

The Huntingdonian Mission to Nova Scotia, 1782-1791: A Study in Calvinistic Methodism¹

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Historical studies on Calvinistic Methodism in eighteenth-century Canada are rare, as the focus has generally been on Wesleyan Methodism. This paper will focus primarily on Calvinistic Methodism as it relates to eighteenth-century Nova Scotia. Because it is the first of four such studies on Calvinistic Methodism in Canada I must begin a step back in order to give attention to the two chief figures in Calvinistic Methodism--George Whitefield and Selina the Countess of Huntingdon--and to make the necessary connections to Nova Scotia. I begin by asking the questions "Is there a relationship between George Whitefield and Nova Scotia" and "What of the connection between Selina, the Countess of Huntingdon and Nova Scotia"?

We know that Whitefield prayed for troops going to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia to fight what many viewed as a Protestant versus Papist battle at Louisbourg.² We also know that Whitefield twice proposed a preaching tour further North into Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, Quebec, and Montreal, yet died not seeing his dream become a reality.³ Rather, the focus here between Whitefield and Nova Scotia lies elsewhere. The second question posed above concerns the identity of this "Mother of Israel." She was Selina, Countess of Huntingdon, born Lady Selina Shirley, the daughter of an Earl and a relative of George Washington. Selina had married the Earl of Huntingdon, hence acquiring the title, Countess of Huntingdon, yet "a Mother of Israel" was the name Whitefield applied to her.

I begin with an overview of biographical details on George Whitefield and Selina, the Countess of Huntingdon before developing

more fully the matter of connections to Nova Scotia and Calvinistic Methodism. This will led to the two Calvinistic Methodists missionaries in Nova Scotia in the eighteenth century, William Furrage and John Marrant.

George Whitefield, Eighteenth-Century Evangelist

George Whitefield was born in Gloucester, England in 1714 and attended the famous Crypt School which to this day has one of its houses named in his honour.⁴ He then went to Pembroke College, Oxford as a student servant. While at Oxford, Whitefield became associated with “The Holy Club,” a group of about a dozen, which included the Wesley brothers, John and Charles. The group received several nicknames, one being “Methodists,” and was known for strenuous self-discipline on the part of its members and rigorous study (all the lectures were based upon the Greek New Testament and logical disputations were the pattern for all exercises).⁵ The Holy Club was not evangelical but, if anything, High Church Anglican and it did not bring spiritual peace to its members. For George Whitefield it was through the reading of Henry Scougal’s small book, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* that he was aroused to seek after salvation with untold earnestness. Coming close to utter mental and bodily collapse, Whitefield was converted at Oxford and cast his soul on the mercy of God through Jesus Christ; that is, he experienced the “new birth.”⁶

In 1736 Whitefield was ordained a Deacon in Gloucester and in 1738 he set forth on his first trip to America. The most significant accomplishment of this trip was the establishment of an orphanage in Georgia called Bethesda (House of Mercy). This was a home where destitute children received food and shelter, schooling and biblical instruction. Bethesda functioned as “its own Academy.” The Bethesda Orphanage was dear to Whitefield’s heart for the next forty years. In his will he turned Bethesda over to Selina, the Countess of Huntingdon, and she attempted to oversee it despite the difficult period of the 1770s and 1780s and the struggles for American Independence.⁷

Whitefield’s ministry can be summarized as a wide-ranging itinerant preacher having an appeal not just to the lower classes such as coal miners, but also to aristocrats in the circle of the Countess of Huntingdon. He must be viewed as the “father” of eighteenth-century open-air preaching, which was also pursued by the Wesleys. His ministry has been characterized as

“transdenominational” because he freely ministered amongst New England Dissenters, Baptists, Episcopalians, and Church of Scotland congregations.

In the early 1740s a theological rift developed between John Wesley and George Whitefield centring around three doctrines: the doctrine of predestination, Christian perfection and limited atonement. Whitefield was a Calvinist, whereas John Wesley was an Arminian. In 1742 Whitefield presided over the first (conference) meeting of the Calvinistic Methodists in England and in 1743 he attended the first meeting of the Calvinistic Methodists in Wales at Caerphilly. In 1748 Whitefield became a Chaplain to the Countess of Huntingdon, thus securing her patronage. By this time the Countess had identified herself with the Calvinistic Methodists. As indicated above, Whitefield died in Newburyport, in 1770, where he was buried in the First Presbyterian Church.

“A Mother of Israel”: Selina, Countess of Huntingdon

In the last ten years there has been a remarkable interest and resurgence in studies on Selina, the Countess of Huntingdon. Note in particular the three recent books by Edwin Welch, Boyd Schlenker and Faith Cook and the reprint of the massive two-volume set *The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon* by A.C.H. Seymour.⁸

Selina was born into an aristocratic, although much impoverished, home, the Shirleys. In many ways she had a rather sad family life. In all likelihood she spent some of her childhood in Ireland. We know very little about her childhood and youth.⁹ One childhood incident recorded in a recent British thesis describes Selina at age nine having a life-influencing experience as she witnessed a funeral procession. She followed the procession to the grave then discovered it was the corpse of a girl of her own age. “She listened intently to the solemn service and was deeply moved . . . with a sad heart and wet eyes, she fervently prayed that, when God should be pleased to take her away, he would deliver her from all her fears and give her a happy departure.”¹⁰

