

**'Wipe away All Tears from Their Eyes':
John Marrant's Theology in the Black Atlantic, 1785-1808**

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In the early 1790s, between one thousand and two thousand African Americans sailed from Halifax, Nova Scotia, in search of land and religious and political independence in Freetown, Sierra Leone. This voyage was an exodus of a portion of the black loyalists of the War of Independence, ex-slaves who had freed themselves by joining the imperial forces. Most of the black loyalists were returned to their former owners or sold into West Indian plantations as the patriot victory became imminent, but about three thousand sailed to Nova Scotia in British ships. Landlessness, poverty, and irksome work for white Nova Scotians turned the eyes of these black refugees to Africa.

The most articulate of the black Nova Scotians was John Marrant (1755-1791). A loyalist mariner in the Revolution, Marrant traversed the Atlantic and arrived in Halifax in 1785 as a missionary of the Huntingdonian Connexion, a Calvinist sect that had separated from the Church of England in 1783. Although he died in 1791 at the dawn of the exodus, Marrant articulated a vision of a holy black African community, a Zion united under God in a covenant of grace. One of several sects of black Nova Scotian Christians in Freetown, Marrant's followers sought to establish self-sufficient religious black communities, but their efforts failed under the pressure of the Sierra Leone Company.

The Sierra Leone Company, a British proprietary venture that had funded the transportation of the black Nova Scotians, tried to coerce them to work for the Company. In 1800, Marrant's followers helped lead a rebellion, which the Company quashed; the only rebel executed was a black Huntingdonian. Never able to extract the labor it desired from the Nova Scotians, the Company sought other workers, indigenous Africans and Jamaican Maroons. When the Company failed in 1808, the British Crown assumed control of the settlement, setting itself against the black Huntingdonians by destroying their church and engulfing the Nova Scotians with "recaptives," Africans removed from slave ships after the 1807 interdiction of the British slave trade. Landless and surrounded by blacks who were willing to work for the British authorities, the Nova Scotians were reduced to a dependent minority in the land that for some was to have been their own Zion.¹

¹ For the black refugees, from their self-liberation to their movement to Nova Scotia to their exodus to Sierra Leone and their battles with the Sierra Leone Company, see Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: WWW.MILLE.ORG/JOURNAL.HTML* WINTER 1999

The seeds of a vision of a holy black community first appeared in Marrant's 1785 *Narrative* recounting his life from his birth in New York to his ordination in England and his plans to evangelize in Nova Scotia.² Born a free black in 1755 in New York, Marrant traveled with his mother and siblings to St. Augustine and Georgia until his family settled in Charleston. By 1770, the teenaged Marrant was a tradesman's apprentice, a well-liked musician, and, as he came to perceive, a sinner. One day as he squeezed into a crowd attending a revival sermon, Marrant found himself eye to eye with George Whitefield. When Whitefield looked directly at the young black man and proclaimed, "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel," Marrant collapsed under the force of divine power. As Marrant cried out, Whitefield announced, "Jesus Christ has got thee at last." A new perception of his own depravity and of the devil's presence led Marrant into a mortification so profound that he lay three days without eating. Whitefield had promised to visit him, but instead sent a local minister, who prayed at the prostrate young man's bedside until, Marrant recounted, "the Lord was pleased to set my soul at liberty" and "my sorrows were turned into peace, and joy, and love."³ Marrant realized that he had been a sinner, prone to the

A History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 32-33, 56-77; James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone 1783-1870* (New York: Dalhousie University Press, 1976--Dalhousie African Studies Series); Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1976); Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 193-201; Gary B. Nash, "Thomas Peters: Millwright and Deliverer," in *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America*, ed. David G. Sweet and Gary B. Nash (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 69-85; and Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 14-73. The number of black Nova Scotians who went to Sierra Leone is not clear. Walker gives a figure of 1196 in the flotilla that sailed January 15, 1792 (Walker, *Black Loyalists*, p. 128), while a recent estimate that "nearly 2000" made the voyage in the early 1790s appears in Fyfe's Introduction to "*Our Children Free and Happy*": *Letters from Black Settlers in Africa in the 1790s*, ed. Christopher Fyfe, with a contribution by Charles Jones (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, - 39 - 1991), p. 1. In 1815, a figure of 2000 was offered as a count of all the early black settlers, Nova Scotians, Londoners, and Jamaicans, in Sierra Leone. See Robert Thorpe, *A Letter to William Wilberforce, Esq., M.P. ...Containing Remarks on the Reports of the Sierra Leone Company, and African Institute* (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1815), p. 3. An effort to situate the emigration from North America to Sierra Leone in the context of a "return" to Africa of various peoples of African descent appears in Antonio McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot: The Mortality Cost of Colonizing Liberia in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 20-37. An effort to place the African American emigres at the beginning of a Krio culture is Akintola Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone: An Interpretive History* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1989), pp. 1-59.

²John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Life of John Marrant, Of New-York, in North America, Giving an Account of His Conversion* (Halifax: J. Nicholson, 1808). Except where noted all quotations herein come from this copy, held at the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

³Marrant, *Narrative*, pp. 1-5. Like all commentators on Marrant, I rely on this *Narrative* for details of his life up to 1785. A general biographical sketch appears in *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Century: Living the New Exodus in England and the Americas*, ed. Adam Potkay and Sandra Burr (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 67-70. An analysis of Marrant's conversion is Peter H. Wood, "'Jesus Christ Has Got Thee at Last': Afro-American Conversion as a Forgotten Chapter in Eighteenth-Century Southern Intellectual History," *The Bulletin of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and Religion*, 3 (1979): 1-7. The best-known commentary on Marrant's *Narrative* by a literary scholar is probably Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), esp. p. 145.

vices of white Charleston and too willing to regale local ladies and gentlemen with his music. Alienated from his former companions, Marrant adamantly refused entreaties to play his instruments and to return to his apprenticeship. Family and friends took offense at his intense piety and his reprovals of their lax faith. Feeling persecuted, Marrant began to spend his days praying and reading scripture in the woods, finding there "clearer views into the spiritual things of God" and finally leaving Charleston for the woods. Again three days without food, Marrant prayed that God might "command the beasts to devour me, that I might be with him in his glory." As Marrant resigned himself to his own consummation, he found himself miraculously strengthened. God provided for him, Marrant was convinced, by protecting him from an attack by bears as well as by fortifying him with "sweet communion" as for a "great trial" soon to come. For in the wilderness Marrant befriended a young Indian hunter who taught him the Cherokee language and who brought him to an Indian fort, where, despite his companion's entreaties, he was imprisoned and condemned to death by fire. In agony, Marrant again accepted his own consummation, begging leave for prayer at the moment of his execution. Recited first in English and then in the Cherokee tongue, Marrant's eloquent prayers so impressed the executioner and the Cherokee ruler that the death sentence was lifted.⁴

Travelling among the Cherokees, Creeks, Catawars, and Housaws, Marrant realized that since "the white people drove them from the Atlantic shores," Indians "have often united, and murdered all the white people in the back settlements which they could lay hold of, man, woman, and child." Compelled by affection for his family, Marrant left the Cherokees and trekked toward Charleston. His family and friends, save his youngest sister, failed to recognize him as he emerged from the woods dressed "purely in the Indian stile." Moved to tears upon learning that he was deeply mourned by those who thought him devoured by beasts, Marrant revealed his identity. "I was then made known," Marrant recounted, "to all the family, to my friends, and acquaintances, who received me, and were glad, and rejoiced: Thus the dead was brought to life again; thus the lost was found."⁵

Known as the "free Carpenter," Marrant contracted to work on a plantation

Historians' views are given in Margaret Washington Creel, *"A Peculiar People": Slave Religion and Community-Culture among the Gullahs* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), pp. 104-106, and Frank Lambert, *"Pedlar in Divinity": George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 206-207. For an argument that Marrant's writing defined him as "colorless" (exactly the opposite of my argument here), see William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Biography, 1760-1865* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 35-36. A general view of African American conversion appears in Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 128-150.

⁴Marrant, *Narrative*, pp. 5-16. Marrant consistently used the language of strength, power, and self-transformation described in Charles Lloyd Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), esp. pp. 4-6, 99-105.

