

“To Wash a Blackamoor White:”

The Rise of Black Ethnic Religious Rhetoric in Early Modern England

By

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To my parents
Reverend Bettye P. Lewis and Dr. Rapheal O. Lewis

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The earliest known visual documentation of an African in England comes from the 1511 Westminster Tournament Roll of Henry VIII, currently displayed in the mounted College of Arms.¹ The illuminated manuscript reveals a lone black man seated among six musicians. All are blowing their trumpets in celebration of the Queen's giving birth to a male child the previous New Year's Day. Contemporary accounts of the Treasury of the Chamber, which document the recurring payments of court staff, list "John Blanc, the blacke trumpeter." Such accounts began in 1507, late in the monarchy of Henry VII, and continue throughout the reign of his son. The name "Blanc," (or Blank) meaning white, is surely a given name, and meant to be of "ironic jest,"² amusing at the English court.

Where did Blanc originate? Did he come to England directly from Africa? Perhaps he arrived by way of Spain or Portugal? Maybe there was a connection with the "Blackamoors" known to be present at the Scottish courts?³ Kate Lowe has suggested

¹ For visual representation <http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/libraries/archives/blackpresence/01/> [date accessed 11/20/13] See also Sydney Anglo, *The Great Tournament Roll of Westminster* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968) and Richard Barber and Juliet Barber, *Tournaments: Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1989).

² Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, (London: Pluto Press, 1984), 4. [Hereafter cited as Fryer, *Staying Power*,]

³ For discussion of blacks in Scotland see Fryer, *Staying Power*, 4; see also Patricia Hill Buchanan, *Margaret Tudor: Queen of Scots* (Edinburgh: Columbia University for Scottish Academic Press, 1985); P. Edwards and J. Walvin, *Black Personalities in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1983).

that Blanc was a “surviving member” of Princess Catherine’s 1501 royal entourage.⁴

Thomas More described Catherine of Aragon, daughter of Spain’s Ferdinand and Isabella, and betrothed at the time to Prince Arthur of England, as having many “slave” attendants. According to eyewitness testimony, (most notably More’s), some of these were black Africans.⁵ Whether or not Blanc originally came to England with the Spanish princess, it is known that in 1512 he married, for records show that King Henry VIII ordered Blanc an expensive wedding gift.⁶ John Blanc therefore represents a unique instance of African assimilation into early modern English society.

Foreigners like Blanc, growing numerically in England, were known by a range of new terms borrowed from Iberian languages. Words, including “Negroes,” “Blacks,” “Moors,” or “Blackamoors,” suggest color as “the visual antithesis of whiteness.”⁷ These terms also reflect the proliferation of contemporary literary “evocations of blackness” in

⁴ Kate Lowe, “The Stereotyping of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe,” in T.F. Earle and K.J.P. Lowe, eds., *Blacks in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 39. [Hereafter cited as Lowe, “Stereotyping.”]

⁵ See Elizabeth Frances Rogers, *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 4. The letter is dated November 1501. More calls the black slave attendants “hunchbacked, tattered, barefooted, pigmy Ethiopians, like devils out of Hell.” Ironically, Desiderius Erasmus teased Thomas More himself for his surname “More,” which could also mean Moor or black Ethiop; Erasmus sometimes called More “Niger” (Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, New York: Nan A. Talese, 1998, 7). The More family coat of arms has the figure of an African head on it, a feature common among English slave-trading families in the early modern period. More uses this coat of arms as his official seal when he is Henry VIII’s under-treasurer. A reproduction of the crest can be viewed in J.A. Rogers, *Nature Knows No Color Line: Research Into the Negro Ancestry of the White Race* (St. Petersburg, FL: Helga M. Rogers Publ., 1980), 76.

⁶ According to Imtiaz Habib, Blanc’s marriage indicates “the degree of his acceptance and social assimilation” into English society (*Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677: Imprints of the Invisible* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 40. [Hereafter cited as Habib, *Black Lives*.] Recorded in the Exchequer Accounts of Henry VIII is a listing of rich clothes as a marriage gift: “14 January John Blak’s Marriage... Warrant to the Great Wardrobe to deliver John Blak ‘our trumpeter.’ ...A gown of violet cloth, &c. including a bonnet and a hat, ‘to be taken of our gift against his marriage.’ Greenwich, 14 January 3 Henry VIII.” As Habib states, the archive record does not reveal whom Blanc married.