In 1728 Selina Shirley married Theophilus Hastings, the Earl of Huntingdon, thus becoming known ever after as Selina, Countess of Huntingdon. She was increasingly attracted to evangelical teaching and, likely sometime in 1738 during an extended illness, it is believed she was “converted” as she “cast herself wholly upon Christ for life and salvation and she was filled with peace and joy . . .”¹¹ This was under a combination of Methodist and Moravian influences, but it was not long before she

rejected the growing “Quietism” in Moravianism at this time, thus siding with John Wesley’s Methodism. Some of the nobility found her “religious enthusiasm” unacceptable and urged her husband to control her conduct. The Earl sent her to see the Bishop of Gloucester and he found her not to be an inarticulate enthusiast. The Bishop disparaged over recently ordaining George Whitefield, to which the Countess of Huntingdon responded: “My Lord, mark my words; when you are on your dying bed, that will be one of the few ordinations you will reflect upon with complacence.”¹²

Thus began in 1738 over fifty years of engaging in living the Christian life and spreading the gospel. Her life was very full, challenging the nobility, establishing a college, building chapels, sending forth preachers and missionaries, and helping the poor. It has been calculated that she gave £100,000 to Christian work. When one studies the English and Welsh evangelical leaders of the eighteenth-century Dissenters, Methodists and Anglicans, it is worthwhile to study their relationship with the Countess of Huntingdon. The list reads like a “who’s who” of the eighteenth-century evangelical movement: John and Charles Wesley, John Fletcher, George Whitefield, William Romaine, Henry Venn, John Berridge, Howell Harris, Daniel Rowlands, Philip Doddridge and Andrew Gifford each in some way had a connection to the Countess of Huntingdon. The Roman Catholic John Henry Newman summarized her life as follows:

She devoted herself, her means, her time, her thoughts to the cause of Christ. She did not spend her money on herself; she did not allow the homage paid to her rank to remain with herself; she passed these on, and offered them up to Him from whom her gifts came . . .¹³

For most of her life the Countess remained within the Church of England fanning revival within it. By 1748 she had parted company with the Wesleys over the same basic doctrinal matters that separated Whitefield from the Wesleys. Thus she became aligned more with Calvinistic Methodism and in 1783, eight years before her death, the Secession occurred from the Church of England and as a result her own Dissenting body known as the Countess of Huntingdon, Connexion was established. The Connexion adopted its own doctrinal standards, The Fifteen Articles of Faith. These standards were a modification and collation of the Westminster Confession of Faith and Shorter Catechism and the Thirty-

Nine Articles of the Church of England and reflect a Calvinistic Methodist theology.¹⁴

Prior to the 1783 Secession, the Countess was able to appoint chaplains in towns and cities as a peeress. She took full advantage of the privilege and thus through her chapels and chaplains she was able to conduct ministries in the leading summer resorts of the nobility such as Bath. Likewise, itinerant ministries amongst the lower classes and small centres received her support.

Critical to this end was the obtaining of a supply of preachers. The need arose for a training college for which plans commenced in 1765. In 1768 such a college was established at Trevecca in South Wales. Trevecca College was brought into existence in 1768 when six students were expelled from Oxford University for being “Enthusiasts who talked of inspiration, regeneration and drawing nigh to God.” Rev. George Whitefield opened the College at Trevecca on the 24 August 1768. The curriculum was a combination of arts classes and theology classes, together with a strong stress on itinerant preaching. There were likely between twelve and twenty-four students per year and all students were fully provided for by the Countess who served as the chief patron. Others such as Lady Chesterfield, King George’s daughter, also provided some funding. The character of the college was clearly evangelical and Calvinistic as reflected in the Fifteen Articles, the Countess’ correspondence with John Brown of Haddington, and her own theological position. Yet there was a certain transdenominational character to the college whereby “students may be ordained in the Established Church or other Churches of Christ.”¹⁵

Selina, Countess of Huntingdon stood in an utterly unique position in the evangelical fold of the eighteenth century. Her influence was immense and reached areas not just in England, Wales and America, but also in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Selina’s last letter was written to the imminent Calvinistic Methodist leader of Wales, Rev. Thomas Charles of Bala and in it she wrote: “I am weak and low and immersed in the great business of preparing missions for the South Seas and the Indian Nations in America. I wish to die immersed in my dear and blessed Master’s business . . .”¹⁶ This brief quotation describes her vision and determination and shows the broad range of the evangelical movement of the eighteenth century. I turn now specifically to Nova Scotia to see the connection with this “nursing Mother of Israel” and George Whitefield.

William Furmage (Liverpool, Halifax)

Very little is known about William Furmage's life or work, and specifically, his labours for Calvinistic Methodism in Halifax. Secondary sources appear either to make assertions and conclusions without clear evidence or to contradict themselves. Potkay and Burr state that John Marrant "was accompanied on his voyage to Nova Scotia by a fellow black Huntingdonian, William Furmage."¹⁷ Yet Marrant did not arrive in Nova Scotia until 20 November 1785 whereas a letter exists dated 9 May 1785 from Rev. Furmage in Halifax to the Countess. Also, Marrant was not ordained at Bath until 15 May 1785. Thus, Marrant and Furmage did not sail together for Nova Scotia, and this makes Furmage the first of four Huntingdonian missionaries to Nova Scotia/New Brunswick.