⁵Marrant, *Narrative*, pp. 16-20. An analysis of Marrant's relationship with the Cherokees is Benilde Montgomery, "Recapturing John Marrant," in *A Mixed Race: Ethnicity in Early America*, ed. Frank Shuffelton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 105-115.

outside Charleston sometime in the early to mid-1770s.⁶ Encountering slave children on the plantation, Marrant found that his "heart was much drawn out in Love for their souls" and he undertook to instruct them in religion. He began to give religious instruction to about thirty blacks. The seeds of the vision his followers carried to Sierra Leone, this "society" was the model he came to propose for a larger community of pious African Americans. "The Lord," reported Marrant, "was pleased often to refresh us with a sense of his love and presence amongst us." When the plantation mistress learned of her slaves' spiritual exercises, Marrant reported, she complained that Christianity would make the "negroes ruin'd." Thus it was not "long before they were made to pledge our dear Lord in the bitter cup of suffering," Marrant reported of his followers. Outraged after hearing black children pray, the mistress ordered the worshipers punished. The master, aided by employees, neighbors and his "negro-driver," raided a prayer meeting. "As the poor creatures came out they caught them, and tied them together with cords," Marrant reported, "till the next morning, when all they caught, men, women, and children, were strip'd naked and tied, their feet to a stake, their hands to the arm of a tree, and so severely flogged that the blood ran from their backs and sides to the floor, to make them promise they would leave off praying." Marrant managed to tell their master "that the blood of these poor negroes that he had spilt that morning would be required by God at his hands." Despite the floggings, the slaves continued worship at night in the woods. "Our faithful Covenant God" received all "the glory" of this worship, affirmed Marrant.⁷

Shortly after these events on the South Carolina plantation, Marrant was impressed into the British navy as the imperial crisis escalated into war. In a skirmish with a Dutch warship, Marrant's gun partner was killed and Marrant himself was hurt and "covered with the blood and brains of the slain." He returned to the service, but his wounds continued to plague him. At the war's conclusion, Marrant became one of numerous black refugees within the British Empire. About three thousand black loyalists, who had left their patriot masters to aid the British forces in the War of Independence, constituted one group of these refugees; the imperial authorities evacuated them from New York, Charleston, and Savannah. Marrant himself sailed to London, where he felt a "call to the ministry clearer and clearer." Exhorting successfully in the mid-1780s, possibly among the "black poor" of London, Marrant came to long for the salvation of his "brethren" and "kinsmen, according to the flesh," the black Nova Scotians, one of whom was Marrant's brother, a refugee from Charleston. Marrant was ordained May 15, 1785, at Bath, under the patronage of the Calvinist Countess of Huntingdon, who believed that "Providence"

⁶There seems little doubt that Marrant sought to type himself as a Christ figure with references to his carpentry, three-day periods, his agony, his acceptance of God's will, and his return from the dead. This typing is noted in Angelo Costanzo, *Surprizing Narrative: Olaudah Equiano and the Beginnings of Black Autobiography* (Westport, Ct., Greenwood Press, 1987), pp. 96-104.

⁷I have used here Marrant's "Fourth Edition," *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black, (Now Going to Preach the Gospel in Nova-Scotia) Born in New-York, in North-America ...Enlarged by Mr. Marrant, and Printed (with Permission) for his Sole Benefit, with Notes Explanatory* (London: R. Hawes, [1785]), pp. 30-33. This edition is held at the Boston Public Library; the current essay is the only analysis of it.

was calling the black evangelist to Nova Scotia. This combination of kinship, black and British identity, and awareness of the Atlantic world led Marrant to carry Huntingdonian theology to Nova Scotia.⁸

The Huntingdonian Connexion was a sect of Methodists that had seceded from the Church of England in 1783 in protest against John and Charles Wesley's acceptance of Arminianism. Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, was patroness of both Marrant and George Whitefield, who similarly resisted Arminianism.⁹ After much debate in the 1770s among Methodists about divine omnipotence and the predestination of the elect, the Wesleys declared themselves Arminians, while the Countess and her ministers declared their Calvinism in fifteen points of doctrine. Prominent among these doctrines was predestination: "Although the whole world is ... guilty before God, it hath pleased him to predestine some unto everlasting life. Predestination therefore to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secrets to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation."¹⁰

Marrant's ordination and transportation to Nova Scotia reflected the interest the Countess had shown since 1770 in evangelizing among "Indians and Negroes."¹¹ Marrant carried Huntingdonian theology to Nova Scotia, yet he also explored American forms of Calvinism in the late 1780s. Marrant began absorbing the New Divinity, the "consistent Calvinism" that flourished in New England from the middle of the eighteenth century to

⁸Marrant, *Narrative*, "Fourth Edition," pp. 36-40. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, pp. 31-32. For the "black poor" of London, see James Walvin, *England, Slaves and Freedom, 1776-1838* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), pp. 62-65. The most detailed book on the migration of the "black poor" to Sierra Leone is Stephen J. Braidwood, *Black Poor and White Philanthropists: London's Blacks and the Foundation of the Sierra Leone Settlement 1786-1791* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994).

⁹Horton Davies, *The English Free Churches* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 136-144. T. Watson Smith, *History of the Methodist Church within the Territories Embraced in the Late Conference of Eastern British America, including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Bermuda* (Halifax: Methodist Book Room, 1877), 1: 32-34, 174. Leland Scott, "The Message of Early American Methodism," in *The History of American Methodism*, ed. Emory Stevens Bucke (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), 1: 331-342. William Warren Sweet, *Methodism in American History*, rev. ed. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 45. For the Countess of Huntingdonian's loyalty to Whitefield, and his to her, see Helen C. Knight, *Lady Huntington [sic] and Her Friends; Or, the Revival of the Work of God in the Days of Wesley, Whitefield, Romaine, Venn, and Others in the Last Century* (New York: American Tract Society, 1853), pp. 39, 54-56, 147-148.

¹⁰*The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, by a Member of the House of Shirley and Hastings* (London: William Edward Painter, 1840), 2: 441.

¹¹*The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, 2: 443-444. *Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, A Select Collection of Hymns, To Be Universally Sung in All the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapels, Collected by Her Ladyship* (London: The Countess of Huntingdon, 1780), pp. 118-120.

the beginning of the nineteenth. Marrant visited Massachusetts on a preaching tour and borrowed liberally from the theological and the antislavery writings of New England Calvinists. In the late 1780s, Marrant added to Huntingdonian predestinarianism and evangelicalism an emphasis, well articulated in American Calvinism, on affection, benevolence, charity, the providential overruling of sin in a divine plan, the freedom of the intellect from the moral corruption of the Fall, and the sinfulness of the enslavement of Africans.¹² With Huntingdonian and New Divinity theology in hand, Marrant defined himself as a conservative in an age marked by theological battles between orthodoxy and liberal Christianity. Indeed, Marrant surpassed the conservatism of his Calvinist peers in his retention of the Puritan notion of a covenanted community, a notion discarded by the New Divinity men in favor of a republican universalism.¹³ Huntingdonian and New England theology and his awareness of the black Atlantic, both free and enslaved, gave Marrant the elements of an Africanist Calvinism, preached in Nova Scotia and echoed in Sierra Leone by his followers after his death. In the mid-1780s, Marrant added to the Huntingdonian emphasis on the predestination of the elect the New Divinity emphases on an omnipotent, omniscient deity who uses even sin in a divine plan and on an ideal social order based on affection, benevolence, charity, and sentiment. This ideal suffused his preaching and writing. For instance, he told his black Boston audience that "benevolence, which is the most important duty, ... comprehends all the rest," that "charity, or universal love and friendship [are] commanded by God," that "pure, holy, spiritual and benevolent affections can only fit us for the kingdom of heaven," while "self-love" is "the source of all those evils that divide the word and destroy the peace of mankind."¹⁴ A postslavery

¹²For the New Divinity, see William Breitenbach, "Unregenerate Doings: Selflessness and Selfishness in New Divinity Theology," *American Quarterly*, 34 (1982): 484-487; William Breitenbach, "Piety and Moralism: Edwards and the New Divinity," in *Jonathan Edwards and the American Experience*, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Harry S. Stout (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 191; Joseph A. Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism, the Congregational Ministry, and Reform in New England between the Great Awakenings* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1981); Joseph Haroutunian, *Piety versus Moralism: The Passing of the New England Theology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1932); David W. Kling, *A Field of Divine Wonders: The New Divinity and Village Revivals in Northwestern Connecticut, 1792-1822* (University Park, Pa: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993); Mark M. Valeri, *Law and Providence in Joseph Bellamy's New England: The Origins of the New Divinity in Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); and Donald Weber, *Rhetoric and History in Revolutionary New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). The New Divinity opposition to slavery is addressed in John Saillant, "Lemuel Haynes's Black Republicanism and the American Republican Tradition, 1775-1820," *Journal of the Early Republic*, 14 (1994): 293-324. Marrant's language suggests his familiarity with Samuel Hopkins, *A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans* (New York: Robert Hodge, 1785; first edition 1776). One of Marrant's personal contacts was the prominent New England Calvinist Samuel Stillman; see John Marrant, *A Journal of the Rev. John Marrant, from August the 18th, 1785, to the 16th of March 1790. To Which Are Attached, Two Sermons; One Preached on Ragged Island on Sabbath Day, the 27th Day of October, 1787; The Other at Boston, in New England, on Thursday, the 24th of June, 1789* (London: Printed for the Author: Sold by J. Taylor and Co. at the Royal Exchange; and Mr. Marrant, No. 2, Black Horse Court, in Aldersgate-street, [1791]), p. 68.

