

# Memoirs of the Life of Boston King, A Black Preacher.

Written by Himself, during his Residence at Kingswood  
School.

From *The Methodist Magazine*, March-June 1798

**This is an annotated edition of *Memoirs of the Life of Boston King, a Black Preacher*, serialized in *The Methodist Magazine* between March-June 1798. Original spelling, punctuation and page citations have been retained; minor typographic errors have been corrected.**

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**THE  
Methodist Magazine,  
for March, 1798.**

MEMOIRS of the LIFE of BOSTON KING  
a Black Preacher.

Written by Himself, during his Residence at Kingswood School. <sup>1</sup>

It is by no means an agreeable task to write an account of my Life, yet my gratitude to Almighty GOD, who delivered my affliction, and looked upon me in my low estate, who delivered me from the hand of the oppressor, and established my goings, impels me to acknowledge his goodness: And the importunity of many respectable friends, whom I highly esteem, have induced me to set down, as they occurred to my memory, a few of the most striking incidents I have met with in my pilgrimage. I am well aware of my inability for such an undertaking, having only a slight acquaintance with the language in which I write, and being obliged to snatch a few hours, now and then, from pursuits, which to me, perhaps are more profitable. However, such as it is, I present it to the Friends of Religion and Humanity, hoping that will be of some use to mankind.

I was born in the Province of South Carolina, 28 miles from Charles-Town.<sup>2</sup> My father was stolen away from Africa when he was young.<sup>3</sup> I have reason to believe that he lived in the fear and love of God. He attended to that true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He left no opportunity of hearing the Gospel, and never omitted praying with his family every night. He likewise read to them, and to as many as were inclined to hear. On the Lord's Day, he rose very early, and met his family: After which he worked in the field till about three in the afternoon, and then went into the woods and read till sunset: The slaves being obliged to work or on the Lord's Day to procure such things as were not allowed by their masters. He was beloved by his master, and he had the charge of the Plantation as a driver for many years. In his old age he was employed as a mill-cutter. Those who knew him, say, that they never heard him swear an oath, but on the contrary, he reprov'd all who spoke improper words in his hearing. To the utmost of his power he endeavoured to make his family happy, and his death was a very great loss to us all. My mother was employed chiefly in attending upon those that were sick, having some knowledge of the virtue of herbs, which she learned from the Indians. She likewise had the care of making the people's

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<sup>1</sup> King's narrative conforms to many slave narrative conventions. "I was born," which begins the second paragraph, came to be an anticipated marker of the slave narrative. King's elaborate focus of discussion on his father in this paragraph is, however, unusual. Generally, slave narratives did not claim an intact patriarchal family structure. See Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. [eds.], *The Slave's Narrative* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 152-53.

<sup>2</sup> King was born circa 1760 on the plantation of one Richard Waring. For this and further biographical information in these notes, see James W. St. G. Walker, "Boston King," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) V, 468-69. For further information on King's social environment, see R.W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971) and P.R. Blakely, "Boston King: A Negro Loyalist who Sought Refuge in Nova Scotia," *Dalhousie Review* 48 (1968-69) 347-56.

<sup>3</sup> King's father was a convert of the Anglican SPG [Society for the Propagation of the Gospel] missionaries of St. George's Parish. However, ten years before King was born, a South Carolina ordinance prohibited missionary work because several masters known for leniency were poisoned by their slaves. See Ellen Gibson Wilson, *The Loyal Blacks* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1976) 13-14.

clothes, and on these accounts was indulged with many privileges which the rest of the slaves were not.

When I was six years old I waited in the house upon my master. In my 9th year I was put to mind the cattle. Here I learnt from my comrades the horrible sin of Swearing and Cursing. When 12 years old, it pleased GOD to alarm me by a remarkable dream.<sup>4</sup> At mid-day, when the cattle went under the shade of the trees, I dreamt that the world was on fire, and that I saw the supreme Judge descend on his great white Throne! I saw millions of millions of souls; some of whom ascended up to heaven; while others were rejected, and fell into the greatest confusion and despair. This dream made such an impression upon my mind, that I refrained from swearing and bad company, and from that time, acknowledged that there was a GOD; but how to serve GOD I knew not. Being obliged to travel in different parts of America with race-horses, I suffered many hardships.<sup>5</sup> Happening one time to lose a boot belonging to the Groom, he would not suffer me to have any shoes all that Winter, which was a great punishment to me. When 16 years old, I was bound apprentice to a trade. After being in the shop about two years, I had the charge of my master's tools, which being very good, were often used by the men, if I happened to be out of the way: When this was the case, or any of them were lost, or misplaced, my master beat me severely, striking me upon the head, or any other part without mercy. One time in the holy-days, my master and the men being from home, and the care of the house devolving upon me and the younger apprentices, the house was broke open, and robbed of many valuable articles, thro' the negligence of the apprentice who had then the charge of it. When I came in the evening, and saw what had happened, my consternation was inconceivable, as all that we had in the world could not make good the loss. The week following, when the master came to town, I was beat in a most unmerciful manner, so that I was not able to do any thing for a fortnight. About eight months after, we were employed in building a store house, and nails were very dear at that time, it being in the American war, so that the work-men had their nails weighed out to them; on this account, they made the younger apprentices watch the nails while they were at dinner. It being my lot one day to take care of them, which I did till an apprentice returned to his work, and then I went to dine. In the mean time, he took away all the nails belonging to one of the journeymen, and he being of a very violent temper, accused me to the master with stealing of them. For this offence I was beat and tortured most cruelly, and was laid up three weeks before I was able to do any work. My proprietor, hearing of the usage I received, came to town, and severely reprimanded my master for beating me in such a manner, threatening him, that if he every heard the like again, he would

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<sup>4</sup> Virginia Lierson Brerton, in *From Sin to Salvation: Stories of Women's Conversions* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), argues that American spiritual narratives of the first half of the nineteenth century follow a uniform pattern: "They typically opened with the convert's early life, went on to describe a period of increasing sense of sinfulness, climaxed with conversion proper, and concluded with an account of the fruits of the experiences—usually zealous conduct of evangelical activity" (14). The slave narrative grew, ideologically and formally, Brerton suggests, from the spiritual narrative tradition. Both spiritual and slave narratives follow a tripartite structure: before, epiphany/conversion or escape/freedom, and after.