But what about this second statement, concerning Furmage as "a fellow black Huntingdonian"? Two secondary sources make such a statement, one being Potkay and Burr, and the other Bridglal Pachai.¹⁸ The recent biographies of the Countess do not draw this conclusion; this calls into question the news story "Ordination of the First Colored Minister in the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion" printed in *The Harbinger* in 1856, which was a story about John Marrant.¹⁹ Either Marrant was not the first black ordained in the Connexion, or Furmage was never ordained, yet this does not appear to be the case from the internal evidence in the letters. For example, Furmage gives evidence of theological terminology and signs his letters to the Countess "V.D.M.," which was commonly used by ordained ministers and may freely be translated "Minister of the Divine Word." Further, with Furmage's identity a recent reference has been made to his Anglicanism.²⁰ To date I see no evidence of this fact unless he belonged to the Church of England prior to the Secession to form the Countess of Huntingdon, Connexion. To date proof has not been forthcoming on this question of Furmage's background. My conclusion is that Furmage was white and arrived in advance of Marrant, perhaps as early as 1782. T. Watson Smith in his monumental work *History of the Methodist Church* states that William Furmage, a Calvinistic Methodist went to Liverpool, Nova Scotia in the Autumn of 1783 where he "occupied the pulpit of 'Old Zion' until the following spring [1784]," when the opposition of the New Lights obliged him to return to Halifax.²¹ However, John Wesley's letter written from London to William Black in Nova Scotia is dated 26 February 1783 and includes a reference to Black's comments not only about Alline, the antinomian mystic, but also about "Lady

Huntingdon's Preacher" who could "do as much hurt as he [Alline]."²² Thus who else could this Calvinistic preacher be other than William Furmage who was still at that time in Halifax prior to going to Liverpool. This raises the date of Furmage's arrival in Nova Scotia to at least February 1783, but more likely 1782. Smith goes on to say that Furmage remained in Halifax until his death, where he was buried at the gate of the old burying ground "where all who passed in and out might walk over it." Eventually his stone was removed as an obstruction at the gate. He was known to be very short yet "something of an orator."²³ I conclude that Furmage was in Halifax in 1782 and involved in ministry there, then he went to Liverpool in 1783. In spring 1784 he returned to Halifax.

It appears that Furmage was "stated supply" at the Congregationalist meeting house in Liverpool for a minimum of six months. Betts does not list him as one of the ministers, rather from 1783 to 1791 there is a gap with no minister listed. This was clearly a difficult period in this congregation's history as they also had the visit from Henry Alline in 1781, and in 1783 from William Black. It appears that the majority of the congregation were satisfied with William Furmage and they were pleased with his "credentials," yet shortly after the congregation divided with part going New Light and part into the Methodist fold, and some remaining Old Light and others Baptist.²⁴ It should be noted that one of the Countess' missionaries to New Brunswick, Rev. John James, also began his labours with a Congregational church at Sheffield/Maugerville. Furmage's ministry at this old Puritan New England church transplanted to Liverpool, Nova Scotia no doubt was not radically distinct from his theology as a Calvinistic Methodist in the George Whitefield tradition. Both groups were paedobaptists, experimental Calvinists, but not "radical" New Lights, hence the conflict for Furmage with one party in Liverpool.

What else can be gleaned from William Furmage's ministry? The best sources I have found to-date have been his three letters to the Countess preserved in the Cheshunt Archives, Cambridge. One can recreate something of his Halifax ministry for Calvinistic Methodism. Furmage was clear on his theological position--he rejected Arminianism or universal atonement theories which he saw as coming out of New England, but curiously makes no direct mention of Wesley. He supported the Countess' Secession from the Church of England and the Halifax Society also supported this as he records in his 3 December 1785 letter. In Halifax he kept very busy with the "Society," namely the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, plus preaching at the poor house and to the orphans and

to the many “poor negroes here.” It does not appear, however, that the “Society” was primarily a black chapel in Halifax, unlike Birchtown. There were at least thirty-nine members in the Halifax Chapel and they used the Countess’ hymnal and Society tickets. The three letters also reveal that he was delighted with the arrival of a second missionary sent out by the Countess to Nova Scotia. The letter reveals mutual respect between the two ministers and Furmage was willing to have Marrant preach in Halifax at the Chapel. The letter gives no hint at efforts to develop a denominational structure for association meetings. This is not surprising given the context of the mid-1780s. I still have a series of questions to answer: when did the Calvinist Methodist Chapel disband in Halifax? Where did they hold their meetings? And who were the thirty-nine members? Was Furmage married while living in Liverpool or Halifax?²⁵

John Marrant and Black Calvinistic Methodism

I now begin with the identity of the second Calvinistic Methodist missionary sent to Nova Scotia--John Marrant. Here the complex web of transatlantic connections is most fascinating.