¹³ Mark Valeri, "The New Divinity and the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 46 (1989): 741-769.

¹⁴John Marrant, *A Sermon Preached on the 24th Day of June 1789, Being the Festival of St. John*
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society was to allow blacks the universal love and friendship that were being violated under slavery.

As his theology coalesced, Marrant traveled in several regions where black migration was being discussed in the half-decade before his congregation actually embarked. He was in London at the very moment when both black and white opponents of the slave trade proposed a settlement in Sierra Leone for the "black poor."¹⁵ Then he itinerated among the black Nova Scotians, who had already moved north on the Atlantic seaboard in search of land. Finally he forged links with Calvinists in New England, where both blacks like Prince Hall and whites like Samuel Hopkins were promoting the emigration of African Americans to Africa.¹⁶ By the time the black Nova Scotians received authorization in 1791 to emigrate, Marrant had had at least five years of contact with Britons and New Englanders promoting black colonization in Africa. Drawing from theology and antislavery schemes, from black experience in England, New England, and Nova Scotia, Marrant emphasized the providential restoration to Africa of a holy black community, bound by affection and the covenant of grace.

In preaching his vision in Nova Scotia, Marrant faced a great challenge, both practical and theological, since the three thousand black refugees were immiserated there, starving for food, clothing, land, and tools as well as for religion.¹⁷ Promised freedom by the British forces engaged in the Revolution, black refugees had arrived in Nova Scotia with certificates of manumission and promises of land grants that would allow families to farm and achieve the independence they much desired. Yet land grants to blacks lagged far behind those to white loyalists. A generalized prejudice certainly removed blacks from a number of social benefits, such as opportunities to worship in local Anglican churches and to share equally in provisions offered by the imperial authorities to the loyalists who relocated to Nova Scotia.¹⁸ Generalized prejudice also ensured that the few blacks who did receive land were awarded lots less than one-twentieth the average size of those given to whites, while when whites found themselves pressed for land in 1784 they were able simply to invade land held by black families, raze the homes they found there, and declare themselves landowners.¹⁹ More specifically, white Nova Scotians had what they perceived as good reason to deny land grants to the black loyalists. The raw economy of Nova Scotia in the 1780s called out for physical labor to clear new farmland and to support the

the Baptist, At the Request of the Right Worshipful the Grand Master Prince Hall, and the Rest of the Brethren of the African Lodge of the Honourable Society of Free & Accepted Masons in Boston (Boston: The Bible & Heart, 1789), pp. 3, 21-24.

¹⁵Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, p. 14. Walker, *Black Loyalists*, p. 97.

¹⁶Floyd J. Miller, *The Search for a Black Nationality: Black Emigration and Colonization, 1787-1863* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), p. 4.

¹⁷Walker, *Black Loyalists*, pp. 18-32, 64-67.

¹⁸Walker, *Black Loyalists*, p. 71.

¹⁹Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, pp. 92-101.

fishing fleets, which, because of competition in the seas off the Maritimes, operated on a razor-thin margin of profitability.²⁰ Nova Scotia's economic difficulties in the 1780s were rooted in a shortage of labor and of capital that had hindered development since mid-century as well as in competition for cod from ships from the U.S.A.²¹ White Nova Scotians perceived blacks not as potential freeholders, but as ideal laborers and servants--as the laborers and as the capital investment white Nova Scotians had been seeking since 1750. Since the black Nova Scotians soon came to complain that they were still slaves, there seems little doubt that they perceived the repetition of one of the oldest Anglo-American patterns, the use of the labor of unlanded black men and women as a substitute for white labor and capital investment. Moreover, slavery was still legal in Nova Scotia, leading to a fear that newly freed blacks would slide back into bondage.²²

Beginning in 1785, Marrant became an active agent in carrying petitions to the imperial authorities, for fulfillment of the land-grant promises and for relief of suffering but he also became a spiritual leader of the black refugees, distilling from their lives and from his Calvinism a theology that helped pave the way for the exodus of the early 1790s. Marrant's theological challenge appeared as he came under harsh attack for his Calvinism.

Within a few days of his arrival in Halifax, Marrant reported, he was criticized because he "was not an Arminian."²³ The attacks came not only from white Arminian Methodists like Freeborn Garrettson, but also from black Arminian Methodists like Moses Wilkinson, whom Marrant considered to be a "devil" misleading the black community. Marrant responded with his own attacks, personal as well as theological, on "Arminians," but he also constructed an Africanist Calvinism.²⁴ Marrant preached that God was forming a black covenanted community, purified in tribulations by the atoning blood of the Lamb and ordained to sail away from suffering and trials in an exodus to Africa. There, Marrant preached, this pure, covenanted black community would build a holy black paradise.²⁵

²⁰ Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, p. 208.

²¹ Lewis R. Fischer, "Revolution without Independence: The Canadian Colonies, 1749-1775," in *The Economy of Early America: The Revolutionary Period, 1763-1790* ed. Ronald Hoffman, John J. McCusker, Russell R. Menard, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988), pp. 94-108.

²² Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, pp. 38-40.

²³ Marrant, *Journal*, pp. 9-11; This copy is held at the Boston Public Library; bound with it is the 1787 sermon, John Marrant, *A Funeral Sermon Preached by the Desire of the Deceased, John Lock; The Text chosen by Himself, from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Phillipians, Chap. I. Ver. 21.*

²⁴ Marrant, *Journal*, pp. 37-38. Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks*, p. 128. Marrant's Calvinism and his attacks on Arminian Methodists were not forgotten by Methodists, who continued to revile him for a century after his death. See Smith, *History of the Methodist Church*, 1: 162-163. Garrettson continued his attacks on Calvinists after Marrant left North America; see Leland Scott, "The Message of Early American Methodism," in *The History of American Methodism*, 1: 340-341.

²⁵ "In its inception African-American Protestant Christianity was a millenarian movement." Sylvia R. Frey, "Shaking the Dry Bones: The Dialectic of Conversion," in *Black and White Cultural Interaction in the*

Marrant's writings of the late 1780s--two sermons, several letters, and a journal, which includes sermon notes--draw his Africanist Calvinism out of the experience he shared with the black refugees of the Atlantic world.

In his travels and in his writings, Marrant situated himself directly in the communities of black Nova Scotians. He underscored his help in constructing a "Chapel, in Birch Town," the place holding the largest number and the highest concentration of blacks in the Maritimes.²⁶ Among the immiserated blacks of Birchtown, Marrant found, "God was in the midst of us" when "we had a great love feast, and we continued all night praying to and praising God." These "poor people" among whom "the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ prospered" and who gave him "a desire for travelling from village to village" were the most destitute of those, "black and white," he encountered in Nova Scotia. In Birchtown, he met refugees dying of cold (once he found a corpse alongside a nearly dead woman on the road) and others lacking proper food, clothing, shelter, and tools. Some households were reduced to eating dogs and cats. Clinging to the hope that the imperial authorities would award them the land grants they were promised as they were evacuated from New York, Charleston, and Savannah, the black refugees induced Marrant to submit petitions for the fulfillment of the imperial promises of the past as well as for supplies to relieve their hardships. When Marrant carried petitions "to Hallifax, to the governor," and successfully procured tools and blankets for the destitute, he found that "Arminians" stole the goods that were to be delivered to the petitioners. Suffering and betrayed, these "very poor people," Marrant reported, were "very willing to hear the word of God," so willing that he led many "love feasts" and "covenant nights," sometimes finding himself "overpowered with the love of God [as] the people wept and groaned throughout the congregation."²⁷

Marrant preached about one hundred sermons in Nova Scotia between August, 1785, and March, 1790. Marrant's notes on his sermonizing, along with the complete texts of two sermons, appeared just before his death and just before his entire Nova Scotian congregation emigrated to Sierra Leone under the guidance of his chosen successor, Cato Perkins.²⁸ Marrant told his audience that a black exodus to Africa, the restoration of a pure and covenanted black community to their Zion, was an element of God's providential design. The restoration was, Marrant preached, a benevolent overruling of the sins of the slave traders and slaveholders. The message of Marrant's

Antebellum South, ed. Ted Ownby (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), p. 25. In Will B. Gravely, "The Rise of African Churches in America: Re-Examining the Contexts (1786-1822)," *Journal of Religious Thought*, 41 (1984): 59, appears the claim that debates on African American religion "have shifted from the degree of syncretism in black Christianity to a consideration of the causes of racial separation in American religion." The form of separation advocated by Marrant--the emigration of a united black community to Africa--was a Calvinist response to the oppression and suffering of the black Nova Scotian refugees.