⁷ Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, “Before *Othello*: Elizabethan Representations of Sub-Saharan Africans,” *WMQ* 54: 1 (1997), 31. [Hereafter cited as Vaughn, “Before *Othello*.”]

early modern English texts.⁸ In the late sixteenth century, black ethnic tropes also begin to occur with frequency in many English *religious* texts, including sermons, commentaries, and homilies. Thus, this dissertation identifies and analyzes examples of black ethnic religious tropes used to convey theological meaning in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. The thesis of this project is that early modern English black ethnic religious rhetoric incorporates literary images of Africans in the signification of the Protestant doctrines of original sin, justification, and sanctification while highlighting the overwhelmingly negative cultural and political race context of the period.

Background

Since the groundbreaking 1965 publication of Eldred Jones' *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama*, literary studies on blackness in early modern English drama, poetry, and prose fiction have blossomed into two distinct waves. The first, in the 1960s, arose from a few scholars operating out of individual interest on the subject. The second, beginning in the 1990s, was a larger movement treating race as an organizing category.⁹ There is a notable absence of scholarly research, however, on race in early modern English religious studies. Ania Loomba and Jonathan

⁸ Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 1. [Hereafter cited as Hall, *Things of Darkness*.]

⁹ Peter Erickson, "The Moment of Race in Renaissance Studies," *SS* 26 (1998): 6. See also Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Race," in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, eds., 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 277-78. For the first wave of literary studies on blackness see Elliot Tokson, *The popular image of the black man in English drama, 1550-1688* (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall, 1982); Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1991); and Anthony Barthelemy, *Black Face, Maligned Race: The Rrepresentation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987). For the second wave of literary studies on blackness see Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race and Renaissance Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, New York, 1989); Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker, eds. *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Joyce Green MacDonald, ed. *Race, Ethnicity, and Power in the Renaissance* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997); "Constructing Race: Differentiating Peoples in the Early Modern World," *WMQ* 54: 1 (1997): 3-252.

Burton draw attention to this omission by providing examples of religious texts in their compilation of early modern materials on race.¹⁰ Recently, David Whitford has also addressed this lacuna. Whitford demonstrates that ancient and medieval beliefs based on Gen. 9:18-27 were transformed into ideologies of black racial identity. These ideologies were subsequently used to justify African slavery in early modern England.¹¹ But missing is a more detailed investigation into the theological and religious foundations of English perceptions of black Africans. Why were they viewed, as stated by the historian Winthrop Jordan in 1968, “as another sort of men?”¹² Many of the early modern period’s emergent racial ideologies can be traced to the English sea captain George Best. In 1578 he infamously declared black skin color to be a “curse” arising from an “infection of blood” transmitted through “lineal descent.” Hence Ania Loomba has argued that early modern conceptions of race reflect beliefs in an innate connection between physical features and moral qualities.¹³ Yet further inquiry into the doctrinal background of these religious ideas has not been undertaken.¹⁴ The following project engages this gap by exploring black ethnic tropes in early modern English religious texts within the context of theological meaning.

¹⁰ See Ania Loomba and Jonathan Burton, eds. *Race and Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). [Hereafter cited as Loomba and Burton, *Race*.]

¹¹ See David Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and the Justifications for Slavery* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009). [Hereafter cited as Whitford, *The curse of Ham*.]

¹² Winthrop Jordan, *White over black: American attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 4. [Hereafter cited as Jordan, *White over black*.]

¹³ See Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, race, and colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). [Hereafter cited as Loomba, *Shakespeare*.]

¹⁴ Sujata Iyengar, *Shades of Difference: Mythologies of Skin Color in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005). [Hereafter cited as Iyengar, *Shades*.] Iyengar argues there is no one precise moment that race comes into being during the early modern period.

Metaphorical phrases including the word “Blackamoor” become increasingly common in early modern English religious texts.¹⁵ Historically, this accompanies an era in which greater attention was being paid to blackness, particularly skin color, through awareness of other cultures arising from England’s increasing participation in international trade, exploration, and colonization. Yet, rhetorical uses of Blackamoor phraseology by English divines are also likened to all of humanity. That is, they are given universal meaning linguistically in the portrayal of the drama of salvation. By focusing on religious texts in order to analyze the black rhetoric of early modern English divines, this study addresses a lacuna in early modern English race studies. Further, specifically analyzing blackamoor rhetoric in religious texts contributes to the burgeoning field of research on language in early modern race studies. Indeed, language “as constitutive of race has not been substantively addressed and remains the conspicuously untested category without a full-scale examination into its potential for defining African identities in the early modern period.”¹⁶ In dissecting how black religious rhetoric was employed to convey doctrinal teaching in early modern England, this study demonstrates the ways in which these metaphors operate out of a classical mythos of African ethnicity.¹⁷ It also exposes the fact that early modern English ministers and theologians incorporated racial

¹⁵ The English usage of the term is “blackamoor,” and associated and varied spellings include “blackamore,” “blackmore,” “blackmoore,” “blackamoore,” and “blackmoor.” The word, inherited from the Spanish use of the word “moor” to describe persons of North African descent, was used as early modern English for sub-Saharan African. As moral and proverbial adages, Blackmore phraseology found its way into the artistic motif and advert of the early modern period, surviving in these forms obliquely even into the present day.