In 1769 George Whitefield was conducting what was to be his last southern preaching tour in Charleston, South Carolina. Two black youths appeared at the meeting house where Whitefield was preaching, and these youths had a stated purpose in view, namely, to disrupt the meeting and create enough noise to drown out Whitefield’s preaching. The one black youth was John Marrant who had brought with him his French horn to aid in the disturbance. The other black youth remains nameless. Marrant was born in New York as a free black, attended school in St. Augustine, Florida, and was trained in music in Charleston where he received lessons in violin, French horn and dance.²⁶ Neither he, his mother, nor his siblings were Christians in 1769 when John attended Whitefield’s preaching in the Charleston meeting house. Marrant was caught by Whitefield’s sermon text and never did create the intended disturbance. Whitefield met with Marrant after the service in the vestry and said “Jesus Christ has Got Thee at Last.”²⁷ Marrant remained under deep spiritual conviction and was visited by a Baptist minister because Whitefield had already left for his journey north. Less than three weeks following Whitefield’s sermon, when Marrant left Charleston, Marrant clearly affirmed that he was a converted man and that the Lord had used George Whitefield in his conversion.

George Whitefield died less than one year later and never knew what was to occur subsequently in Marrant's life. The preaching of Whitefield in the south was freely addressed to blacks and whites--"I have freely offered the Lord Jesus to them . . ." and the eunuch was "a negro like yourselves."²⁸

After his conversion John Marrant went to visit his mother, who lived 84 miles away from Charleston. The visit did not go well. He left and came amongst the Cherokee Indians and escaped execution by them; in an interesting turn of events Marrant became a missionary to the Cherokee, thus making him the first black missionary to the American Indians. He lived amongst the Cherokees for two years and several were converted.²⁹ At the outbreak of the American Revolution he was pressed into the British Navy and was discharged in England where he came to work for a cotton merchant in London. While in London he joined a Countess of Huntingdon Chapel thus commencing a relationship with Whitefield's patroness. It was entirely logical for Marrant to join the Countess of Huntingdon Connexion in London due to the common link with Whitefield.

In 1784 John Marrant received a letter from his Black Loyalist brother in Nova Scotia, describing the need for Christian knowledge amongst the Black Loyalists. This letter sparked an interest with the Countess of Huntingdon and led to Marrant's ordination on 15 May 1785 at Vineyard's Chapel, Bath, England as a missionary to Nova Scotia for the Countess of Huntingdon, Connexion. It also should be noted that another letter had been sent from Nova Scotia to England to secure preachers for the Black Loyalists. Wesley was told this by Thomas Barry concerning Birchtown and its needs.³⁰ Thus both strands of Methodism were being informed of the need. Marrant described it in his published narrative this way:

During this time I saw my call to the ministry fuller and clearer; had a feeling concern for the salvation of my countrymen: I carried them constantly in the arms of prayer . . . and had continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, for my kinsmen, according to the flesh___I wrote a letter to my brother, who returned me an answer, in which he prayed some ministers would come and preach to them, and desired me to shew it to the minister whom I attended. I used to exercise my gifts on a Monday evening in prayer and exhortation and was approved of, and ordained at Bath. Her Ladyship having seen the letter from my brother in Nova Scotia, thought Providence called me

there: To which place I am now bound, and expect to sail in a few days.

I have now only to entreat the earnest prayers of all my kind Christian friends, that I may be carried safe there; kept humble, made faithful, and successful; that strangers may hear of and run to Christ; that Indian tribes may stretch out their hands to God; that the black nations may be made white in the blood of the Lamb; that vast multitudes of Hard tongues and a strange speech, may learn the language of Canaan, and sing the song of Moses, and of the Lamb; and we all with fervent Hearts, and willing tongues, sing hallelujah: the kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of God, and of his Christ, Amen and Amen.

FINIS.³¹

The full title of the *Narrative* is *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. Taken down from his own Relation, arranged, corrected, and Published By the Rev. Mr. Aldridge.* The *Narrative* has gone through more than fifty printings from the first London edition of 1785! To unravel simply the editions and printings of Marrant's *Narrative* is a feat in itself.³² It was printed in London, Dublin, Halifax, Leeds, York, Brighton, Carmarthen, Caerdydd, Yarmouth, Manchester and now more recently in Boston, Nendelm (in Liechtenstein), Knoxville and New York, for more scholarly purposes. The *Narrative* appears to have evolved from its first purpose as a promotional of the Countess' sending out a missionary to Nova Scotia to a greater emphasis that this was a tremendous story about an Indian captivity narrative. The title page of the Halifax edition of 1812 makes this very clear as it drops portions of the original title and adds several new lines “. . . being at last taken by an Indian hunter among the Cherokees, where he was condemned to die, with an account of the conversion of the King of the Cherokees and His Daughter.”³³ Some London reviews of the *Narrative* found it to be “miraculous” and likely embellished, yet it sold well, including a Welch translation. Rev. Aldridge was not the only person to be told the narrative, as Lady Anne Erskine (an intimate of Selina and a Trustee upon her death) had also heard it directly from Marrant and there was a poem published in Bath at the time just prior to his ordination that was based upon Marrant's story. The original context was clearly in

preparation for his ordination and going forth as a missionary to Nova Scotia.³⁴

Concerning Marrant's time in Britain one must ask, did he study at the Countess' College in Wales--Trevecca College? The student lists for Trevecca College do not record John Marrant as having ever studied there. However, there were actually four Huntingdonian missionaries to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in the 1780s and one should take note that all four names are absent from such lists.³⁵ Despite this absence, the two missionaries to New Brunswick definitely studied at Trevecca and there are hints that the two to Nova Scotia also did.³⁶ I believe the missionary letter from Furbage to the Countess speaks of an intimacy with the "college brethren" leading to the possibility that the writer may have spent time there. Since Trevecca class lists from 1768 to 1791 are very unreliable, and since the course tended to be very short (often only "one year," plus much itinerant preaching), it is highly probable that Marrant passed through Trevecca College at some point while in Britain and under the Countess' influence, as some secondary sources assert.