²⁶Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, pp. 81, 86-87.

²⁷Marrant, *Journal*, pp. 12, 20, 28, 32, 34-36, 44, 49-53, 63. Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, p. 91.

²⁸Walker, *Black Loyalists*, p. 123.

Nova Scotia sermons apparently led Prince Hall, a vocal proponent of a black exodus to Africa, to invite Marrant to preach to the African Masonic Lodge in 1789. Massachusetts and Rhode Island contained several African American groups that had expressed approval of the exodus, so Marrant probably knew that he would find a receptive audience in the Boston area. Indeed, Marrant reported that he preached widely in the area (and incited a white mob to attack him), but no sermon from Massachusetts other than the one he delivered at the Masonic Lodge is known to have survived.²⁹

In Boston, among "us Africans," Marrant preached that God's first city seems to have been in Africa and that the divinely-ordained mission of black Masons was to rebuild the holy city.³⁰ "Paradise," Marrant told the black Masons, may have been in "African Ethiopia." He continued, "I could show also that one grand end or design of masonry is to build up the temple that Adam destroyed in Paradise." In general, he told the African Lodge, "Ancient history will produce some of the Africans who were truly good, wise, and learned men, and as eloquent as any other nation whatever, though at present many of them are in slavery, which is not a just cause of our being despised."³¹ Marrant linked this vision of Africa as the site of paradise and the home of "learned men" to the New Divinity teaching that the Fall corrupted humankind's moral faculty while leaving the intellectual capacity unimpaired.³² The Fall may have left humankind in need of moral regeneration, Marrant argued, but it still left Africans as masters of "architecture, arts and sciences." As evidence for the skills of Africans and the depredations of Europeans, Marrant pointed to "the famous temple of Jupiter Hammon, in Libian Africa,...that stood till demolished by the first Christians in those parts." This was likely a heartening message for Christian black Masons who were envisioning an exodus to Africa.

Carrying his critique into the present day, Marrant preached that slave-holders, who set blacks in "despised" condition, were actually "under the power of the prince of darkness," living with "souls void of the grace of God." Moreover, he told the Masons of

²⁹For Marrant's trip to Boston, see Charles H. Wesley, *Prince Hall: Life and Legacy*, Second Edition (Washington, D.C.: The [Masonic] United Supreme Council, 1983), pp. 77-86. *The Proceedings of the Free African Union Society and the African Benevolent Society, Newport, Rhode Island 1780-1824*, ed. William H. Robinson (Providence: The Urban League of Rhode Island, 1976), pp. 16-21, 43-47, and Thomas J. Davis, "Emancipation Rhetoric, Natural Rights, and Revolutionary New England: A Note on Four Black Petitions," *New England Quarterly*, 62 (1989): 257, show black New Englanders' support for emigration to Africa. Marrant, *Journal*, p. 69, describes the attack by a mob of white Massachusetts men.

³⁰Marrant, *Sermon Preached on the 24th Day of June 1789*, p. 9.

³¹In the late eighteenth century, the notion of Africans' "natural eloquence" as "the first spark of genius" conveyed the idea that Africans were cognitively equal to Europeans even if the superior moral influence of Christianity had not yet spread to Africa. See Joseph LaVallee, *The Negro as There Are Few White Men*, tr. J. Trapp (London: For the Author [Trapp], 1790), 3: 126.

³²Samuel Hopkins, *Two Discourses. I. On the Necessity of the Knowledge of the Law of God, in Order to the Knowledge of Sin. II. A Particular, and Critical Inquiry into the Cause, Nature and Means of That Change in Which Men Are Born of God* (Boston: William McAlpine, 1768), pp. 10-11, 39-41. Samuel Hopkins, *The Nature of True Holiness* (Newport: Solomon Southwick, 1773), p. 1. Breitenbach, "Unregenerate Doings: Selflessness and Selfishness in New Divinity Theology," pp. 484-487.

the African Lodge that they were modern versions of Nehemiah, who suffered spiritually under captivity yet who "received liberty from the king Artaxerxes, letters, and a commission, or charter, to return to Jerusalem" to rebuild its wall (Nehemiah 1-6). Even the word "despised" alludes to Nehemiah's desire to extricate himself from captivity and rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Nehemiah knew he was despised by his captors but still he trusted in his Lord: "Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity" (Nehemiah 4:4).³³

The sufferings of the black Nova Scotians and Marrant's itinerancy among them are set in the context of nearly one hundred references to the Bible, the texts for his sermons, mostly verses on the origin of the world, Christ's message of repentance, conversion, love, and hope, and the prophecies concerning those who keep the covenant and those break it. These references match the prominent themes in Marrant's theology: the existence of a providential divine design, the conversion of the elect, the piety of the covenanted community, the vengeance of God to be wreaked upon the sinful, and the restoration of the covenanted community to Zion. With nearly one hundred biblical references, Marrant imbued his *Journal* with a text beyond the chronicle of his itinerancy--a text narrating the divine design given for black people in the Bible. The biblical references in his *Journal* set the sufferings, triumphs, and hopes of his audience in God's providential design, offering instructions for the return to Africa, the exodus his entire flock made shortly after his untimely death.

The fundamental doctrine of Marrant's theology was that an overruling God works a design in the universe by countering human sin with beneficent provisions. Theodicy was thus of the first importance in Marrant's theology. The God who has a "grand design," "overruled all things for his glory," Marrant assured the Nova Scotians.³⁴ God's "providential ways" display "irresistible power," Marrant preached.³⁵ "The love and irresistible power of God," Marrant added, guide the "allwise, righteous, and faithful determination." "Christ is invested with uncontrollable dominion," Marrant exulted, "over every person."³⁶ Describing for his audience the "proportion of one dispensation with another, in the divine government," Marrant promised that there will be a "harmony and correspondence" of the "dispensations."³⁷ The proportionality of the dispensations of a benevolent, omnipotent God--the notion that God counters evil with an overruling good, as with the Crucifixion and the Resurrection--was a central doctrine of the New Divinity.³⁸

³³Marrant, *Sermon Preached on the 24th Day of June 1789*, pp. 8-10, 15, 19, 20.

³⁴Marrant, *Sermon...from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Phillipians*, pp. 11, 97.

³⁵Marrant, *Journal*, pp. 4-5.

³⁶Marrant, *Journal*, p. 92.

³⁷Marrant, *Sermon...from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Phillipians*, p. 99.

³⁸Samuel Hopkins, *An Enquiry Concerning the Promises of the Gospel* (Boston: W. McAlpine and J. Fleeming, 1765), p. iii. Samuel Hopkins, *Two Discourses*, p. 14. Samuel Hopkins, *The True State and Character of the Unregenerate, Stripped of All Misrepresentation and Disguise* (New Haven: Thomas and Samuel Green, 1769), p. ii. Samuel Hopkins, *Twenty-One Sermons* (Salem: Joshua Cushing, 1803), pp.