¹⁶ Ian Smith, *Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: Barbarian Errors* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 4. [Hereafter cited as Smith, *Race and Rhetoric*.]

¹⁷ Based on race theory, categorical values are assigned to blackness and whiteness, and relatedly to black and white bodies in this period. This hierarchical arrangement, the construction of race, is given societal sanction politically and economically. However, from the ancient period on, physical differences were recognized and acknowledged. Ethnic or ancient racism was the assigning of difference or morality based on phenotype. But in antiquity these classifications were not always considered axiomatic as they would become in modern times. (See Benjamin Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

language signs in order to elucidate theology. Further, this dissertation's extensive doctrinal identification and study of early modern black ethnic religious rhetoric determines that these tropes reflect contemporary views of Africans in England. The classical rhetoric of the African race as "non-washable," used to symbolize sinfulness as well as the possibilities of justification and sanctification in religious texts, is associated with popular beliefs about actual blacks. Historical research on the parish and evangelical ministry of late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English ministers to Africans, however, also presents a multifaceted picture of the religious perception of blacks during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Literature Review

The following review of literature pays attention to the distinction between the goals of race theory and early modern black religious history. Race theory seeks to deconstruct established patterns of racialized meaning. In this case, early modern black religious history focuses on theological uses of blackamoor rhetoric as defined by early modern English ministers and theologians. Regardless of the writers' intent, because of the social and cultural setting of the early modern period, the use of this kind of language arguably forms racial discourse. However, defining blackamoor religious rhetoric in the early modern period as racial discourse is outside the scope of this dissertation. Racial discourse operates out of modern constructions of race. This study uses race and ethnicity interchangeably, that is, from an ancient perspective—reducible to nationality, tribal,

and/or physical characteristics.¹⁸ Yet, there is also an awareness of the burgeoning definition of the term “race,” itself which is beginning to suggest a combination of physical features and moral qualities in some early modern circles.

Cultural, Literary, and Race Studies in Early Modern England

The work of race theorists in early modern English cultural and literary studies have established that ideological racialization took place during this period.¹⁹ In dramas, narratives, poetry, and other printed and visual materials, early modern race scholars demonstrate that discourses become racialized. In other words, physical, cultural, and ethnic differences are gradually reified in early modern England. This is in concert with contemporary changes in early modern English society that increased the visibility of Africans.²⁰ As Kim F. Hall argues, the “politics of race” cannot be ignored in the study of early modern texts that incorporate images of blackness.²¹ Her work demonstrates there is a “broad discursive network” of linguistic polarities using dark and light tropes as well as black/white dichotomies. During the Renaissance these tropes become culturally signified with the political and socioeconomic realities of English relations to black Africans in the transatlantic experience. Hall builds on Winthrop Jordan’s landmark study *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro* (1968) which holds that

¹⁸ For works on race as a social construct see Hannah Franziska Augstein, *Race: The Origins of an Idea, 1760-1850* (Bristol, England: Thoemmes Press, 1960); and Robert Bernasconi and Tommy L. Lott. eds. *The Idea of Race* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publ. Co., Inc., 2000).

¹⁹ For example, see Michael Neill, “ ‘Mulattos,’ ‘Blacks,’ and ‘Indian Moors’: *Othello* and Early Modern Constructions of Human Difference.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49.4 (1998): 361-74. What Michael Neill has described as a “racialist ideology” was taking place alongside Britain’s nascent imperialism. See also Michael Neill, “Unproper Beds: Race, Adultery, and the Hideous in *Othello*.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989), 383-412; Loomba and Burton, *Race*, 8.

²⁰ In the early 1590s, the first Shakespearean drama to portray an African in a negative light is the character Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*. Aaron is the black lover of Queen Tamora of the Goths. The language of the play juxtaposes Aaron’s physical blackness with his moral corruption. See also Vaughan, “Before *Othello*,” 42-43.

²¹ Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 9.

blackness as a concept is already firmly embedded in medieval English epistemology and associated with dirt, evil, sin, and the devil. This definition was widened to include persons with black skins in the early modern period.²² Thus when the English first began directly confronting Africans on a large scale in the sixteenth century, they built associations between their understandings of the concept of blackness and dark-skinned people. Jordan argues that the English saw the Africans as radically different in essence, based on a combination of their ‘lack of religion’ and their skin color.²³ This different way of “seeing” Africans formed a prejudice that became a seed for English conceptions of difference, later forming ideologies of race.