<sup>5</sup> The reiteration of hardships is another convention of slave narratives that echoes the trope of trials suffered by the sinner-convert in the spiritual narrative both before and, as a test of faith, after conversion as well.

take me away and put me to another master to finish my time, and make him pay for it. This had a good effect, and he gave much better to me, the two succeeding years, and I began to acquire a proper knowledge of my trade. My master being apprehensive that Charles-Town was in danger on account of the war, removed into the country, about 38 miles off. Here we built a large house for Mr. Waters, during which time the English took Charles-Town.<sup>6</sup> Having obtained leave one day to see my parents, who lived about 12 miles off, and it being late before I could go, I was obliged to borrow one of Mr. Waters's horses; but a servant of my masters, took the horse from me to go a little journey, and stayed two or three days longer than he expected the severest punishment, because the gentleman to whom the horse belonged was a very bad man, and knew not how to shew mercy. To escape his cruelty, I determined to go to Charles-Town, and throw myself into the hands of the English. They received me readily, and I began to feel the happiness of liberty, of which I knew nothing before, altho' I was much grieved at first, to be obliged to leave my friends, and reside among strangers. In this situation I was seized with the smallpox, and suffered great hardships; for all the Blacks affected with that disease, were ordered to be carried a mile from the camp, lest the solders should be infected, and disabled from marching.<sup>7</sup> This was a grievous circumstance to me and many others. We lay sometimes a whole day without any thing to eat or drink; but Providence sent a man, who belonged to the York volunteers whom I was acquainted with, to my relief. He brought me such things as I stood in need of; and by the blessing of the Lord I began to recover.

By this time, the English left the place; but as I was unable to march with the army, I expected to be taken by the enemy. However, when they came, and understood that we were ill of the small-pox, they precipitately left us for fear of infection. Two days after, the wagons were sent to convey us to the English Army, and we were put into a little cottage, (being 25 in number) about a quarter of a mile from the Hospital.

Being recovered, I marched with the army to Chamblem.<sup>8</sup> When we came to the headquarters, our regiment was 35 miles off. I stayed at the head-quarters three weeks, during which time our regiment had an engagement with the Americans, and the man who relieved me when I was ill of the small pox, was wounded in battle, and brought to the hospital. As soon as I heard of his misfortune, I went to see him, and tarried with him in the hospital six weeks, till he recovered; rejoicing that it was in my power to return him the kindness he had shewed it was in my power. From thence I went to a place about 35 miles off, where we stayed two months: at the expiration of which, an express

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<sup>6</sup> The British captured Charlestown, South Carolina, in May 1780.

<sup>7</sup> A smallpox epidemic swept North America between 1775 and 1782. More people died from smallpox than died fighting in the Revolutionary War. See Elizabeth Fenn, *Pox Americana* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001) 46.

<sup>8</sup> Located in Camden, South Carolina, Chamblem was a base where British commander Lord Cornwallis was stationed. Vincent Carretta, *Unchained Voices: An Anthology of Black Authors in the English-Speaking World of the Eighteenth Century* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001) 367.

came to the Colonel to decamp in fifteen minutes. When these orders arrived I was at a distance from the camp, catching some fish for the captain that I waited upon; upon returning to the camp, to my great astonishment, I found all the English were gone, and had left only a few militia. I felt my mind greatly alarmed, but Captain Lewes, who commanded the militia, said, "You need not be uneasy, for you will see your regiment before 7 o'clock tonight."<sup>9</sup> This satisfied me for the present, and in two hours we set off. As we were on the march, the Captain asked, "How will you like me to be your master?" I answered, that I was Captain Grey's servant. "Yes," said he, "but I expect they are all taken prisoners before now; and I have been long enough in the English service, and am determined to leave them." These words roused my indignation and I said some sharp things to him. But he calmly replied, "If you do not behave well, I will put you in irons, and give you a dozen stripes every morning." I now perceived that my case was desperate, and that I had nothing to trust to, but to wait the first opportunity for making my escape. The next morning, I was sent with a little boy over the river to an island to fetch the Captain some horses. When we came to the Island we found about fifty of the English horses, that Captain Lewis had stolen from them at different times while they were at Rockmount.<sup>10</sup> Upon our return to the Captain with the horses we were sent for, he immediately set off by himself. I stayed till about 10 o'clock, and then resolved to go to the English army. After traveling 24 miles, I came to a farmer's house, where I tarried all night, and was well used. Early in the morning I continued my journey till I came to the ferry, and found all the boats were on the other side of the river: After anxiously waiting some hours, Major Dial crossed the river, and asked me many questions concerning the regiment to which I belonged. I gave satisfactory answers, and he ordered the boat to put me over. Being arrived at the head-quarters, I informed my Captain that Mr. Lewes had deserted. I also told him of the horses which Lewes had conveyed to the Island. Three weeks after, our light horse went to the island and burnt his house; they likewise brought back forty of the horses, but he escaped.<sup>11</sup> I tarried with Captain Grey about a year, and then left him, and came to Nelson's-ferry.<sup>12</sup> Here I entered into the service of the commanding officer of that place. But our situation was very precarious, and we expected to be made prisoners every day; for the American had 1600 men, not far off; whereas our whole number amounted only to 250: But there were 1200 English about 30 miles off; only we knew not how to inform them of our danger, as the Americans were in possession of the country.<sup>13</sup> Our commander at length determined to send me with a letter, promising me great rewards, if I was successful in the business. I refused going on

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<sup>9</sup> Captain Lewes was commander of the Rocky Mount Militia Regiment, a Loyalist American militia (Wilson 33).

<sup>10</sup> Rockmount — a British military outpost in South Carolina.

<sup>11</sup> Light horse — lightly-armed cavalry.

<sup>12</sup> The British vacated their post at Nelson's Ferry, located on the Santee River near present-day Eutawville, in May 1781.

<sup>13</sup> In December 1782, British military forces left Charleston taking 5,327 slaves of Loyalist masters and emancipated refugees from rebel owners. Most were taken to Florida and Jamaica, but many went to New York and Nova Scotia (Carretta 367).

horse-back, and set off on foot about 3 o'clock in the afternoon; I expected every moment to fall in with the enemy, whom I well knew would shew me no mercy. I went on without interruption, till I got within six miles of my journey's end, and then was alarmed with a great noise a little before me. But I stopped out of the road, and fell flat upon my face till they were gone by. I then arose, and praised the Name of the Lord for his great mercy, and again pursued my journey, till I came to Mums-corner tavern. I knocked at the door, but they blew out the candle. I knocked again and entreated the master to open the door. At last he came with a frightful countenance, and said, "I thought it was the Americans; for they were here about an hour ago, and I thought they were returned again." I asked "How may were there?" he answered, "about one hundred." I desired him to saddle his horse for me, which he did, and went with me himself. When we had gone about two miles, we were stopped by the picket-guard, till the Captain came out with 30 men: As soon as he knew that I had brought an express from Nelson's-ferry, he received me with great kindness, and expressed his approbation of my courage and conduct in this dangerous business. Next morning, Colonel Small gave me three shillings, and many fine promises, which were all that I ever received for this service from him. However, he sent 60 men to relieve the troops at Nelson's-ferry.