Using a key word of the New England tradition, Marrant urged onto his audience "a relish of those divine provisions."³⁹ Still, acknowledging the suffering of his audience, Marrant conceded the difficulty that "sometimes things are so variable, or mixed in providence, that we are ready to say, >wherein does the holiness and glory of God appear in them?" "God often hides the sensible signs of his favour from his dearest friends," Marrant further conceded, yet "real Christians, whilst they are among fiery serpents are awaiting with desire, and holy expectations, for the good of the promise."⁴⁰ He assured black Nova Scotians that "the judge of all the earth does right." Hence, Marrant invoked for his audience "the city" of Revelation 21:23, urging them that "soon there can be no more mistakes, no more stumbling blocks, no more disquietude, no more unhallowed fire, no more implacable enemies." The telos of God's grand design was the restoration of the faithful to their Zion along with the punishment of the wicked. The "harmony" and "correspondence" of the "dispensations" were to be the liberty and dignity of the betrayed ex-slaves of Nova Scotia, matched by the suffering of the oppressors of the past and present.⁴¹ Like Nehemiah, Marrant expressed his desire to return to the holy land of his fathers to rebuild God's city there as well as to see the reproaches of the captors of his people turned back upon their own heads. Marrant utilized the doctrine of the overruling God to acknowledge the suffering of his hearers as well as to urge them to relish the providence that would deliver them: "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).⁴²

That the new birth was the way in which sinful creatures become reconciled to God's grand design was Marrant's second doctrine. In line with the "consistent Calvinism" of the late eighteenth century, Marrant told the black Nova Scotians that all are born with "a wicked heart," that the unconverted "never had [any] good thoughts."⁴³ As a "relish" for being, an "unspeakable joy," and "the love of God in Christ," the new birth was for blacks an orientation to Africa, since for Marrant the refreshing of the spirit and the postslavery reconstruction of the black community were inextricably linked in God's design. Since the black remnant returning to Africa must be pure, Marrant repeatedly emphasized the doctrine of the necessity of the conversion of the saints by preaching from

334-341. Haroutunian, *Piety versus Moralism*, pp. 31-40. Kling, *A Field of Divine Wonders*, p. 82. Weber, *Rhetoric and History in Revolutionary New England*, p. 69.

³⁹Marrant, *Journal*, p. 96. Hopkins, *An Enquiry Concerning the Promises of the Gospel*, p. 45.

⁴⁰Marrant, *Sermon...from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Phillipians*, pp. 95-96.

⁴¹Marrant, *Sermon...from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Phillipians*, pp. 99-100.

⁴² Marrant, *Journal*, p. 45. For a parallel in Hopkins, see *An Enquiry Concerning the Promises of the Gospel*, pp. 144-145.

⁴³Marrant, *Journal*, pp. 16, 31. Hopkins, *An Enquiry Concerning the Promises of the Gospel* pp. 7-75. Hopkins, *Two Discourses*, pp. 20-23. Hopkins, *True State and Character of the Unregenerate*, pp. 9-15.

its classical biblical reference, John 3:5, "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Marrant linked the new birth and the postslavery reconstruction of the black community when he preached that one who feels "the sweet workings of the spirit" has "a sympathetic feeling for those of his fellow-creatures, who has [sic] their face Zion forward."⁴⁴

Since an essential element of his own virtuous blackness was his effectiveness in relaying this message to African Americans, Marrant emphasized throughout his *Journal* his success in leading black souls to conversion. Again and again, his sermons led to "love feasts" and "covenant nights," in which sinners were "pricked to the heart," many of them converted by the "divine power." In the course of just a few typical days:

The Spirit of God did move upon the waters....The Lord brake the bread of eternal life amongst poor hungry souls....The Lord was pleased to shew them the absolute necessity of repentance; indeed they were led to cry out, "What shall we do to be saved."...The Lord was pleased to display his divine power, in giving them true repentance....In the heart, the Lord was pleased to open their understanding, so that some of them were constrained to cry out, saying, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory."... The power of God was present to wound, and to heal.⁴⁵

One of the uniquely Africanist elements of Marrant's theology was his merger of an orthodox notion of conversion with a notion of the covenanted community, which had faded out of late eighteenth-century Calvinism but was still convincing to the dispossessed blacks of Nova Scotia.⁴⁶ Had Marrant merely used the sentimentalist language of the New Divinity--affection, benevolence, charity, and the like--he would have established himself as a theologian of black community, a theoretician of the way in which conversion integrated blacks into a community of believers. But Marrant added to New Divinity sentimentalism an older notion of the covenanted community--in his formulation a black community in a particular covenant with God to pass through suffering to a Zion.

From the years of slavery, oppression, and betrayal, as well as from the Nova Scotian "love feasts" and "covenant nights," Marrant believed, was arising a covenanted community of black converts. "The rich blessings" of "the covenant of grace," Marrant preached, include "the happiness of believers," who set their faces "Zion forward." Those

⁴⁴Marrant, *Sermon...from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Phillipians*, pp. 21, 36, 87.

⁴⁵Marrant, *Journal*, pp. 15-20.

⁴⁶Valeri, "The New Divinity and the American Revolution," pp. 741-769. Edwards' understanding of the covenant is discussed in Gerald R. McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society: The Public Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp. 12-14, 34.

of "the covenant of grace" accept that God will "do what he will with his own," while "the great and noble," "those of high birth and parentage," Marrant asseverated, rarely hear God's call. Marrant addressed this covenanted community, harassed by "fiery serpents" and "carnal reasonings," in words directly applicable to the experience of the black Nova Scotians. "The poverty of Christ's followers," he stated, "would have shocked and humbled any man."⁴⁷

Against Christ's followers, Marrant thus set the "covenant breakers," those without "natural affection," those who are "worthy of death" (Romans 1:32). The "covenant breakers" were both those who enslaved blacks and those who denied black Nova Scotians their rightful farms, for which the refugees believed they had contracted through their loyalism in the War of Independence. Still, Marrant was apparently convinced that human evil was to be the instrument of the benevolent divine will--a conviction firmly established in the New Divinity. The salvation of the suffering, as Marrant phrased it, was "an excellent scheme, to illustrate the glory, and harmony, of the divine perfection." "The power of God," Marrant reiterated often, will both "wound" and "heal." John 9:1-3 made it clear that "sin" allows "the works of God" to be "manifest." This notion of the works of God made manifest through sin afforded Marrant his greatest opportunity to draw from the Bible, where he found countless verses instructing believers that a great new compensating work was about to burst forth in the covenanted community that found itself encircled and harassed by the corrupt.⁴⁸

A "heaven" is within his followers, Marrant insisted (Luke 13:21). The "evil" of the day is inevitable, but is about to pass, to be replaced by the fulfillment of the law and the "kingdom of God" for "the poor in spirit" and for those "that mourn" (Matthew 5:3-4, 16-18; 6:10-13, 33-34). The time is come, Marrant urged, to enter at "the strait gate," for like the thief on the cross, one who is in "condemnation" may expect to dwell with Christ in "paradise." Marrant's message was "Come; for all things are now ready" (Luke 14:17), "a place for you" is prepared (John 14:2). Marrant preached, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). The return to the African paradise, to the site where God's temple will be rebuilt, was for Marrant the exodus of the covenanted community to "mount Sion," where those with his "Father's name written in their foreheads" will live with the Lamb, who "shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Revelation 7:15-17). In one of his few uses of an entire chapter, instead of a few verses, Marrant preached from Isaiah 60, which begins, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come," and ends, "A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I

⁴⁷Marrant, *Journal*, pp. 20, 44, 89-90, 96, 101-102.

⁴⁸Marrant, *Journal*, pp. 12, 17, 32, 57, 102. Hopkins' major effort in defense of God's use of sin was *Sin, thro' Divine Interposition, an Advantage to the Universe* (Boston: Daniel and John Kneeland, 1759). The Edwardsean background of this notion is discussed in McDermott, *One Holy and Happy Society*, pp. 56, 81.

the Lord will hasten it in his heart."⁴⁹ As Charles H. Long has noted, "the historicity" of the Christian tradition has been "related to the possession of a land, and this has not been the case for blacks in America."⁵⁰ Colonization in Africa was aimed at possession of a land--a Christian aim heightened by slavery and oppression in America and by a theology emphasizing a holy and affectionate community.