John Marrant's ministry centered around Birchtown where a Huntingdon Chapel of forty families was formed. It appears that Marrant was reacquainted with old friends and family in Birchtown so the core group for his new Calvinistic Methodist Chapel was not necessarily initially by conversion.³⁷ Yet he did not limit his ministry to the black community of Birchtown. He also preached to the Micmacs and to other black settlements in Nova Scotia and upon a more limited number of occasions to white congregations. The nature of Marrant's itinerant ministry needs fuller expansion now that Marrant's *Journal* is once again available.³⁸ Marrant experienced strife with Wesleyan Methodists on several occasions. The Wesleyan Methodist Philip Marchinton wrote a letter to the blacks of Shelburne and Birchtown "warning them of the dire errors of Marrant's teachings." In 1786 Moses Wilkinson, a black Wesleyan Methodist, sold government supplies that Marrant understood were to be for his Huntingdonian people and finally Wilkinson tried to prevent Marrant from using the Birchtown meetinghouse so that Freeborn Garrettson could use it. Potkay and Burr summarize Marrant's Birchtown ministry as follows:

Despite this opposition, Marrant built a chapel in Birchtown, ordained two black men, Cato Perkins and William Ash, as preachers, taught over one hundred children in the Birchtown school, preached four

times a week, and answered other towns' demands for spiritual ministering. Exhausted with this schedule, Marrant relinquished charge of the school by late November of 1786 and focussed on his route of itinerant preaching.³⁹

Marrant went to Boston in January 1788 where he was associated with Prince Hall and the Black Masons, but returned to Nova Scotia to marry Elizabeth Herries. Others think he was already married to Mellia. There is some confusion about this. While in Boston Marrant became a member of the Freemason Lodge in March 1789; on 24 June 1789 he delivered a sermon to the Lodge members. This sermon was subsequently published and it is believed by some that the sermon by Marrant was greatly edited by Prince Hall for publication.⁴⁰ While in Boston, Marrant preached to both whites and blacks and worked as a schoolteacher.⁴¹ A question that many raise is "why is a Calvinistic Methodist minister joining a masonic lodge?" Generally, evangelicals have not associated with freemasonry. George Whitefield was a close friend to one of America's leading freemasons—Benjamin Franklin. There is no evidence Whitefield spoke out against the Lodge. Also, Marrant joined a black lodge, one which had originated with blacks who had served with the 38th British Foot Infantry in 1775. These blacks were organized as African Lodge on 3 July 1776; in March 1784 they petitioned the Grand Lodge of England for a charter to organize a regular masonic lodge. Such a charter was granted in September 1784. This lodge under Hall's leadership championed equal rights and education for Boston's blacks.⁴² It is only natural that Marrant was drawn to it and in reality it was only an extension of what he had done in Birchtown, Nova Scotia.

Marrant was a champion for the black Loyalists in Nova Scotia, appalled at the terrible conditions he often found. In 1789 John Marrant returned to London, England where he ministered at the Countess of Huntingdon Chapel, Islington and two years later died and was buried in that chapel's cemetery.⁴³

The logical question to ask is what became of the Huntingdonian Chapel in Birchtown, Nova Scotia? Marrant's successors were Cato Perkins and William Ash, but this congregation left en masse for Sierra Leone. The promise of land in Nova Scotia did not materialize and when the Sierra Leone Company was formed under such leaders as William Wilberforce and Granville Sharp, the black Nova Scotian Huntingdonians accepted the Company's offer to found a settlement in Africa for freed

slaves. Thus, in January 1792 almost 1,200 black Loyalists left Halifax harbour for Sierra Leone. On board those ships were three groupings of Christians--Wesleyan Methodists, Baptists and Huntingdonians. Before sailing for Sierra Leone, religious leaders were each appointed captains to keep order on the ship.⁴⁴ When they disembarked in Freetown, the people were led ashore singing the hymn by William Hammond, found in *A Select Collection of Hymns to be universally sung in all the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel*:

Awake, and sing the song
Of Moses and the Lamb;
Wake every heart and every tongue
To praise the Saviour's Name.

Ye pilgrims on the road
To Zion's city, sing;
Rejoice ye in the Lamb of God,
In Christ, the eternal King.⁴⁵

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the trail of connections between Whitefield's ministry in Charleston, South Carolina, Selina, the Countess of Huntingdon and Nova Scotia; one connection came through a connexion minister, and one through supporting a black Calvinistic Methodist preacher of the Huntingdonian Connexion, sent to Nova Scotia in 1785. Though the actual story in Nova Scotia is brief, only a few years (10) in the second half of the eighteenth century, it is important. It involved some of the most significant leaders of the Great Awakening, including those involved in great Clapham Sect philanthropic enterprise in Sierra Leone. It took place during major political events such as the American Revolution, and the settlement of loyalists in Nova Scotia. It involves the story of the Christian Church and one small branch, the Huntingdonians, who still continue to have churches and schools today at the beginning of the twenty-first century in Sierra Leone. Perhaps Andrew Walls offers an interesting perspective on all of this:

There is something symbolic in the fact that the first church in tropical Africa in modern times was not a missionary Creation at all. It arrived ready-made, a body of people of African birth or descent who had

come to faith in Christ as plantation slaves or as soldiers in the British army during the American war of Independence, or as farmers or squatters in Nova Scotia after it.⁴⁶

They also highlight the nature of eighteenth century evangelicalism as a transatlantic movement--Marrant was converted under Whitefield in South Carolina, was a member of a Countess of Huntingdon Chapel, London, the patroness who was highly influenced by Whitefield and sent Marrant to Nova Scotia as a missionary. Theologically this small band of missionaries sent out by the Countess were Calvinistic Methodists, a virtually forgotten group in the history of the church in Canada. This is also an amazing study in both the role of patronesses in Methodism of the eighteenth century and of the theological debates of that day.

Endnotes

1. I want to express my thanks to Margaret Staplehurst, Archivist of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion and to Dr. Janet Tollington, Director of the Cheshunt Foundation, Westminster College, Cambridge for so freely answering my enquiries and allowing me access to the resources in their care for this paper. I am also appreciative of Dr. Richard Virr's (Montreal) kindness in reading this paper and offering many helpful comments.
2. Arnold A. Dallimore, *George Whitefield* (Westchester: Crossway, 1979), 2: 201-203.
3. Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, 2: 432-433, 497, 503.
4. Alister McGrath, *To Know and Serve God: A Biography of James I. Packer* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997), 7, 18, 21.
5. Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, 1: 66-70.
6. Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, 1: 76-77.
7. Boyd Stanley Schlenker, "'To Convert the Poor People in America': The Bethesda Orphanage and the Thwarted Zeal of the Countess of Huntingdon," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 78, No. 2 (1994): 225-256.
8. See my review article, "The Countess of Huntingdon--Recent Studies," *Banner of Truth* 429 (June 1999): 24-27; Edwin Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrim A Reassessment of the Life of the Countess of Huntingdon* (Llandybie, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1995); Boyd Stanley Schlenker, *Queen of the Methodists: The Countess of Huntingdon and the Eighteenth-Century Crisis*

of Faith and Society (Durham: Durham Academic Press, 1997); Faith Cook, *Selina Countess of Huntingdon Her Pivotal Role in the 18th Century Evangelical Awakening* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2001); and A.C.H. Seymour, *The Life and Times of the Countess of Huntingdon*, 2 vols. (Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire: Tentmaker, 2000).

9. Schlenther, *Queen of the Methodists*, 5-6.
10. Kenneth Morey, "The Theological Position of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion" (B.A. Theology Thesis, Council for National Academic Awards, 1990), 3.
11. Morey, "The Theological Position of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion," 4; and John R. Tyson, "Lady Huntingdon's Reformation," *Church History* 64 (1995): 582.
12. Thomas Haweis, *Succinct History*; cited in Morey, "The Theological Position of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion," 5.
13. S.E. Boyd Smith, "The Effective Countess: Lady Huntingdon and the 1780 edition of A Select Collection of Hymns," *The Hymn* 44 No. 3 (1993): 32.
14. Gilbert W. Kirby, *The Elect Lady* (Rushden, Northants: The Trustees of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, 1972; rev. ed., 1990), 77-82. See Morey, "The Theological Position of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion," 39-48 for the best study of the composition of the Fifteen Articles. For an analysis of John Wesley and the Countess of Huntingdon theological controversy see James E. Hull, "The Controversy Between John Wesley and the Countess of Huntingdon: Its Origin, Development and consequences" (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 1959).
15. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Significance of Trevecca College 1768-91* (London: Epworth Press, 1969), 3-8, 21; Geoffrey Thomas, "Trevecca College and the Countess of Huntingdon," *Banner of Truth* 61(1968): 5-14; H. McLachlan, *English Education Under the Test Acts: Being the History of the Non-Conformist Academics 1662-1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1931), 14; Robert MacKenzie, *John Brown of Haddington* (London: Banner of Truth, 1964), 158ff; Dorothy Eugina Sherman Brown, "Evangelicals and Education in Eighteenth-Century Britain: A Study of Trevecca College, 1768-1792" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1992).
16. James Hull, "The Controversy Between John Wesley and the Countess of Huntingdon," 70.