Soon after I went to Charles-Town, and entered on board a man of war. As we were going to Chesepeak-bay, we were at the taking of a rich prize. We stayed in the bay two days, and then sailed for New York, where I went on shore.<sup>14</sup> Here I endeavoured to follow my trade, but for want of tools was obliged to relinquish it, and enter in service. But the wages were so low that I was not able to keep myself in clothes, so that I was under the necessity of leaving my master and going to another. I stayed with him four months, but he never paid me, and I was obliged to leave him also, and work about the town until I was married.<sup>15</sup> A year after I was taken very ill, but the Lord raised me up again in about five weeks. I then went out in a pilot boat. We were at sea eight days, and had only provisions for five, so that we were in danger of starving. On the 9th day we were taken by an American whale-boat. I went on board them with a cheerful countenance, and asked for bread and water, and made very free with them. They carried me to Brunswick, and used me well. Notwithstanding which, my mind was sorely distressed at the thought of being again reduced to slavery, and separated from my wife and family;<sup>16</sup> and at the same time it was exceeding difficult to escape from my bondage, because the river at Amboy was above a mile over, and likewise another to cross at Staten Island. I called to remembrance the great deliverances the Lord had wrought for me, and besought him to

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<sup>14</sup> Slavery remained legal in New York at this date, but was in serious decline. See Edgar McManus, "Antislavery Legislation in New York," *Journal of Negro History* 46 (October 1961) 4:207-216.

<sup>15</sup> King married in 1780.

<sup>16</sup> Boston and Violet (1764-1794) King did not have any recorded or mentioned children, so this reference to his "family" is curious. It may refer to relatives rather than children.

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save me this once, and I would serve him all the days of my life. While my mind was thus exercised, I went into the jail to see a lad whom I was acquainted with at New-York. He had been taken prisoner, and attempted to make his escape, but was caught 12 miles off: They tied him to the tail of a horse, and in this manner brought him back to Brunswick. When I saw him, his feet were fastened in the stocks, and at night both his hands. This was a terrifying sight to me, as I expected to meet with the same kind of treatment, if taken in the act of attempting to regain my liberty. I was thankful that I was not confined in a jail, and my master used me as well as I could expect; and indeed the slaves about Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, have as good victuals as many of the English; for they have meat once a day, and milk for breakfast and supper; and what is better than all, many of the masters send their slaves to school at night, that they may learn to read the Scriptures. This is a privilege indeed. But alas, all these enjoyments could not satisfy me without liberty! Sometimes I thought, if it was the will of God that I should be a slave, I was ready to resign myself to his will; but at other times, I could not find the least desire to content myself in slavery.

Being permitted to walk about when my work was done, I used to go to the ferry, and observed, that when it was low water, the people waded across the river; tho' at the same time I saw there were guards posted at the place to prevent the escape of prisoners and slaves. As I was at prayer on Sunday evening, I thought the Lord heard me, and would mercifully deliver me. Therefore putting my confidence in him, about one o'clock in the morning I went down to the river side, and found the guards were either asleep or in the tavern. I instantly entered into the river, but when I was a little distance from the opposite shore, I heard the sentinels disputing among themselves: One said, "I am sure I saw a man cross the river." Another replied, "There is no such thing." It seems they were afraid to fire at me, or make an alarm, lest they should be punished for their negligence. When I had got a little distance from the shore, I fell down upon my knees, and thanked God for this deliverance. I traveled till about five in the morning, and then concealed myself till seven o'clock at night, when I proceeded forward, thro' bushes and marshes, near the road, for fear of being discovered. When I came to the river, opposite Staten-Island, I found a boat; and altho' it was very near a whale-boat, yet I ventured into it, and cutting the rope, got safe over. The commanding officer, when informed of my case, gave me a passport, and proceeded to New-York.

*[To be continued.]*

**THE  
Methodist Magazine,  
For April, 1798.**

MEMOIRS of the LIFE of BOSTON KING.

[Continued from page 110.]

When I arrived at New York, my friends rejoiced to see me once more restored to liberty, and joined me in praising the Lord for his mercy and goodness. But notwithstanding this great deliverance, and the promises I had made to serve GOD, yet my good resolutions soon vanished away like the morning dew: The love of this world extinguished my good desires, and stole away my heart from GOD, so that I rested in a mere form of religion for near three years. About which time, (in 1783,) the horrors and devastation of war happily terminated, and peace was restored between America and Great Britain, which issued universal joy among all parties, except us, who had escaped from slavery, and taken refuge in the English army; for a report prevailed at New-York, that all slaves, in number 2,000, were to be delivered up to their masters, although some of them had been three or four years among the English. This dreadful rumour filled us all with inexpressible anguish and terror, especially when we saw our masters coming from Virginia, North-Carolina, and other parts, and seizing upon their slaves in the streets of New-York, or even dragging them out of their beds. Many of the slaves had very cruel masters, so that the thoughts of returning home with them embittered life to us. For some days, we lost our appetite for food, and sleep departed from our eyes. The English had compassion upon us in the day of distress, and issued out a Proclamation, importing, That all slaves should be free, who had taken refuge in the British lines, and claimed the function and privileges of the Proclamations respecting the security and protection of Negroes.<sup>17</sup> In consequence of this, each of us received a certificate from the commanding officer at New-York,<sup>18</sup> which dispelled all our fears, and filled us with joy and gratitude. Soon after, ships were fitted out, and furnished with every necessary for conveying us to Nova Scotia. We arrived at Burch Town<sup>19</sup> in the month of August, where we all safely landed. Every family had a lot of land, and we exerted all our strength in order to build comfortable huts before the cold weather set in.

That Winter, the work of religion began to revive among us, and many were convinced of the sinfulness of sin, and turned

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<sup>17</sup> Article 7 of the Treaty of Paris stated that the British would exit "with all convenient Speed, and without causing any *Destruction*, or carrying away any *Negroes* or other *Property* of the American Inhabitants." Despite objections from George Washington, the commander-in-chief of British forces, Sir Guy Carleton, interpreted this article as meaning that slaves freed before ratification of the treaty were no longer American property. For discussion, see Ralph Lowry, "The Black Question in Article Seven of the 1783 Peace Treaty," *Negro History Bulletin* 38 (1975) 5:415-418.

<sup>18</sup> These were called 'General Birch Certificates,' after brigadier general Samuel Birch, military commandant of New York City. James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (New York: Africana Publishing Company and Dalhousie University Press, 1976) 11.

<sup>19</sup> Birchtown [King employs a variant spelling], located some six miles from Shelburne, Nova Scotia, was established in 1783 and named for the general who protected black fugitives after New York City's surrender. With over 1500 inhabitants, the town was, as Walker (cf. footnote 2) notes, the largest settlement of free blacks in North America. While Birchtown was planned with garden plots to promote self-sufficiency, many residents worked at construction in Shelburne to support themselves. Because blacks worked for lower wages, white workers in Shelburne rioted in July 1784 against the presence of blacks in town, expelled some twenty black families, and attacked Birchtown repeatedly. King's non-confrontational narration can be noted in that he does not mention the province's first anti-black race riot (Walker 48-49).



from the error of their ways. It pleased the Lord to awaken my wife under the preaching of Mr. Wilkinson;<sup>20</sup> she was struck to the ground, and cried out for mercy: she continued in great distress for near two hours, when they sent for me. At first I was much displeased, and refused to go; but presently my mind relented, and I went to the house, and was struck with astonishment at the sight of her agony. In about six days after, the Lord spoke peace to her soul: she was filled with divine consolation, and walked in the light of GOD's countenance about nine months. But being unacquainted with the corruptions of her own heart, she again gave place to bad tempers and fell into great darkness and distress. Indeed, I never saw any person, either before or since, so overwhelmed with anguish of spirit on account of backsliding, as she was. The trouble of her soul brought affliction upon her body, which confined her to a bed a year and a half.