The theology Marrant distilled from the lives of the black Nova Scotians and black Masons declared that their experience of God was an encounter with a benevolent overruler who had determined their tribulations as means to both their redemption and His glory. Marrant's repeated insistence that this God and His means be relished was probably the reason his exhortations led his audience to cry and moan and the exhorter himself to be struck dumb in awe and love of the deity. When Marrant preached Jesus's phrase, "I am with you always," and when he described the "harmony of the Divine perfections, in the dispensation of God, towards his church, in its militant state," he was serving his black audience not only piety, but also a precise analysis of the history of slavery and of redemption. While the "sweetness" of an omnipotent, overruling God--of "divine Glory, in almost every Thing"--induced Edwards and Hopkins into "a calm, sweet Abstraction of Soul," it induced Marrant and his audience into an overflow of emotion at the thought that God's beneficent hand had worked through their enslavement and suffering.⁵¹ Marrant's representation of the history of the work of redemption must have been breathtaking for the harassed ex-slaves of Nova Scotia, particularly in his notions that the suffering of blacks--their enslavement as the "weak" and the "small"--was the "tribulation" in which God's chosen people "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14).⁵² Marrant offered himself as a prophet of this work of redemption. "The times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord," as Marrant instructed his audience, while "a prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you of your brethren" (Acts 3:19-22). The headiness of prophesying perhaps well led him to caution his audience, "I am not the Christ" (John 1:19).⁵³

⁴⁹Marrant, *Journal*, pp. 12, 15, 19, 25, 30, 34, 37, 42, 45, 53, 75-76.

⁵⁰Charles H. Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), p. 180.

⁵¹Samuel Hopkins, *The Life of the Late Reverend, Learned and Pious Mr. Jonathan Edwards* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1765), pp. 25-27. In other words, the "love" of "God and his law" that Hopkins urged, as in *Two Discourses*, pp. 16-22, had a different quality when Marrant and his followers applied it to the God they felt working through their immiseration than when Hopkins applied it to his spiritual travails.

⁵²Ava Chamberlain, "The Theology of Cruelty: A New Look at the Rise of Arminianism in Eighteenth-Century New England," *Harvard Theological Review*, 85 (1992): 335-356, argues that Arminianism attracted liberals who came first to regard Calvinist orthodoxy as cruel and then to "desire to minimize cruelty" (346). Marrant's Calvinism was an effort to understand human cruelty, which expressed God's will and which black Nova Scotians had little hope of minimizing in the late eighteenth century.

⁵³Marrant, *Journal*, pp. 14, 18, 28, 76. Marrant, *Sermon ... from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Phillipians*, p. 99.

In 1791, authorization to emigrate arrived in the hands of John Clarkson (brother of the famed British abolitionist Thomas Clarkson) and Thomas Peters. Born in Africa around 1738, held as a slave in North Carolina in the 1760s and 1770s, and relocated from New York as a black loyalist after the war, Peters had sailed from Halifax to London in 1790 with a petition to the Secretary of State for better treatment of the black Nova Scotians. In London, Peters entered the same complex of discussion of black colonization that Marrant had entered in the previous decade and transferred to Nova Scotia in 1785. Although Peters played a crucial role in the exodus, there is no evidence that he was involved in the discussion of the 1780s in London and New England of black colonization. Peters, moreover, died four months after landing in Freetown, while Marrant's ideas were echoed by the Nova Scotians there for at least another decade.⁵⁴

As Marrant died in England at the dawn of the exodus, his congregation, led by his chosen successor, Cato Perkins, and by a Mason, William Ash, apparently took him so seriously that they themselves, men, women, and children, all emigrated to Sierra Leone in 1792. White Nova Scotians bitterly opposed the emigration of black workers, seeking to halt it by insisting to the imperial authorities that the Maritimes needed black labor as well as by demanding that any black individual in debt make full recompense before embarking. Many black Nova Scotians were in fact deeply in debt or in indentures entered in exchange for food, clothing, or shelter.⁵⁵ In the early 1790s, one-third to two-thirds of the black Nova Scotians sailed to Sierra Leone in search of their promised land.⁵⁶ Theirs was an exodus both pragmatic and religious. The vast majority of adult emigrants were men and women between thirty and fifty years of age, embarking in a family group. The majority of men identified themselves as both loyalist veterans of the War of Independence and farmers or builders, though they had not worked at these occupations in Nova Scotia. All the adult men carried tools, while half claimed to be carrying guns. The provisions of families included chickens and seeds for pumpkins, squash, watermelon, beans, cabbage, purslain, sage, and thyme.⁵⁷ These facts all suggest the refugees' orientation to the future: families were to have the largest portions of farmland, while the seeds of their future were in their bodies, provisions, and bibles. Methodists, whether Calvinist or Arminian, were the most likely of the black Nova Scotians to emigrate. Marrant's followers, led by Perkins and Ash, sang hymns from the Countess of Huntingdon's Hymn Book as they gathered in Nova Scotia to embark and as they disembarked in Sierra Leone. One was,

⁵⁴Nash, "Thomas Peters," pp. 78-83.

⁵⁵Walker, *Black Loyalists*, pp. 40-144. Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, pp. 81-91, 103, 202-204, 211. Searching, perhaps, for a justification of their actions, white Nova Scotians came to claim that the Maritimes were too cold for blacks, a notion reiterated in J. Kofi Agbeti, *West African Church History: Christian Missions and Church Foundations, 1482-1919* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), p. 19. McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, p. 29, uncritically repeats this idea.

⁵⁶Walker, *Black Loyalists*, pp. 72, 122-125. Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, pp. 217-219. Winks, *Blacks in Canada*, p. 56.

⁵⁷Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, pp. 220-224.

"The day of Jubilee is come; Return ye ransomed sinners home." Another was, "Awake! and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb."⁵⁸ On March 28, 1792, twelve days after they landed, Perkins, Ash, and their followers established the first chapel of the Huntingdonian Connexion in Sierra Leone.⁵⁹

Just as Marrant remained conservative in theology, the Nova Scotians remained influenced by a religiously-inspired antislavery thought that had little to do with the new liberal thought of the late eighteenth century concerning slavery, freedom, and commerce.

For the Nova Scotians, the immorality of slavery and oppression consisted in the slaveholders' violation of divinely-mandated benevolence. This conviction separated the Nova Scotians from the major development in late eighteenth-century antislavery thought. Leading abolitionists of the late eighteenth century, black as well as white, considered the slave trade an "illicit" commerce that could be replaced by a "legitimate" commerce with Africa. As the slave trade declined, the opponents of slavery assumed, "legitimate" commerce would increase. African social groups were to provide raw materials such as palm oil and groundnuts to the Atlantic trade, while consuming European finished goods.⁶⁰

The Sierra Leone Company, which funded the travel of the black Nova Scotians from Halifax to Freetown, was guided by the trade-and-abolition strategy. In Britain, white abolitionists like Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson, as well as black abolitionists like Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoano, insisted that commerce in goods could replace commerce in slaves. In 1789, Equiano argued for the creation of a "System of Commerce ... in Africa," in order to abolish "diabolical Slavery," induce Africans to "adopt our Fashions, Manners, Customs," and to open "a free Trade" in African "Treasures" procured through "Industry, Enterprise, and Mining."⁶¹ The founding

⁵⁸Selina Hastings, *A Select Collection of Hymns*, pp. 43-44, 66-68.

⁵⁹Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, p. 217. J. B. Elliott, *Lady Huntingdon's Connexion in Sierra Leone, A Narrative of Its History and Present State* (London: Society for the Spread of the Gospel at Home and Abroad, 1851), p. 14. "Governor Clarkson's Diary," in E. G. Ingham, *Sierra Leone after a Hundred Years* (London: Seeley and Co., 1894), p. 36. Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, p. 37.

⁶⁰Robin Law, "The Historiography of the Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa," in *African Historiography: Essays in Honor of Jacob Ade Ajayi*, ed. Toyin Falola (Essex, England: Longman, 1993), pp. 91-115. The success of this trade-and-abolition strategy is evaluated in Suzanne Miers, *Britain and the Ending of the Slave Trade* (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1975), pp. 146-153. An invaluable overview appears in J. F. Ade Ajayi and B. O. Oloruntimehin, "West Africa in the Anti-Slave Trade Era," in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, ed. John E. Flint (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 6: 200-221.