17. "John Marrant," in *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Adam Potkay and Sandra Burr (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 68. Unfortunately other secondary sources also make this assumption. See Elizabeth Currie Grant, "The Development of Krio Christianity in Sierra Leone 1792-1861" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Edinburgh, 1993), 72.
18. Bridglal Pachai, *Peoples of the Maritimes Blacks* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1997), 17.
19. See Welch, *Spiritual Pilgrim*, 205; and Cook, *Selina*, 400, 440. Cook omits Furmage completely.
20. Pachai, *Blacks*, 17.
21. T. Watson Smith, *History of the Methodist Church within the territories embraced in the late conference of Eastern British America* (Halifax: Methodist Book Room, 1877), 174. Smith only makes one reference to John "Morant" in volume I (162). The name receives a different spelling and is not included in the index. Likewise, Smith spells Furmage as "Firmage."
22. Matthew Richey, *A Memoir of the Late William Black* (Halifax: William Cunnabell, 1839), 99.
23. Smith, *History of the Methodist Church*, 158, 174.
24. E. Arthur Betts, *Congregational Churches in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick 1749-1925* (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press, 1985), 39, 165-166. Unfortunately, Ian F. MacKinnon's, *Settlements and Churches in Nova Scotia 1749-1776* (Montreal: Walker Press, 1930), 74 does not deal with Furmage's ministry in Liverpool.
25. Included as an Appendix is a full transcription of Furmage's letters in order for Canadian readers to learn more about the Countess' mission to Nova Scotia (for the original copies see Cheshunt College Foundation, Cambridge, Correspondence of Countess of Huntingdon, A3/12, No. 13, 14, and 15).
26. James W. St G. Walker, "John Marrant," in *Dictionary Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 4: 514-516.
27. John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, A Black, Now Going to Preach the Gospel in Nova Scotia*, ed. W. Aldridge (London: Gilbert & Plummer, 1785), 9-13.
28. Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, 1: 495-509.
29. Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings*, 20-35.

30. E. Arthur Betts, *Bishop Black and His Preachers* (Sackville: Tribune Press, 1976), 19.
31. Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings*, 39-40.
32. "John Marrant," in *Black Atlantic Writers of the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Adam Potkay and Sandra Burr (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995), 71-72. Here the editors attempt to sort out this tangle of printings.
33. John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Life of John Marrant . . .* (J. Nicholson: Halifax, 1812).
34. "John Marrant," in *Black Atlantic Writers*, 68.
35. S.C. Orchard, *Cheshunt College: A Record of the College Founded by Selina, Dowager Countess of Huntingdon at Trevecca in 1768, moved to Cheshunt in 1792, and to Cambridge in 1905* (n.p.: The Governors of Cheshunt College, 1968), 20-23; Geoffrey F. Nutall, "The Students of Trevecca College: 1768-1791," *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, II(1968), 249-277; and Kenneth B. Stone, "The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion" in *Christian Words* (December 1966), 4. Stone writes with certainty that Trevecca students were ministering in Nova Scotia.
36. John Bradford, *An Address to the Inhabitants of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, in North America, occasioned by the Mission of Two Ministers, John James, and Charles William Milton, sent out by the Countess of Huntingdon, from her College in South Wales, to preach the Glad Tidings of Salvation by Jesus Christ to lost sinners* (London: Hughes and Walsh, 1788), i.
37. Potkay and Burr, *Black Atlantic Writers*, 69.
38. Joanna Brooks and John Saillant, eds., "*Face Zion Forward*": *First Writers of the Black Atlantic, 1785-1798* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002), 94-160. It is not my purpose in this paper to analyse fully the *Journal* but will make summary statements and leave this to a more detailed study.
39. Potkay and Burr, *Black Atlantic Writers*, 69.
40. Potkay and Burr, *Black Atlantic Writers*, 74, 106-118.
41. Potkay and Burr, *Black Atlantic Writers*, 70.
42. Oral interview with Dr. Charles Roberts on "Military Lodges and Black Lodges," 16 March 2003; and "A Brief History of Prince Hall Freemasonry in Massachusetts," www.princehall.org (accessed 19 March 2003).

43. Walker, "John Marrant," 515; and Grant, "The Development of Krio Christianity in Sierra Leona 1792-1861," 71-72, 80.
44. Christopher Fyfe, "The Countess of Huntingdon Connexion in Nineteenth Century Sierra Leone," *Sierra Leone Bulletin Religion* 4, No.2 (July 1962): 53-61; Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 31-34; Andrew F. Walls, "A Christian Experiment: The Early Sierra Leone Colony," in *The Mission of the Church and the Propagation of the Faith*, ed. G.J. Cuming (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 107-110; J.B. Elliott, *Lady Huntingdon's Connexion in Sierra Leone* (London: Society for the Spread of the Gospel at Home and Abroad, 1851), ix-x, 13-14, 18; and Adams Archibald, "The Story of the Deportation of Negroes from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone," *Nova Scotia History Society* 7 (1871): 129-154.
45. John Julian, *A Dictionary of Hymnology* (London: John Murray, 1892), 483; and William Hammond, "Awake and Sing the Song," *Christian Hymns* (Bryntirion, Bridgend, Wales: Evangelical Movement of Wales, 1977), No. 659. Several writers have wrongly attributed this hymn to Isaac Watts (see Grant, "The Development of Krio Christianity in Sierra Leona 1792-1861," 80).
46. Andrew F. Walls, *The Significance of Christianity in Africa* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland- St. Colm's Education Centre and College, 1989), 5.

Appendix I

Letter #1

Rev. William Furmage, N.S. to Countess of Huntingdon

Outside: The Honourable Countess of Huntingdon of Huntingdon
College near Hay, Brecon S. Wales

Hon'd Madam

Pardon me in troubling your Ladyship with a few lines, retaining a grateful sense of your favours bestowed upon your unworthy Servant, glory be to the Great God, that the Redeemer Orders all things well; I am persuaded that nothing can afford you more pleasure than to hear the Kingdom of Christ is advancing and raising itself above the Kingdom of Darkness.