However, the Lord was pleased to sanctify her afflictions, and to deliver her from all her fears. He brought her out of the horrible pit, and set her soul at perfect liberty. The joy and happiness which she now experienced, were too great to be concealed and she was enabled to testify on the goodness and living kindness of the Lord, which such liveliness and power, that many were convinced by her testimony, and sincerely sought the Lord. As she was the first person at Burch Town that experienced deliverance from evil tempers, and exhorted and urged others to seek and enjoy the same blessing, she was not a little opposed by some of our Black brethren.<sup>21</sup> But these trials she endured with the meekness and patience becoming a Christian; and when Mr. FREEBORN GARRETTSON came to Burch Town to regulate the society and form them in classes, he encouraged her to hold fast her confidence, and cleave to the Lord with her whole heart.<sup>22</sup>

Soon after my wife's conversion, the Lord strove powerfully with me. I felt myself a miserable wretched sinner, so that I could not rest night or day. I went to Mr. BROWN, one evening, and told him my case.<sup>23</sup> He received me with great kindness and affection, and intreated me to seek the Lord with all my heart. The more he spoke to me, the more my distress increased; and when he went to prayer, I found myself burdened with a load of guilt too heavy for me to bear. On my return home, I had to pass thro' a little wood, where I intended to fall down on my knees and pray for mercy; but every time I attempted, I was so terrified, that I thought my hair stood upright, and that the earth moved beneath my feet. I hastened home in great fear and horror, and yet hoped that the Lord would bless me as well as my neighbours: for the work of the Lord prospered greatly among us, so that sometimes in our class meetings, six or seven persons found peace before we were dismissed.

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<sup>20</sup> Moses Wilkinson, a former slave, became an influential preacher despite being blind and lame. 'Brother Moses' Chapel,' a Methodist congregation, was a central Birchtown institution (Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 73).

<sup>21</sup> Christian conversions gave some black women the opportunity to claim a voice and identity in their communities. See, for example, the widowed Jarena Lee's *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, Giving an Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel, Revised and Corrected from the Original Manuscript Written by Herself* (1836).

<sup>22</sup> American Methodist missionary Freeborn Garrettson (1752-1827), a former slaveholder, was sent from Baltimore, Maryland, to Birchtown in response to an appeal for help with missionary work in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. After his own conversion experience in 1775, Garrettson immediately freed his slaves (Wilson 126-127). For further, see Robert Drew Simpson [ed.], *American Methodist Pioneer: The Life and Journals of the Rev. Freeborn Garrettson, 1752-1826* (Rutland, VT: Academy Books, 1984).

<sup>23</sup> Mr. Brown was probably Joseph Brown, a former slave who departed from New York City on the *L'Abondance* together with King. He became a preacher after arriving in Nova Scotia (Wilson 344). Brown joined the Black Loyalist exodus to Sierra Leone, becoming a long-serving preacher at the Rawdon St. Methodist Chapel (Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 290).

Notwithstanding I was a witness of the great change which many experienced, yet I suffered the enemy, through unbelief, to gain such advantage over me, that instead of rejoicing with them, and laying hold of the same blessing, I was tempted to envy their happiness, and sunk deeper in darkness and misery. I thought I was not worthy to be among the people of GOD, nor even to dwell in my own house; but was fit only to reside among the beasts of the forest. This drove me out into the wood, when the snow lay upon the ground three or four feet deep, with a blanket, and a fire-brand in my hand. I cut the boughs of the spruce tree and kindled a fire. In this lonely situation I frequently intreated the Lord for mercy. Sometimes I thought that I felt a change wrought in my mind, so that I could rejoice in the Lord; but I soon fell again thro' unbelief into distracting doubts and fears, and evil-reasonings. The devil persuaded me that I was the most miserable creature upon the face of the earth, and that I was predestinated to be damned before the foundation of the world. My anguish was so great, that when night appeared, I dreaded it as much as the grave.

I laboured one year under these distressing temptations, when it pleased GOD to give me another offer of mercy. In 1784, I and sixteen persons worked for Mrs. ROBINSON; all of them were devoted to GOD, except myself and two others. The divine preference was with these men, and every night and morning they kept a prayer-meeting, and read some portion of Scripture. On the 5th of January, as one of them was reading the Parable of the Sower, the word came with power to my heart.<sup>24</sup> I stood up and desired him to explain the parable; and while he was shewing me the meaning of it, I was deeply convinced that I was one of the stony-ground hearers. When I considered how many convictions I had trifled away, I was astonished that the Lord had borne with me so long. I was at the same time truly thankful that he gave me a desire to return to him, and resolved by the grace of God to set out afresh for the kingdom of Heaven.

As my convictions increased, so did my desires after the Lord; and in order to keep them alive, I resolved to make a covenant with him in the most solemn manner I was able. For this purpose, I went into the garden at midnight, and kneeled down upon the snow, lifting up my hands, eyes, and heart to Heaven; and entreated the Lord, who had called me by his Holy Spirit out of ignorance and wickedness, that he would increase and strengthen my awakenings and distress, and impress my heart with the importance of eternal things; and that I might never find rest or peace again, till I found peace with him, and received a sense of his pardoning love. The Lord mercifully looked down upon me, and gave me such a sight of my fallen state, that I plainly

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<sup>24</sup> Matthew 13:3-9. A parable of seeds sowed in an inhospitable climate that failed to produce, while other seeds produced a hundred-fold.

saw, without an interest in Christ, and an application of his atoning blood to my conscience, I should be lost to all eternity. This led me to a diligent use of all the means of Grace, and to forsake and renounce everything that I knew to be sinful.

