son of the living God.” For so my heart has experienced him. In Him I have found the words of eternal Life. The worst of mankind is not too bad for him, that he cannot have mercy. Of this I am a living proof. My only wish and prayer is, that the Lord who bought me a lost and undone sinner, who purchased me with his precious blood and delivered me from the power of Satan, not with silver and gold, but with his holy and precious blood; may more and more gain ascendency in my heart, that I may be and remain his property, until he calls me from this earth.

I can appear before him with nothing but what is expressed in the verse

The Saviour’s blood and righteousness
My beauty is, my glorious dress,
Thus well arrayed I need not fear
When in his presence I appear.

New Carmel, Jamaica, 1853

Notes

1. Most often the name is spelled Monteith. Another variation is Monteous.
2. The name Durl appears at this point in the German text. Missions-Blatt, 1864, p. 89.