I have the pleasure to acquaint your Ladyship that the Lord has not left himself without witness in the dark parts of Nova Scotia and though I am unworthy, I thank the Great Lord of all Things that my Poor Petitions does pass through the Golden Senser, Being Perfumed with the sweet odours of the merits of a crucified Jesus--many can set to their seal that [the] Lord has revealed Himself to many souls and can now rejoice--But my greatest sorrow is that I can do no more for Him, who has done and suffered so much for me.

Honourable Madam how much are you indebted to Divine Grace that the Lord has been pleased to apoint you over a number of those happy few to whom it is given to know the mysteries of God.

I preach three times every week, meet Society once, Preach at the Poor house, and to the Orphans. Beside preaching every Lord's Day--New England at present is much in confusion having the doctrines of Arminianism and Universalism much propagated and confessed--the Lord has pleased to work upon the minds of many poor Negroes here--I could be happy to hear from Your Ladyship that thereby, whilst you are supporting the cause of Christ in Europe, you may refresh my Soul by a line, which, Honourable Madam, if you would but think me worthy, it would be esteemed as an honour conferred on one though unworthy.

Yet Your Ladyships, Servant at Command
Wm. Furmage, V.D.M.

Nova Scotia
May 9th, 1785

P.S. Your Ladyship may direct for me at Captain R. Willis, Mill St., Rother-smithe(?) London--Next opportunity God willing I shall write many more particulars.

Letter #2

Rev. Wm. Furnage, N.S. to Countess of Huntingdon

Outside: The Honourable Countess of Huntingdon
Spa Fields, London

Honourable Madam,

Yours I received with a more than usual joy, especially when I found the cause of God flourishing in England and Wales, it afforded me an unspeakable satisfaction that you thought me an object worthy of our notice--but to add to my gay no sooner had perused yours with earnest thanksgiving on your behalf.

But I was surprised of the arrival of my dear Brother Marrant who continued to preach with me a fortnight and last Lord's Day he sailed for Birch Town--the small Society I have joins me in the Secession and they say they have reason to thank the Lord that I ever (though accidentally) came hither. Since my last two more are wrought upon of which is rejoicing in the pardoning love of Jesus--many flock to hear the simple truths of the Gospel.

The Little Society in close Connection which consist of 39 besides others stand [unopposed?], all of which unanimously join in fervent prayer for the increase of our Connection which appellation we have took up always to distinguish ourselves--the lips of the swearer, lyer, and whoremongers etc.--are now turned into prayer and praise, Families who lived without prayer are now becoming praying families all of which acknowledge your mindfulness of them and in return they ever are bound to pray begging your Ladyship to accept of their Christian love--One thing amongst many others we are at lost for and that is we have but one of your Lady's Hymn Books which I have, and I could earnestly wish if it be in your power to send me out some as the Society and the publick in General would be glad to have them universally sung. Likewise some Society ticketts and if you will be so condescending as to send me a few--your Ladyship may direct them to the care of Mr. Pickering, Mulberry Gardens Chapel who will convey them to my friends.

I hope you are still rolling all your concerns upon him who has amidst our manifold distresses and cares appeared for you--Dear Mr. Marrant joins me in my address to you and cordial love to all dear Brethren in the Connection--as

soon I hear from Birch Town I shall embrace the very first opportunity of writing in the mean while.

Beg an interest in your prayers and a continued correspondence is the earnest request.

Of Your Ladyship's unworthy
Servant at Command
William Furnage V.D.M.

Halifax, Nova Scotia
3 Dec. 1785

P.S. Your Ladyship please to direct for me at Halifax, Nova Scotia, To the care of Capt. R. Furnage near Mill Strains (or Stains) Southwork, London

Letter #3

Wm. Furnage, N.S. to Countess of Huntingdon

Outside: The Honourable Countess of Huntingdon
Hay, South Wales

Honourable Lady,

Yours I received with an unexpressible gay and satisfaction. Especially when I found one coming to be a helper in God's Vineyard to maintain the pure truths of the System of Divinity which I an unworthy dead dog have endeavoured to support. Scarcely had I read of our Ladyship's letter with much thankfulness--but so to my abundant consolation I received intelligence of the arrival of my dear Brother Marrant who preached Friday 11th with much satisfaction.

Thanks be unto the Holy Redeemer of man's salvation that his work seems to prosper amidst the many oppositions of his Kingdom.

I have many agreeable accounts to relate which I trust will in my next letter be very acceptable--My cordial and respectful love to your Ladyships companion Lady A[nne Erskine] and likewise to my much esteemed friends the Rev. Mr. W[ills] and Mr. T[aylor] may the Lord bless them and Crown their faithful undertakings with a Divine blessing--Blessed be to the Name of

the Holy child Jesus that we do not secede from the truth, tho from the corrupt errors of the antichristian world—my kind love with my Brother Marrant to all our Dear Brethren in College not forgetting Dear Mr. Phillip's hoping that none of them will ever lay any false or bastard foundations but boldly to maintain the truths as it is in Jesus Christ. I must confine myself as the vessel is to sail this very Sabbath. But more of things relative to the progress of religion in my next _____ my Dear Brother Marrant joins me in wishing you all spiritual blessings in heavenly places through our dear Redeemer.

I am Your Ladyship's
Devoted Servant (First to God)
William Furmage, V.D.M.

Halifax, Nova Scotia
Nov. 12th, 1786