The more convictions increased, and the more I felt the wickedness of my own heart; yet the Lord helped me to strive against evil, so that temptations instead of prevailing against me, drove me nearer to him. The first Sunday in March, as I was going to the preaching, and was engaged in prayer and meditation, I thought I heard a voice saying to me, "Peace be unto thee!" I stopped, and looked round about, to see if any one was near me. But finding myself alone, I went forward a little way, when the same words were again powerfully applied to my heart, which removed the burden of misery from it; and while I sat under the sermon, I was more abundantly blessed. Yet in the afternoon, doubts and fears again arose in my mind. Next morning I resolved like Jacob, not to let the Lord go till he blessed me indeed.<sup>25</sup> As soon as my wife went out, I locked the door, and determined not to rise from knees until the Lord fully revealed his pardoning love. I continued in prayer about half an hour, when the Lord again spoke to my heart, "Peace be unto thee." All my doubts and fears vanished away: I saw, by faith, heaven opened to my view; and Christ and his holy angels rejoicing over me. I was now enabled to believe in the name of Jesus, and my Soul was dissolved into love. Every thing appeared to me in a different light to what they did before; and I loved every living creature upon the face of the earth. I could truly say, I was now becoming a new creature. All tormenting and slavish fear, and all the guilt and weight of sin were done away. I was so exceedingly blessed, that I could no longer conceal my happiness, but went to my brethren and told them what the Lord had done for my soul.

I continued to rejoice in a sense of the favour and love of God for about six weeks, and then the enemy assaulted me again; he poured in a flood of temptations and evil-reasonings; and suggested that I was deceiving myself: The temptation alarmed and dejected me, and my mind was discomposed. Then the enemy pursued his advantage, and insulted me with his cruel upbraidings, insinuating, —"What is become of all your joy, that you spoke of a few days ago? You see, there is nothing in it." But blessed be the Lord, he did not suffer the enemy to rejoice long over me; for while I heard Mr. GARRETSON preaching from John ix, 25, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see;" the words were so suitable to my experience, that I was encouraged to exercise fresh faith upon the Lord;<sup>26</sup> and he removed every doubt and fear; and re-established me in his

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<sup>25</sup> Genesis 32:24-29.

<sup>26</sup> King dates his conversion within the period January-March 1784. However, this was approximately one year before Freeborn Garretson arrived in Nova Scotia (Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 72, 90).

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peace and favour. I then could say with the Psalmist, “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” for I had him always before my eyes, and in some measure walked in the light, as he is in the light.<sup>27</sup> I found his ways were ways of pleasantness, and all his paths were peace.

Soon after, I found a great concern for the salvation of others; and was constrained to visit my poor ungodly neighbors, and exhort them to fear the Lord, and seek him while he might be found. Those that were under convictions, I prayed with them, and pointed them to the Saviour, that they might obtain the same mercy he had bestowed upon me. In the year 1785, I began to exhort both in families and prayer-meetings, and the Lord graciously afforded me his assisting preference.

[*To be continued.*]

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<sup>27</sup> Psalm 111:10.

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MEMOIRS of the LIFE of BOSTON KING.  
[Continued from page 161.]

The Goodness and Mercy of God supported me in the various trials and exercise which I went through; nevertheless I found great reluctance to officiate as an exhorter among the people, and had many doubts and fears respecting my call to that duty, because I was conscious of my great ignorance and insufficiency for a work of such importance, and as often overwhelmed with grief and sorrow: But the Lord relieved me by impressing upon my mind these words, “I will send, by whom I will send.” In the year 1787, I found my mind drawn out to commiserate my poor brethren in Africa; and especially when I considered that we who had the happiness of being brought up in a christian land, where the Gospel is preached, where notwithstanding our great privileges, involved in gross darkness and wickedness; I thought, what a wretched condition then must those poor creatures be in, who never heard the Name of God or of Christ; nor had an instruction afforded them with respect to a future judgment. As I had not the least prospect at that time of ever seeing Africa, I contented myself with pitying and praying for the poor benighted inhabitants of that country which gave birth to my forefathers. I laboured in Burchtown and Shelwin two years, and the word was blessed to the conversion of many, most of whom continued steadfast in the good way to the heavenly kingdom.<sup>28</sup>

About this time the country was visited with a dreadful famine, which not only prevailed at Burchtown, but likewise at Chebucto, Annapolis, Digby, and other places. Many of the poor people were compelled to sell their best gowns for five pounds of flour, in order to support life. When they had parted with all their clothes, even their blankets, several of them fell down dead in the streets, thro’ hunger. Some killed and eat their dogs and cats; and poverty and distress prevailed on every side; so that to my great grief I was obliged to leave Burchtown, because I could get no employment. I traveled from place to place, to procure the necessaries of life, but in vain. At last I came to Shelwin on the 20th of January. After walking from one street to the other, I met with Capt. Selex, and he engaged me to

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<sup>28</sup> For an extensive history of these Nova Scotia black communities and their precarious economies, see Walker, *Black Loyalists*, chaps. 2 and 3. The religious history of the Black Loyalist communities was closely related to the rise of the New Light movement, led by Rhode Island minister Henry Alline, who immigrated in 1776 and remained an influential figure in Nova Scotia until his death in 1784. New Light congregations emphasized liberty of individual conscience, independence from — even scorn for — denominational organizations, religious enthusiasm, and self-ordination as witness of divine presence (Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 64-66).

make him a chest. I rejoiced at the offer, and returning home, set about it immediately. I worked all night, and by eight o'clock next morning finished the chest, which I carried to the Captain's house, thro' the snow which was three feet deep. But to my great disappointment he rejected it. However he gave me directions to make another. On my way home, being pinched with hunger and cold, I fell down several times, thro' weakness, and expected to die upon the spot. But even in this situation, I found my mind resigned to the divine will, and rejoiced in the midst of tribulation; for the Lord delivered me from all murmurings and discontent, altho' I had but one pint of Indian meal<sup>29</sup> left for the support of myself and wife. Having finished another chest, I took it to my employer the next day; but being afraid he would serve me as he had done before, I took a saw along with me in order to sell it. On the way, I prayed that the Lord would give me a prosperous journey, and was answered to the joy of my heart, for Captain Selex paid me for the chest in Indian-corn; and the other chest I sold for 2s.6d. and the saw for 3s. 9d. altho' it cost me a guinea; yet I was exceeding thankful to procure a reprieve from the dreadful anguish of perishing by famine. O what a wonderful deliverance did GOD work for me that day! And he taught me to live by faith, and to put my trust in him, more than I ever had done before.

While I was admiring the goodness of GOD, and praising him for the help he afforded me in the day of trouble, a gentleman sent for me, and engaged me to make three flat-bottomed boats for the salmon-fishery, at 1£ each. The gentleman advanced two baskets of Indian-corn, and found nails and tar for the boats. I was enabled to finish the work by the time appointed, and he paid me honestly. Thus did the kind of providence interpose in my preservation; which appeared still greater, upon viewing the wretched circumstances of many of my black brethren at the time, who were obliged to sell themselves to the merchants, some for two or three years; and others for five or six years. The circumstances of the white inhabitants were likewise very distressing, owing to their great imprudence in building large houses, and striving to excel one another in this piece of vanity. When their money was almost expended, they began to build small fishing vessels; but alas, it was too late to repair their error. Had they been wise enough at first to have turned their attention to the fishery, instead of fine houses, the place would soon have been in a flourishing condition; whereas it was reduced in a short time to a heap of ruins, and its inhabitants were compelled to flee to other parts of the continent for sustenance.