In arguing that pre-existing linguistic binary oppositions between whiteness and blackness in Renaissance texts become attached to the emerging realities of racial consciousness in the early modern period, Hall rejects the tendency of literary criticism to shroud blackness solely in aesthetics. Hall’s scholarship emphasizes that the “association of ‘black’ as a negative signifier of different cultural and religious practices with physiognomy and skin color is precisely what pushes this language into the realm of

²² For example, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*: “Black is deeply stained with dirt; soiled, dirty, foul...Having dark or deadly purposes, malignant, pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister...Foul, iniquitous, atrocious, horrible, wicked.....Indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment, etc.” [Quoted in Jordon, 6]. “In each [European] language the word for “black” carried a host for disparaging connotations. In Spanish, for example, “negro” also meant gloomy, dismal, unfit, and wretched; in French, “noir” also connoted foul, dirty, base, and wicked; in Dutch, certain compounds of “zwart” conveyed notions of anger, irascibility, and necromancy; and “black” had comparable pejorative implications in Elizabethan and Stuart England (Alden T. Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, 6).

²³ Leo Africanus’ *History and Description of Africa* (1492) and George Abbot’s *Briefe Description of the Whole Worlde* (1599) emphasize the heathenish state of sub-Saharan black Africans being neither Muslims nor Christians and influenced the cultural and ideological climate, which led to the reasoning of the 1601 Elizabethan Edict expelling blacks from England on the basis of their incapability of acquiring true religion.

racial discourse.”²⁴ Arguably, cultural or literary theorists would maintain that regardless of the theological intentions of English divines, the use of black rhetorical language in religious texts also creates racialization. Binaries of difference create meaning in Western society, and the hierarchical polarity of light over dark, white over black, arguably becomes established as the English are negotiating difference in the early modern period. In their dissemination of Protestant theology, early modern English clearly adapted readings of difference. These readings ironically reified hierarchies in the West. Binaries are expressed rhetorically in tropes of blackness in Renaissance texts in order to express the hierarchical order not only of white over black, but also of male over female. Therefore even aesthetic divisions of beauty into white or black were part of the larger structure of “white supremacy” and “male hegemony.” Hall notes that anxieties about blackness are present throughout early modern narrative texts. For example, George Best’s 1578 description of an Ethiopian-English marriage clearly reflects the binary system that differentiates white over black as well as “belongingness and otherness” characteristic of racist discourse.²⁵ Moreover, in the narrative, whiteness becomes synonymous with Englishness, so that blackness and Englishness are treated as mutually exclusive categories. It is impossible to be English and black (as Best’s description of the child born to the interracial couple in England is not English, but black).²⁶ Thus

²⁴ Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 6. As Alden T. Vaughn and Virginia Mason Vaughn emphasize for example, in the Elizabethan period “representations of sub-Saharan Africans.....generally focused on *difference*, implying their natural inferiority and non-assimilability into English notions of civility and proper appearance [and] set them apart in English eyes and imaginations as a special category of humankind” (Vaughn, “Before *Othello*,” 21).

²⁵ Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation* (London, 1598-1600), 5: 172. See also Stuart Hall, “New Ethnicities,” *Black Film, British Cinema* ICA Documents 7 (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1989), 28.

²⁶ Paul Gilroy, “*There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*”: *The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 55. In George Best’s *True Discourse of the Late Voyages of Discoverie* (London, 1578), an alternative explanation for African skin color to the usually accepted

blackness is not only used ironically to enforce a value for whiteness, again maintaining the binary construction, but ultimately “blackness for him really has meaning only in relation to whiteness.”²⁷ Whiteness is not only considered better than blackness, but whiteness also receives existence from it.

Hall discards Enlightenment definitions of race to emphasize that modes of racial difference come into existence during the early modern period. However, Anu Korhonen, while similarly arguing that the polarities of blackness and whiteness in the early modern period function as a basis for cultural difference, still operates within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century parameters that define race.²⁸ In this regard, Hall’s position is more persuasive. Korhonen maintains along with Hall that Renaissance “texts all come together to construct blackness as an absolute, without differences or degrees, juxtaposed with a whiteness similarly simplified and categorized.”²⁹ Here, “the conceptual and ‘racial’ black” was created, based on the dichotomy between black and white.³⁰ This transcended the aesthetic perspective, as Hall has shown, so that abstract blackness, understood as ugliness or deformity, was equated with black skin while whiteness, also understood as blondness, was defined as beauty.³¹ Along with these, in early modern

climate theory is offered. Best writes that black color “proceedeth of some naturall infection” which explains how “the whole progenie of them descended.” The infection arises as a result of a curse, explained in Genesis, chapters nine and ten. According to Best, Cham disobeyed Noah’s orders that there should be no sexual intercourse on the ark, and as punishment Cham’s son Chus “should be so blacke & lothsome, that it might remaine a spectacle of disobedience to all the World.” In 1584, Reginald Scot’s *Discoverie of Witchcraft* also demonized black skin as a curse.