⁶¹From a letter by Equiano (writing as Gustavus Vassa) included in the *Report of the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council...concerning the present State of the Trade to Africa, and particularly the Trade in Slaves...1789, Part I, No. 14*. Included in *Sierra Leone Inheritance*, ed. Christopher Fyfe (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 109-111. For Cugoano (born Adjumako, writing in 1787 as John Stuart), see his *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, in *Black Writers in Britain, 1760-1890*, ed. Paul Edwards and David Dabydeen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 39-53. American thought on slavery in contrast to "legitimate" economic activity is described in David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*,

declaration of the Sierra Leone Company in 1791 echoed Equiano's statements: "The Sierra Leone Company established by the British Parliament do hereby declare, that they will send out goods from England and take all kinds of African produce in exchange; that they will not deal in slaves themselves, nor allow of any slave trade on their ground."⁶² Thus the Nova Scotians and the directors of the Sierra Leone Company approached the settlement with radically different views of the immorality of slavery and of the slave trade and correspondingly different views of the postslavery future. These views clashed in Freetown--a clash made more dramatic by the fact that the "legitimate" trade that the Sierra Leone Company promoted actually amplified the use of slaves in parts of West Africa instead of quelling the "illicit" - 28 - trade. Already "ranglesome," the Nova Scotians were infuriated by the presence of slave ships in the Freetown harbor and slave traders in the Freetown streets and in the Company establishments.⁶³

A clash was well-nigh inevitable. Insofar as the Sierra Leone Company saw the goal of the settlement as the replacement of the slave trade by "legitimate" commerce, it saw the role of the Nova Scotians as one of laboring to produce raw materials for the Atlantic trade while consuming finished goods provided by the Company.⁶⁴ Not primarily interested in the Atlantic trade, the Nova Scotians desired land on which they would live in "Unanimous" Christian communities.⁶⁵ Land grants, confirmed with certificates in Nova Scotia, were denied the refugees, since the Sierra Leone Company could not come to terms about land with local Temne rulers and since the Company plan involved not self-sufficient black communities but a caste of workers in a Euro-African extension of the Atlantic economy. The Nova Scotians received only one fifth of the land they had expected to receive (much of it uselessly rocky) while the Company charged them taxes or quitrents, in violation of a promise made, without Company authority, by John Clarkson. Moreover, indigenous people in Sierra Leone had been trading with the British for more than a century by 1792, creating an English-language trading network and a tradition of commercial relations the Nova Scotians could hardly oppose.⁶⁶ Thus, the Nova Scotians' plan to escape oppression by migrating from one part of the Atlantic world to another failed.

1770-1823 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp. 254, 268-269.

⁶²Substance of the *Report of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company to the General Court, held in London on Wednesday the 19th of October, 1791*, pp. 50-54. Included in *Sierra Leone Inheritance*, pp. 116-118.

⁶³"Our Children," p. 45.

⁶⁴Abolitionists' assumption that Africans should work as wage laborers is explored in David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 20-23.

⁶⁵ "Our Children," p. 23.

⁶⁶ John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1680* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 65-66.

When the black Huntingdonian Cato Perkins sailed to London in 1793 to present grievances to the directors of the Sierra Leone Company he was asked to describe the understanding with which the Nova Scotians left Halifax in 1792. Perkins, writing with Isaac Anderson, described "the promises made by Mr. Clarkson to us (the inhabitants of Free Town) in Nova Scotia." In recompense for "loyalty and service" in the War of Independence, they were to be transported to Africa, where there was to be "a settlement for the purpose of abolishing the Slave Trade" and where "each head of a family should have a grant of not less than twenty acres of land, for him or herself; ten acres for a wife, and five acres for each child, ... given directly on our arrival in Africa, free of any expence or charge."⁶⁷ It was this understanding that had led to the emigration of black Nova Scotian men and women with their children, seeds, and tools, then to conflicts with the Sierra Leone Company.

Even the white men who most sympathized with the Nova Scotians failed to understand either their desire for land or the role of religion in their lives. In 1792, John Clarkson, who cast himself as the champion of the blacks, noted in his diary that the Nova Scotians "had reason to expect to have been put on their lands on their arrival, and they frequently reminded me of it." "The want of their lots of land," Clarkson continued, "is the strongest."⁶⁸ Yet Clarkson failed to perceive that for the Nova Scotians land was a goal separate from the trade-and-abolition program of the Sierra Leone Company. Clarkson marveled at the agricultural prowess of the Nova Scotians, but he called them "lazy" because they did not work on Company projects. Clarkson paradoxically urged the Nova Scotians to be "productive" and "industrious" without adequate land. His incomprehension of this paradox is illustrated in Clarkson's diary entry recounting what happened when he "summoned all the black captains and settlers to meet me in the storehouse." Conceding the difficulty of their landlessness, Clarkson nonetheless urged the Nova Scotians to work on Company projects: "I explained to them the beneficial nature of public works--such as erecting storehouses, churches, schools, making roads, etc., and even the officers' houses, for as long as the gentlemen were obliged to live all in one house, having no place of security for their papers, etc., they could not help neglecting their duty in failing to procure comforts for the settlers." The "public projects" remained undone, leading Clarkson, as he left Sierra Leone in 1793 (never to return), to preach to the Nova Scotians that "one of the duties of a Christian is to be industrious." "Heaven is open to all," he continued, although "some men are born to be rulers over others, to be their instructors and advisers, and others are created for a more laborious employment."⁶⁹

Similarly, a sympathetic European "Gentleman" who toured Sierra Leone criticized the Company for its failure to fulfill the promises made to the Nova Scotians, but revealed himself unable to understand the way in which religion offered them a goal beyond those of the Company. "I really believe," he asserted, "that religion, which ought to have been

⁶⁷A. M. Falconbridge, *Narrative of Two Voyages to the River Sierra Leone during the Years 1791-1793* (London: Frank Cass, 1967; reprint of second edition, 1802), p. 267.

⁶⁸Ingham, *Sierra Leone after a Hundred Years*, pp. 80-83.

⁶⁹Ingham, *Sierra Leone after a Hundred Years*, pp. 70-71.

the support and sheet anchor of the Colony, will be its ruin, from its being practiced with too great enthusiasm and inconsistency."⁷⁰ Missionaries visiting Sierra Leone reached similar conclusions. Two Scottish missionaries who toured the settlement in 1797 reported that those who were not natives (the Nova Scotians) were too independent. Natives, however, seemed more tractable in religion and labor. "Ethiopia's sons," even "the children of kings," were not only "lispering out Hosannas," but also waiting on "the Governor's table" and proving to be "readily got for hire" as "the Company's servants in cultivation."⁷¹

Throughout the 1790s, the Nova Scotians insisted upon their right to much more and better land than they had received. Perkins and Anderson sailed to London in 1793 to present "the Petition" of the "Black Settlers" for their "Lots of Land" and to take advantage of six months of training in theology funded by the London Connexion.⁷² In 1796, some Nova Scotians wrote to Clarkson, "The land which we understand you gave us we have had difficulty to hold in our possession." In 1797, some Nova Scotians complained to the Sierra Leone Company by reiterating their "expectation to receive Lands ... But we find it to the Contrary of that, for we find that the Company says the Land is theirs. Sir if we had been told that, we never could come here on that condition."⁷³ As the Nova Scotians pressed for their lands in the 1790s, the Sierra Leone Company responded by pursuing its trade-and-abolition policy without them. The Company trained members of the Bulom to cultivate its fields and began to make trading excursions to the hinterlands with local men as guides.⁷⁴ The Nova Scotians were further enraged by the complicity of the Company with slave traders, who, the black governing council pointed out, "can come and be supplied whenever they think proper."⁷⁵ For the British abolitionists' belief that "legitimate" trade would replace the slave trade was incorrect; African agricultural produce was sometimes cultivated or transported by slaves, while a mix of European goods, agricultural produce, and slaves constituted trade items in West Africa around 1800.⁷⁶

⁷⁰Falconbridge, *Narrative of Two Voyages*, p. 277.

⁷¹"Religious Intelligence," *The Theological Magazine*, 3 (1797): 75-80.

⁷²Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, p. 51. Wilson, *Loyal Blacks*, p. 341. "Our Children," p. 35-40.

⁷³"Our Children," p. 57.

⁷⁴Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, pp. 46-73.

⁷⁵"Our Children," p. 61. The way in which the trade in slaves, agricultural goods, and finished goods grew together in the area south of Freetown although no slaves were held within the city is described in Adam Jones, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels: A History of the Galinhas Country, West Africa, 1730-1890* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1983), pp. 37-54.