Next Winter, the same gentleman employed me to build him some more boats. When they were finished he engaged me to

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<sup>29</sup> Corn meal.

go with him to Chebucto,<sup>30</sup> to build a house, to which place he intended to remove his family. He agreed to give me 2£ per month, and a barrel of mackerel, and another of herrings, for my next Winter's provision. I was glad to embrace this offer, altho' it gave me much pain to leave the people of GOD. On the 20th of April I left my wife and friend, and sailed for Chebucto. When we arrived at that place, my employer had not all the men necessary for the fishing voyage; he therefore solicited me to go with him; to which I objected, that I was engaged to build a house for him. He answered, that he could purchase a house for less money than build one, and that if I would go with him to Bayshallow, I should greatly oblige him; to which I at length consented. During our stay at Chebucto, perceiving that the people were exceeding ignorant of religious duties, and given up to all manner of wickedness, I endeavoured to exhort them to flee from the wrath to come, and to turn unto the Lord Jesus. My feeble labours were attended with a blessing to several of them, and they began seek the Lord in sincerity and truth, altho' we met with some persecution from the baser sort.

On the 2d of June we sailed for Bayshallow, but in the Gulf of St. Lawrence we met with a great storm, and expected every moment would be our last. In about 24 hours the tempest abated, and was succeeded by a great fog, in which we lost the company of one of our vessels, which had all our provisions on board for the fishing season. July 18, we arrived at the River Pisguar,<sup>31</sup> and made all necessary preparations for taking the salmon; but were greatly alarmed on account of the absence of the vessel belonging to us; but on the 29th, to our great joy, she arrived safe; which was four days before the salmon made their appearance. We now entered upon our business with alacrity, and Providence favoured us with good success.

My employer, unhappy for himself as well as others, was as horrible a swearer as I ever met with. Sometimes he would stamp and rage at the men, when they did not please him, in so dreadful a manner, that I was stupefied like a drunken man, and knew not what I was doing. My soul was exceedingly grieved at his ungodly language; I repented that I ever entered into his service, and was even tempted to murmur against the good Providence of God. But the case of righteous Lot, whose soul was vexed day by day with the ungodly deeds of the people of Sodom, occurred to my mind; and I was resolved to reprove my master when a proper opportunity offered.<sup>32</sup> I said to him, "Dear sir, don't you know that the Lord hath declared, that he will not hold them guiltless who take his Name in vain? And that all profane shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone?" He bore the reproof with patience,

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<sup>30</sup> Chedabucto Bay.

<sup>31</sup> Apparently near present-day Guysborough.

<sup>32</sup> Genesis 19:1-26.

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and scarce ever gave me an unkind word; notwithstanding which, he persisted in his impiety, and the men, encouraged by his example, imitated him to the utmost of their ability. Being much grieved with their sinful deeds, I retired into the woods for meditation and prayer. One day when I was alone, and recollecting the patient suffering of the servants of God for the Truth's sake, I was ashamed of myself, on account of the displeasure I felt at my ship-mates, because they would not be persuaded by me to forsake their sins. I saw my folly in imagining that it was in my power to turn them from their evil ways. The Lord shewed me, that this was his prerogative; and that my duty consisted in entreating them, and bearing patiently their insults, as God for Christ's sake had borne with me. And he gave me a resolution to reprove in a right spirit, all that swore in my presence.

Next day my master began to curse and swear in his usual manner. When I saw him a little calm, I entreated him not to come into the boat any more, but give me orders how to proceed; assuring him, that I would do every thing according to his pleasure to the utmost of my power; but that if he persisted in his horrible language, I should not be able to discharge my duty. From that time he troubled me no more, and I found myself very comfortable, having no one to disturb me. On the 11th of August we sailed for home; and my master thanked me for my fidelity and diligence, and said, "I believe if you had not been with me I should not have made half a voyage this season." On the 16th we arrived at Chebucto, and unloaded the vessels. When this business was finished, we prepared for the herring-fishery in Pope's Harbour, at which place we arrived on the 27th of August, and began to set the nets and watch for the herrings. One day as we were attending our net at the mouth of the harbour, we dropped one of the oars, and could not recover it; and having a strong west wind, it drove us out to sea. Our alarm was very great, but the kind hand of Providence interposed and saved us; for when we were driven about two miles from our station, the people on shore saw our danger, and immediately sent two boats to our assistance, which came up with us about sun-set, and brought us safe into the harbour.

October 24, we left Pope's Harbour, and came to Halifax, where we were paid off, each man receiving 15£ for his wages; and my master gave me two barrels of fish agreeable to his promise. When I returned home, I was enabled to clothe my wife and myself; and my Winter's store consisted of one barrel of four, three bushels of corn, nine gallons of treacle, 20 bushels of potatoes which my wife had set in my absence, and the two barrels of fish; so that this was the best Winter I ever saw in Burchtown.



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In 1791, I removed to Prestant,<sup>33</sup> where I had the care of the Society by the appointment of Mr. William Black, almost three years.<sup>34</sup> We were in all 34 persons, 24 of whom professed faith in Christ.<sup>35</sup> Sometimes I had a tolerable congregation. But alas, I preached a whole year in that place without seeing any fruit of my labours. On the 24th of Jan. 1792, after preaching in the morning I was greatly distressed, and said to the Lord, "How long shall I be with this people before thy work prospers among them! O Lord God! if thou hast called me to preach to my Black Brethren, answer me this day from heaven by converting one sinner, that I may know that thou hast sent me. In the afternoon I preached from James ii. 19. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well. The devils also believe, and tremble."<sup>36</sup> Towards the conclusion of the meeting, the divine presence seemed to descend upon the congregation: Some fell flat upon the ground, as if they were dead; and others cried out aloud for mercy. After prayer, I dismissed the public congregation; but many went away with great reluctance. While the Society was meeting, Miss F— knocked at the door, and said, "This people is the people of GOD; and their GOD shall be my GOD." She then desired to be admitted among us, that she might declare what the Lord had done for her soul. We opened the door, and she said, "Blessed be the Name of the Lord for ever, for I know he hath pardoned, my sins for the sake of his Son Jesus Christ. My mind has been so greatly distressed for these three weeks, that I could scarcely sleep; while I was under the preaching all my grief vanished away, and such light broke in upon my soul, that I was enabled to believe unto salvation. O praise the Lord with me, all year that love his Name; for he hath done great things for my soul." All the Society were melted into tears of joy, when they heard her declarations: and she immediately entered into connection with us, and many others in a few weeks after. From this time the work of the Lord prospered among us in a wonderful manner. I blessed GOD for answering my petition, and was greatly encouraged to persevere in my labours. The Blacks attended the preaching regularly; but when any of the White inhabitants were present, I was greatly embarrassed, because I had no learning, and I knew that they had. But one day Mr. Ferguson and several other gentlemen came to hear me; speaking the Truth in my simple manner. The gentlemen afterwards told our Preachers, that they liked my discourse very well; and the Preachers encouraged me to use the talent which the Lord had entrusted me with.