²⁷ Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 10.

²⁸ Anu Korhonen, “Washing the Ethiopian white: conceptualizing black skin in Renaissance England” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, T. F. Earle and K. J. P. Lowe, eds. (Cambridge University Press, 2005). [Hereafter cited as Korhonen, “Washing the Ethiopian white.”]

²⁹ Korhonen, “Washing the Ethiopian white,” 99.

³⁰ Korhonen, 100.

³¹ Becoming most prominent during Elizabethan England, whiteness was the most dramatic spectacle of beauty; hence blackness and the sub-Saharan black African skin color was the visual antithesis of that whiteness. Yet the visual power of blackness made it a constant source for drama and performance as spectacle at pageants and masques. As Alden T. Vaughn and Virginia Mason Vaughn note, “actors painted

conceptions of thought, physical appearance was linked to nature so that interiority is understood as a simulacrum of the outward state. There is a direct relationship between “inner character and outer appearance” and since the outer has been clearly defined on the basis of skin color polarities—whiteness and blackness—the internal soul is marked as well. Thus, in Renaissance culture, skin color was associated with morality. For example, those persons with darker skins were judged essentially uncivil and barbaric.³² Hall is therefore more convincing in her theorizing on the early modern development of race than scholars like Korhonen who want to stress “meanings of blackness were floating on the mortal surface; they were without philosophical and scientific fixity” during the same period.³³ According to Hall, even without more precise theoretical definitions of blackness, the playing fields were being outlined into ‘us’ and ‘them’ (otherness). Once binaries were established, the notion of essential difference associated with physical appearance became the conceptual paradigm upon which to assign classes of individuals. Hence, the beginning of the conception of racial difference is created. On that basis, new philosophical concepts, ideas, and theories were added in later periods to better “explain” racial difference (e.g. biological and scientific).

Sujata Iyengar complexifies the understanding of race in the early modern period by challenging its definition as a pure category.³⁴ She argues that multiple ways of conceptualizing difference emerge during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and various contexts in which ideas of race develop, including history, geography, and

as Moors were frequently used to create spectacular entrances in a venue unsuitable for horses” (“Before *Othello*,” 30). In fact at the 1584 court of James VI in Scotland, a blackamoor was used to draw in a chariot at a court pageant. Thus it was a prevailing custom to use blackamoors as animals instead of horses or other beasts.

³² Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 95.

³³ Hall, 111.

³⁴ Iyengar, *Shades*, 1.

literary arts. Thus, she rejects Hall's method, which Iyengar argues results in "a specific historical or disciplinary point for the emergence of race as a color-coded classification."³⁵ Instead of constructing a teleological narrative of how race originates in the early modern period, which she maintains only creates a closed and static version of history, Iyengar calls for evaluation of the multiple ways the English imaged difference, which contributed to "a mythology of race."³⁶ But in my view, scholars like Iyengar, who advocate accessing the multiple early modern discourses in which race, colorism, and physical difference takes shape, a complexity which belies a temporal moment of racial origins, miss the larger point. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the English national phenomenon of ordering black/white hierarchical relationships begins to form.³⁷ This, as Hall and also Ania Loomba argue, is the beginning of the understanding of racial difference in English society. In other words, "race" (as we understand it today) comes into existence as a social construct. Biological and scientific refinements of the basic idea would come later. Iyengar, on the other hand, stresses that multifarious definitions, ideologies, and demarcations relate to hierarchies of human difference in early modern texts. This is relevant for literary scholarship in appreciating the complexity of images of diversity in period art and literature. Indeed, in early modern texts, varying discourses and multiple practices are evident. Loomba agrees that the development of the ideology of race is itself not stable in its meanings and definitions, thereby reflecting a series of mutations, ebbs, and flows over time. However, all of these variations ultimately fit into the binary structure of white over black. As soon as people started talking about

³⁵ Iyengar, 1.

³⁶ Iyengar, 4.

³⁷ Iyengar, 4.

essentialized difference in terms of whiteness and blackness, and began making anthropological associations, they began to construct what we now understand as “race.”