⁷⁶In seeing slave ships in the Freetown harbor, the Nova Scotians were observing one face of what Eltis has called "the paradox ... of increased demands for slaves, on the one hand, and the suppression of slavery and the slave trade, on the other." Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, p. 47. Thorpe commented on the complicity of the Company with slave traders as well as on the fact that agriculture in commercial tropical goods in West Africa would likely utilize slave labor. See *A Letter to* WWW.MILLE.ORG/JOURNAL.HTML

The black Huntingdonians echoed Marrant's theology as they sought to understand their grim situation. When French forces attacked Freetown in 1794, a group of Nova Scotians, including Isaac Anderson, echoed Marrant's providential language, defining the assault as part of God's design. "Thanks be God," they wrote; we "Raly believed that God see the tyranny and oppression that are upon us and send the Message of his Power to attack the Barbarous Task Masters in the Hight of their Pomp and Oppression and furthermore after the Enemy have Pity Our Case and Bestowed A little few Necessary upon us." Cato Perkins's "Mathodist connection [i.e., Connexion]" put it succinctly in writing, "God has ordained it so that the Enmy has Atakd us."⁷⁷ Desperate, some Nova Scotians wrote to John Clarkson in Britain, reminding him of the "affection" and "love" he and they had shared, lamenting that "our Oppressions is very great," and pleading with their one-time benefactor, "Sir leave us Not in the Wilderness to the Oppressing Masters--but be Amongst us. As you have took that Great undertaking as Mosis & Joshua did--be with us Until the End."⁷⁸ Although little writing expressing the self-understanding of the Nova Scotians in Sierra Leone survives and even that remained mostly unpublished until 1992, what there is suggests the staying power of Marrant's ideas, even though not all blacks in Freetown were Huntingdonians.

Less than a decade after the exodus, the Nova Scotians and the Sierra Leone Company had had their fill of each other. When the Sierra Leone Company announced that quitrents were to be paid in July, 1797, the black Huntingdonians refused to pay and the black Arminian Methodists threatened those who did pay with expulsion.⁷⁹ A rebellion of September, 1800, declaring against the Sierra Leone Company that "the law of the Sierra leone Setler is to tak place the 25 of this month" drew the majority of its rebels from Perkins's Huntingdonian congregation, although Perkins himself offered to mediate.⁸⁰ The Company attacked the Nova Scotians, banishing most of the leaders of the rebellion and hanging the Huntingdonian Isaac Anderson. The Company's most effective response, however, was the biological engulfment of the Nova Scotians by two waves of less "ranglesome" blacks--Jamaican Maroons and "recaptives."⁸¹ The Sierra Leone

William Wilberforce, pp. 5, 48-49. An important part of the future was evident in the late eighteenth century in Sierra Leone, since the link between "legitimate" exports and African slave labor continued to the end of the nineteenth century, as emphasized in Paul E. Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 173-178, and John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 149-151.

⁷⁷"Our Children," pp. 44-46.

⁷⁸"Our Children," p. 51.

⁷⁹Fyfe, *History of Sierra Leone*, p. 73.

⁸⁰"Our Children," p. 64.

⁸¹Ironically, the Nova Scotians themselves had been intended as replacements for the seemingly uncooperative "black poor" of England, the first blacks to sail the Atlantic for Sierra Leone. The refusal of the "black poor" to work hard enough at the task of forming a new settlement in Sierra Leone led to denunciations of their immorality by British abolitionists, including John Clarkson. James Walvin, *Black and White: The*

Company preferred the Jamaicans, who were willing to work for the Company and eventually returned to Jamaica. After the Sierra Leone Company went bankrupt, the British crown assumed control of the colony in 1808, transforming it into a settlement for thousands of "recaptives," Africans removed from slave ships seized by the British navy once the slave trade was made illegal in 1807.

In dealing with the Jamaicans and the "recaptives," the royal governors were intent on avoiding the missteps the directors of the Sierra Leone Company had made with the Nova Scotians. As the last Company governor waited for the first royal governor to arrive, the religious services of the Nova Scotians were barred from occurring between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m.⁸² Crown Governor Thomas Perronet Thompson immediately came to perceive the Nova Scotians as rebellious and unwilling to work for the colony or to defend it, so he actively sought cooperative blacks who he believed would turn a profit for the Crown. He insisted upon separating newcomers from the Nova Scotians, whom he considered architects of the "constraint" and "oppression" of useful blacks.⁸³ Sharing the European view of religious extremism in Freetown, Thompson noted that "the Nova Scotians are roaring out hymns."⁸⁴

Following Thompson, Crown Governor Sir Charles MacCarthy concerned himself little with a "Surveyor" or "allotments of land," but rather channeled new arrivals into "industry" without any "accumulation of expense" to his "mother Country." New arrivals were to be limited to one year's worth of public "Rations" and trained for "trade" or when "not wanted for the purpose of trade..., agriculture." Since a black Christianity of "enthusiasm" had added to the "ruin" of the settlement in the 1790s, MacCarthy knew that to promote "trade" and "agriculture it would be desirable to divide the Peninsula in Parishes, settling a Clergyman in each" as a missionary of the Church of England. MacCarthy used imperial power to organize blacks into small parishes where they worked under white supervision, not congregating as they had before in a four-hundred-seat church the Nova Scotians built in Freetown in 1798.⁸⁵

An African peasantry producing for the Atlantic trade and consuming its goods was a goal of European evangelicals.⁸⁶ The Nova Scotians failed spectacularly to meet this goal, just as they failed in their own goal of establishing an ideal society by migrating within the

Negro and English Society, 1555-1945 (London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1973), pp. 153-156.

⁸²Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, p. 48

⁸³Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, pp. 52-53.

⁸⁴Quoted in A. P. Kup, *A History of Sierra Leone, 1400-1787* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 103.

⁸⁵Peterson, *Province of Freedom*, p. 48. Still, there were as late as 1851 black Huntingdonians in Sierra Leone claiming to follow the fifteen points of doctrine promulgated by the Countess and her ministers in 1783. See Elliott, *Lady Huntingdon's Connexion in Sierra Leone*, p. 18.

⁸⁶Law, "The Historiography of the Commercial Transition in Nineteenth-Century West Africa," pp. 91-92.

Atlantic world. Timber, palm oil, and groundnuts were the valuable materials British interests extracted from Sierra Leone in the early nineteenth century by means of the labor of the Jamaican and African settlers of 1800 and after. By 1811, moreover, Crown, Company, and Church had successfully publicized in the Atlantic world their interpretation of Sierra Leone's first two decades. Thomas Jefferson could thus write in 1811, without a sense of irony that might have been stirred by memories of 1776, that the Company failed and "the British government [took] the colony in its own hands" because the "fugitives from these States during the Revolutionary War" had "by their idleness and turbulence ... kept the settlement in constant danger of dissolution, which could not have been prevented but for the aid of the Maroon negroes from the West Indies, who were more industrious and orderly than the others, and supported the authority of the government and its laws."⁸⁷ Religion, it seemed, was the cause of the Nova Scotians' flaws. Jehudi Ashmun, soon to become missionary, entrepreneur, and Liberian agent of the American Colonization Society, wrote in 1819 that the early black colonists in Sierra Leone pursued an "irregular and defective" religion and thus "wasted away an unprofitable existence."⁸⁸

The Nova Scotians were reduced at last to a small minority of black people in the place that some believed was to have been their Zion. No black Nova Scotian other than John Marrant--and very few other African Americans of the eighteenth century--left an extended commentary on religious faith and blackness. Marrant's writings allow us to understand how an Africanist Calvinism arose from his early experiences of service, conversion, and captivity, from his travels in the Atlantic world, from his contacts with Huntingdonians and New Englanders, and from his evangelism in black communities. This Africanist Calvinism was not the only black Christianity in Nova Scotia or Sierra Leone, but it was the one that received the fullest articulation and it shows how predestinarianism and sentimentalism could inform an antislavery and problack critique. Marrant's Africanist Calvinism instructed blacks to rise from their sufferings and to form covenanted communities best realized in Africa. Once in Africa, the black Huntingdonians were prominent in the resistance to commercial and imperial authorities, who well knew that religion was inspiring the resisting blacks. At last, commercial and imperial forces prevailed over religious visionaries in Sierra Leone.

⁸⁷*The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Andrew A. Lipscomb and Albert Ellery Bergh (Washington, D.C.: The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association), 13: 10-11, letter to John Lynch, from Jefferson, Monticello, January 21, 1811.

⁸⁸Quoted in Ralph Randolph Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun, Late Colonial Agent in Liberia. With an Appendix, Containing Extracts from His Journal and Other Writings; With a Brief Sketch of the Life of the Rev. Lott Cary* (Washington, D.C.: James C. Dunn, 1835), p. 63.