[*To be continued.*]

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<sup>33</sup> Preston, Nova Scotia.

<sup>34</sup> William Black was a Methodist evangelist, whom King accompanied on the Nova Scotia mission circuit without pay (Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 73). Born to a Yorkshire immigrant family, Black converted in 1779, became a traveling preacher, and then the presiding elder of Nova Scotia's Methodists. See M. Richey, *A Memoir of the late Reverend William Black, Wesleyan Minister* (Halifax, 1839). More generally for Methodism in the Atlantic provinces and Loyalist influences, see John S. Moir, "American Influences on Canadian Protestant Churches Before Confederation," *Church History* 36 (December 1967) 4:440-455.

<sup>35</sup> King's congregation in Preston was nearly entirely black, with only one white family in attendance (Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 73).

<sup>36</sup> James 2:19.

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[Continued from page 213.]

I continued to labour among the people at Prestant with great satisfaction, and the Society increased both in number and love, till the beginning of the year 1792, when an opportunity was afforded us of removing from Nova Scotia to Sierra Leone.<sup>37</sup> The advantages held out to the Blacks were considered by them as valuable. Every married man was promised 30 acres of land, and every male child under 15 years of age, was entitled to five acres. We were likewise to have a free passage to Africa, and upon our arrival, to be furnished with provisions till we could clear a sufficient portion of land necessary for our subsistence. The Company likewise engaged to furnish us with all necessaries, and to take in return the produce of the new plantations.<sup>38</sup> Their intention being, as far as possible in their power, to put a stop to the abominable slave-trade. With respect to myself, I was just got into a comfortable way, being employed by a gentleman, who gave me two shillings per day, with victuals and lodging; so that I was enabled to clothe myself and family, and provide other necessaries of life: But recollecting the concern I had felt in years past, for the conversion of the Africans, I resolved to embrace the opportunity of visiting that country; and therefore went to one of the Agents employed in this business, and acquainted him with my intention. The gentleman informed Mr. Clarkson, that I was under no necessity of leaving Nova Scotia, because I was comfortably provided for: But when I told them, that it was not for the sake of the advantages I hope to reap in Africa, which induced me to undertake the voyage, but from a desire that had long possessed my mind, of contributing to the best of my poor ability, in spreading the knowledge of Christianity in that country.<sup>39</sup> Upon which they approved of my intention, and encouraged me to persevere in it. The Preachers likewise gave us the Rules of the Society, and many other little books which they judged might be useful to us: they also exhorted us to cleave to the Lord with our whole heart, and treated us with the tenderness and affection of parents

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<sup>37</sup> John Clarkson (1764-1828), a naval officer, well-known white abolitionist, and younger brother of the more famous Thomas Clarkson, worked *gratis* as the Sierra Leone Company's Nova Scotia agent, recruiting black resettlement volunteers and escorting them to Sierra Leone. King was almost certainly in attendance at an October 26, 1791, meeting at Moses Wilkerson's Methodist church in Birchtown, where over 400 prospective settlers attended to listen to Clarkson. Each free black male was promised "20 acres to each man, 10 for his wife and 5 for every child." Ellen Gibson Wilson, *John Clarkson and the African Adventure* (London: Macmillan, 1980) 67-68. Clarkson gathered 1,196 black emigrants, engaged 15 ships for transport, departed from Halifax with the flotilla on January 15, 1792, and became the first governor of the new settlement. After his departure from the colony in 1793, Clarkson and King remained in contact; on at least one occasion, he sent paper and pens to King's school (J. Clarkson to King, 2 October 1797; cited *ibid* 176, 204)

<sup>38</sup> The Sierra Leone Company. The Company governed the colony until the territory and governmental powers were transferred to the Crown on January 1, 1808. J.J. Crooks, *A History of the Colony of Sierra Leone* (London: Frank Cass, 1903) 70.

<sup>39</sup> A.F. Walls, "The Nova Scotian Settlers and Their Religion," *Sierra Leone Bulletin of Religion* 1 (1959) 19-31.

to their children. After praying with us, we parted with tears, as we never expected to meet again in this world.

January 16, we sailed to Africa; and on the 22nd, we met with a dreadful storm which continued for sixteen days. Some of the men who had been engaged in a seafaring life for 30 or 40 years, declared, that they never saw such a storm before. Our fleet, consisting of 15 ships, were dispersed, and only five of us kept together. We lost one man, who was washed overboard; he left a wife and four children; but what most affected me was, that he died as he had lived, without any appearance of religion. I was upon deck at the same time that he met with this misfortune, but the Lord wonderfully preserved me.<sup>40</sup> After the storm abated, we had a very pleasant passage. But the situation of my wife greatly distressed me. She was exceeding ill most of the voyage; sometimes for half a day together, she was not able to speak a word. I expected to see her die before we could reach land, and had an unaccountable aversion to bury her in the sea. In the simplicity of my heart, I entreated the Lord to spare her, at least till we reached the shore, that I might give her a decent burial, which was the last kind office I could perform for her. The Lord looked upon my sincerity, and restored her to perfect health.

March 6, we arrived safe at Sierra Leone; and on the 27th, my wife caught a putrid fever.<sup>41</sup> For several days she lost her senses, and was as helpless as an infant. When I enquired into the state of her mind, she could give me no satisfactory answer, which greatly heightened my distress. On Friday, while we were at prayer with her, the Lord mercifully manifested his love and power to her soul; she suddenly rose up, and said, "I am well: I only wait for the coming of the Lord. Glory be to his Name, I am prepared to meet him, and that will be in a short time." On Sunday, while several of our friends were with her, she lay still; but as soon as they began singing this hymn, "Lo! he comes, with clouds descending, Once for favour'd sinners slain," &c. She joined with us, till we came to the last verse, when she began to rejoice aloud, and expired in a rapture of love. She had lived in the fear of GOD, and walked in the light of his countenance for above eight years.

About two months after the death of my wife, I was likewise taken ill of the putrid fever. It was an universal complaint, and the people died so fast, that it was difficult to procure a burial for them. This affliction continued among us for three months, when it pleased the Lord to remove the Plague from the place.<sup>42</sup> It was a happy circumstance, that before the rainy season commenced, most of us had built little huts to dwell in; but as we had no house sufficient to hold the congregation, we preached under a large tree when the weather would permit.

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<sup>40</sup> I.e., he was protected from death because he was Christian.

<sup>41</sup> Putrid fever — malaria.

<sup>42</sup> Malaria raged through the colony's population during the wet season beginning in May. Eight hundred of just over 1,100 surviving black settlers contracted the disease; all but one of the 100 white Company employees and family members did the same. Approximately a tenth of Nova Scotian settlers died, as did 57 of the 100 Europeans. A.B.C. Sibthorpe, *The History of Sierra Leone*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Frank Cass, 1970) 9-10.