Loomba and Jonathan Burton agree with Iyengar that finding the precise moment when racist thinking emerges is not useful, or even possible. They also advocate, like Iyengar, taking into account multiple early modern discourses, evident textually—including word usage, meanings, and interpretations—all relating to understandings of physical and color difference.³⁸ But, they find studying these texts in conversation still makes it possible to evaluate generally when the multiple and intricate ways various kinds of thinking and practices began to “order and delimit human possibilities at particular moments in history.”³⁹ In other words, the issue of race broadly arising as a construct during the early modern period remains a central one, regardless of the multiple ways developing in order to construct difference. Although the origins of race in England are admittedly “protracted and erratic,” possessing a “protean quality” in which its meanings and definitions reflect a series of mutations, ebbs, and flows, over time, we can locate its general beginnings in the application of categorical beliefs or assumptions with regard to human worth depending on hierarchical binaries of whiteness and blackness. Therefore, their research challenges “conventional periodization” with regard to race and culture in early modern studies, recognizing that “most theorists and historians of race still tend to exclude the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from extended consideration.”⁴⁰ In agreement with Hall’s position, Loomba and Burton demonstrate that it is not inappropriate (or anachronistic) to talk about “race” or “racial ideologies” in the early modern period. Instead, understanding difference in this era was based on the

³⁸ Iyengar, 1.

³⁹ Loomba and Burton, *Race*, 3.

⁴⁰ Loomba and Burton, 2.

“divisions of humanity that were putatively based on distinctive combinations of physical traits and transmitted through a line of descent.”⁴¹ Moreover, Loomba and Burton formally challenge the idea that race in the early modern period has been considered to be “anachronistic” based specifically on modern Enlightenment derived scientific and biological definitions. Instead, “quasi” scientific or biological principles of race form only a particular kind of paradigm around conceptualizations of difference. As we have seen, conceptualizations of what are understood as racial difference can be traced to earlier periods; only the models or tools through which the ideas were formulated or interpreted were different to those we have today.

For example, the fields of early modern and Renaissance studies have recently queried the “appropriateness of terms like ‘race’ or ‘racism,’ ‘xenophobia,’ ‘ethnicity,’ or even ‘nation’ in describing community identities in early modern Europe.”⁴² Some of these words did not exist in the early modern period, and other terms had different meanings. But what period texts demonstrate is that the *ideas* did exist. And, using early modern dictionaries and other source texts, it is clear that the definitions of words like “family,” “class,” or “lineage” developed new meanings in the period, but at the same time, older meanings continue to exist “alongside or in competition” with the newer ones.⁴³ Also, many analyses of race are separated on the basis of culture in the early modern era and into nature/essence in the modern era. “Culture” is often understood as a combination of religious background and ethnicity. In contrast, natural/essential understandings are attributed to biological difference. Arguments in favor of culture in the early modern period ignore textual accounts that stress natural or essential

⁴¹ Loomba and Burton, 2.

⁴² Loomba and Burton, 2.

⁴³ Loomba and Burton, 2.

understandings to account for differences during the same period. Thus, early modern discourses suggest that ideas about “culture” and “biology” do not occupy separate domains (as they do in the modern period); instead they develop in relation to one another.⁴⁴ Although biological or scientific systems of thought using racial classifications were not developed until the modern/Enlightenment period, ways of thinking about human difference and organizing those patterns of thought according to beliefs, mythologies, societal structures and ongoing practices did exist in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus early modern English literary scholarship problematizes the definition of race “as a post-Enlightenment ideology forged on the twin anvils of colonialism and Atlantic slavery and hinging on pseudo-biological notions of human differentiation, especially color” and the assumptions this definition sustains.⁴⁵

Race, Religious History, and Early Modern England

Historians and theorists of race have been divided over the question of whether racism caused black slavery or whether conversely the economic drive for slavery engendered the production of the concept of race and racial discrimination to support it. These debates are reflected in the early modern English historiography on race. The consensus of scholars is that conceptions of human difference crystallized to form racial ‘structures’ during the sixteenth century. Conceptions become structures, because, as we have seen in the previous section, they are given application in culture and society. That is, the concept or idea of race became a basis for social and economic stratification, one case being race-based slavery. In 1984, Peter Fryer challenged this longstanding position by questioning whether race prejudice indeed was the historical basis for the development

⁴⁴ Loomba and Burton, 8.