The people regularly attended the means of Grace, and the work of the Lord prospered. When the rains were over, we erected a small chapel, and went on our way comfortably. I worked for the Company, for 3s. per day, and preached in my turn. I likewise found my mind drawn out to pity the native inhabitants, and preached to them several times, but laboured under great inconveniences to make them understand the Word of God, as I could only visit them on the Lord's-Day. I therefore went to the Governor,<sup>43</sup> and solicited him to give me employment in the Company's plantation on Bullam Shore, in order that I might have frequent opportunities of conversing with the Africans. He kindly approved of my intention, and sent me to the Plantation to get ship-timber in company with several others. The gentleman who superintended the Plantation, treated me with utmost kindness, and allowed six men to help me build a house for myself, which we finished in 12 days. When a sufficient quantity of timber was procured, and other business for the Company in this place compleated, I was sent to the African town to teach the children to read, but found it difficult to procure scholars, as the parents shewed no great inclination to send their children. I therefore said to them, on the Lord's Day after preaching, "It is a good thing that God has made the White People, and that he has inclined their hearts to bring us into this country, to teach you his ways, and to tell you that he gave his Son to die for you; and if you will obey his commandments he will make you happy in this world, and in that which is to come; where you will live with him in heaven;--and all pain and wretchedness will be at an end; and you shall enjoy peace without interruption, joy without bitterness, and happiness to all eternity. The Almighty not only invites you to come unto him, but also points out the way whereby you may find his favour, viz. turn from your wicked ways, cease to do evil, and learn to do well. He now affords you a means which you never had before; he gives you his Word to be a light to your feet, and a lantern to your paths, and he likewise gives you an opportunity of having your children instructed in the Christian Religion. But if you neglect to send them, you must be answerable to God for it."

The poor Africans appeared attentive to the exhortation, altho' I laboured under the disadvantage of using an interpreter. My scholars soon increased from four to twenty; fifteen of whom continued with me five months. I taught them the Alphabet, and to spell words of two syllables; and likewise the Lord's Prayer. And I found them as apt to learn as any children I have ever known. But with regard to the old people, I am doubtful whether they will ever abandon the evil habits in which the

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<sup>43</sup> The governor during this period was William Dawes. Dawes, a Methodist, was known for his religious piety (Wilson 287). Dawes also brought a military background and prior service in the Botany Bay penal colony, which contemporary observers acknowledge adversely influenced his attitudes towards and treatment of the Nova Scotian settlers (Crooks 46-47).

were educated, unless the Lord visits them in some extraordinary manner.

In the year 1793, the gentlemen belonging to the Company told me, that if I would consent to go to England with the Governor, he would procure me two or three years schooling, that I might be better qualified to teach the natives.<sup>44</sup> When this proposal was first mentioned to me, it seemed like an idle tale; but upon further conversation on the subject, difficulties were removed, and I consented. On the 26th of March 1794, we embarked for England, and arrived at Plymouth, after a pleasant voyage, on the 16th of May. On the 1st of June we got to the Thames, and soon after, Mrs. Paul, whom I was acquainted with in America, came to Wapping, and invited me to the New Chapel in the City-Road, where I was kindly received.

When I first arrived in England, I considered my great ignorance and inability, and that I was among a wise and judicious people, who were greatly my superiors in knowledge and understanding; these reflections had such an effect upon me, that I formed a resolution never to attempt to preach while I stayed in the country; but the kind importunity of the Preachers and others removed my objections, and I found it profitable to my own soul to be exercised in inviting sinners to Christ; particularly on Sunday, while I was preaching at Snowsfields-Chapel, the Lord blessed me abundantly, and I found a more cordial love to the White People than I had ever experienced before. In the former part of my life I had suffered greatly from the cruelty and injustice of the Whites, which induced me to look upon them, in general as our enemies; And even after the Lord had manifested his forgiving mercy to me, I still felt at time an uneasy distrust and shyness towards them; but on that day the Lord removed all my prejudices; for which I bless his holy Name.

In the month of August 1794, I went to Bristol; and from thence Dr. Coke took me with him to Kingswood-School, where I continued to the present time, and have endeavoured to acquire the knowledge I possibly could, in order to be useful in that sphere which the blessed hand of Providence may conduct me into, if my life is spared.<sup>45</sup> I have great cause to be thankful that I came to England, for I am now fully convinced, that many of these White People, instead of being enemies and oppressors of us poor Blacks, are our friends, and deliverers from slavery, as far as their ability and circumstances will admit. I have met with most affectionate treatment from the Methodists of London, Bristol, and other places which I have had an opportunity of visiting. And I must confess, that I did not believe there were upon the face of the earth a people so friendly and human as I have proved them to be. I beg leave to acknowledge the obligations

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<sup>44</sup> At this point King's narrative becomes notable for its omissions concerning conditions of the Nova Scotian settlement in Sierra Leone. In 1793 the settlers sent two representatives to England to protest against oppressive administration, overpriced goods from Company warehouses, poor wages, and unfulfilled promises. The Company directors rejected the petition and rebellion broke out upon return of the delegates. The insurrection was suppressed, six rebel leaders deported, and an amnesty granted to other rebels. King's omission of this history indicates his reluctance to enter into secular politics and focus on spiritual life and missionary work. The colony continued in unsettled conditions throughout the decade. French naval forces occupied and ransacked the colony in October 1794, while King was in England. After he completed his narrative in England and returned to Sierra Leone, Nova Scotian settler revolt again broke out in mid-summer 1799. In late September, a small British military force arrived and suppressed the rebellion: two rebels were killed, three executed, and 32 deported (Crooks 46-56).

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Coke (1747-1814) received ordination from John Wesley. In 1784, Wesley appointed Coke to serve as superintendent of overseas Methodist missions. Coke founded the short-lived monthly, *The Arminian Magazine* (1789-90) in Philadelphia, the first sectarian magazine in the United States. Coke evangelized in England, Ireland, the Caribbean, Africa and North America, and was a well-known Methodist author on both sides of the Atlantic. For his North American revival tours, see *Extracts from the Journals of Dr. Coke's Five Visits to America* (London: G. Paramore, 1793).

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I am under to Dr. Coke, Mr. Bradford, and all the Preachers and people; and I pray GOD to reward them a thousand fold for all the favours they have shewn to me in a strange land.

BOSTON KING.

Kingswood-School, June 4, 1796.

► About the latter end of September, 1796, Boston King embarked for Sierra Leone; where he arrived safe, and resumed the employment of a school-master in that Colony; the number of scholars under his care are about forty; and we hope to hear that they will not only learn the English Language, but also attain some knowledge of the way of salvation thro' faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> King and his second wife, Peggy, both died in 1802 in Sherbro, approximately 100 miles south of Freetown, where the Company employed him as an agent (Walker cf. footnote 2; Carretta 368).