⁴⁵ Loomba and Burton, 8.

of English slavery. Fryer takes to task the accepted view (pioneered by Winthrop Jordan) that the “debasement” of Africans occurs in English colonies relative to the treatment of whites and even Native Americans because of the initial different perception towards those with darker skins. Rather than the deeply ingrained prejudice of the English against black Africans that inspired the rise of race slavery, Fryer argues that slavery developed out of the “drive for profit” which in turn stimulated the need to justify free labor. Race prejudice, which already existed based on preconceptions associated with blackness, was nurtured and developed to denigrate blacks after slavery was already established.⁴⁶

Indeed, colonial theory holds that racial discourses were engendered due to modern colonization and slavery. The idea is that when a society begins to develop the infrastructure for race-based slavery the ideology grows to accompany this system. Willie James Jennings, for example, associates the beginnings of the concept of the black race and racism with the imperialism of Portugal.⁴⁷ The term “Blackamoor” encapsulates the idea that in the early modern period race became substituted for ethnic, regional, or geographical identity. When West Africans became regarded primarily as “black bodies,” their physical objectification was complete in order to justify the dehumanization of enslavement.⁴⁸

Fryer’s theory brings to light the debate regarding the impact of prejudice in the growth of racism as opposed to the contingency of historical forces in the development of

⁴⁶ Fryer, *Staying Power*, 134.

⁴⁷ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010), 15-64. [Hereafter cited as Jennings, *The Christian imagination*.] Jennings argues that the ideology of race was initially created when European Jews were displaced by European Christians as the chosen people.

⁴⁸ Jennings, 42. Emily C. Bartels concurs, writing, “although the term “African” was available—and had begun to be employed—by the 1560s, African peoples were described largely in discrete, regionally or racially specific groups as Negroes, Ethiopians (or Ethiopes), and Moors, with ‘African’ coming into usage to designate any of these parts, but not, in the Renaissance, the whole” (Bartels, “*Othello* and Africa: Postcolonialism Reconsidered,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, 54(1): 49).

slavery necessitating legitimation. As we have seen in the case of early modern England, many scholars argue that preconceived notions of blackness as inferior were juxtaposed with whiteness conceptually as the physical awareness of Africans increased prior to the rise of slavery. Thus there is no escaping, as Jordan argues, that earlier, medieval notions of blackness as evil dovetailed with perceptions of Africans as monstrous and barbaric in the early modern period prior to the growth of slavery. This is apparent in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century travelogues that circulated throughout England, which expanded into discourses characterized by Africans presented as the embodiments of evil, filled with lust, and excited with murderous rage. Although the Portuguese and Spanish had already been enslaving Africans by the time the English began large-scale trade in humans and commodities, the correlation between blackness and slavery had already been established in many non-slaving holding European societies. In the Elizabethan period, binaries of whiteness and blackness reflecting human skin color were evident in multiple facets of English Renaissance culture. By the early seventeenth century, during the reign of James I, English commercial investments, in the development of new commodities, including black slavery, became stable.⁴⁹

Therefore, in black religious historiography, the dominant position is that antecedent views of blackness as negative influenced the European consciousness prior to the development of slavery. This view holds that rather than racism arising out of a utilitarian function (such as the justification of slavery) during colonialism, hatred of blackness and black people is endemic to the culture of the West, having its basis in the ancient Greco-Roman tradition. Robert Hood argues that primal myths, representing a kind of subconscious, subliminal way of seeing, “buried deep within our Western psyche

⁴⁹ Jennings, 59.

and culture,” instinctively associate darkness and blackness with fear, negativity, and evil.⁵⁰ An offshoot of this mode of consciousness is that negative perceptions are transferred to people with dark or black skins, as reflected in stories, proverbs, and iconic cultural images. This legacy of myths and inherent modes of perceiving blackness, as part of the universal human psyche, is firmly implanted within the historical Christian tradition, particularly in the West. Moreover, the Christian tradition has been instrumental in propagating this notion of black inferiority. Hood maintains that the existence of these myths must be uncovered in order to deconstruct the ancient and modern cultural beliefs that sabotage “modern religious doctrines as well as civil ideals about equality and inclusiveness,” making them unattainable.⁵¹ Further, Hood’s returning concern is that the embedded psychic, cultural, and historical values of blackness are so firmly entrenched, reflexive, and unconscious in the communal spirit of Western society that they are too fixed to be effectively dislodged in the quest for racial equality and diversity. This is the challenge he finds that looms over the deconstruction of these psychic, mythic, classic, religious, and historical ideas from the Western mind. Ultimately, Hood finds that “Whoever controls the images of a people or a culture is crucial to the domination and identity of that people or culture.”⁵² The problem with this position is that if blackness as evil is programmed within the human psyche, how can racism, which Hood argues is associated with this primordial consciousness, ultimately be avoided or transcended? Instead, this position implies that society, the outgrowth of human consciousness, is forever doomed to racism.

⁵⁰ Robert Hood, *Begrimed and Black: Christian Traditions on Blacks and Blackness* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1978). [Hereafter cited as Hood, *Begrimed*.]

⁵¹ Hood, xiv.

⁵² Hood, 181.

Hood acknowledges that biblical texts contain no antecedents imaging blackness as morally negative, evil, or demonic.⁵³ This implies that the cultures that produced these texts exhibited no overt hatred of blackness or black people. In his exegesis of Jer. 13:23 —“Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots”—Hood finds that “the reference is rhetorical rather than pejorative” to Ethiopians or blacks.⁵⁴ It is only in apocryphal, extra-biblical Christian texts that blackness and black skin are associated with immorality, beliefs also found in Greco-Roman culture. As scholars like Denise Buell and Lloyd Thompson have proven, the negativity associated with blackness in antiquity was adopted by the early Christian tradition.⁵⁵ Thus Hood appears to contradict his own assertion that all cultures implicitly hate blackness and propagate these ideas. If this is not the case, then this weakens his position that hatred of blackness is part of the instinctive, primordial, reflexive human sub-consciousness.

Hood is not the only scholar to argue that the hatred of blackness is primordial in human and cultural consciousness. Joseph R. Washington also calls attention to what he deems the “primordial symbolism” related to the word black.⁵⁶ Washington qualifies what he describes as “anti-Black” by identifying two concepts that he names “antiblackness” and “anti-Blackness.” For Washington, antiblackness is the abstract

⁵³ See Rodney Sadler, *Can a Cushite Change His Skin?: An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Othering in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005).

⁵⁴ Hood, *Begrimed*, 75. Hood writes, “the Old Testament attaches no particular moral significance to the color black,” and on that basis references the scriptural texts Gen. 30:35, Lev. 13:31, Song of Sol. 5:11, and Zech. 6:2; 6:6. Despite references to blackness or darkness, the meaning for Hood in these texts is not morally negative.

⁵⁵ See Denise Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) [Hereafter cited as Buell, *Why This New Race*]; Lloyd Thompson, *Romans and Blacks* (Norman, OK.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989) [Hereafter cited as Thompson, *Romans*.]

⁵⁶ Joseph R. Washington, *Antiblackness in English Religion 1500-1800* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1984). [Hereafter cited as Washington, *Antiblackness*.]

“opposition to all evil...the affirmation of pure goodness.”⁵⁷ Moreover, he says that it emerges “from the conditions of nature and the preconscious state.”⁵⁸ It “seeks to vanquish the Devil and his evil in order that God and his goodness may prevail.”⁵⁹ In developing antiblackness, Washington takes the abstract concept of goodness (as affirmation) and directly opposes it to the color black.

Yet Washington never questions the implicit association between blackness and evil, an association that he ironically seeks to animadvert. In his understanding of the notion of antiblackness, the nature of blackness is implicitly linked to the notion of evil. Thus, antiblackness is the refutation of all that is evil or sinful. In other words, Washington implicitly associates evil with the color black. But he never stops to critique this association. Admittedly, this may be part of what he means by “primordial symbolism,” the inherent connection between all that is opposed to goodness and that of blackness. Yet he never explains this connection, only assumes it. Washington’s other concept, “anti-Blackness,” is “the refusal to respect, accept and affirm blacks as a people.”⁶⁰ Anti-Blackness is the manifestation “of the belief that black features proved these people to be the Devil incarnate, therefore anathema.”⁶¹ When the abstract hatred of blackness, or antiblackness, becomes morphed historically into the rejection, repulsion, and ostracism of people with black skins, it becomes anti-Blackness. Washington writes, “When the Devil and black people are equated or related and thus condemned,

⁵⁷ Washington, xiii.

⁵⁸ Washington, xiii.

⁵⁹ Washington, xvi.

⁶⁰ Washington, ix.

⁶¹ Washington, xiv.

antiblackness is anti-Blackness personified.”⁶² Another, more familiar term for anti-Blackness is black racism, the hatred or prejudgment of black people.

Because of the primordial existence of blackness (evil), which leads to antiblackness (the hatred of evil), there is a natural black/white bifurcation of reality. Washington finds that “Black and white, symbolically speaking, are polar ambivalences, primordial, universal, religious.” It is assumed therefore that since blackness is primal evil, whiteness is original good. Later he goes on to criticize this dualism as “human and not divine in their genesis,” and thus not apparently primordial (assuming, from a theistic perspective, if something is primordial, or existing from the beginning, it was placed there by God).⁶³ This is a seeming contradiction in Washington’s thought. At first he states that blackness as evil is primal, and then he goes on to state that the association between blackness and evil is humanly created. Further, this contrariety is compounded by the statement, “the larger issue of why blackness and whiteness exist is not the concern, although the point is that they co-exist.”⁶⁴ But Washington has supposedly already established that blackness and whiteness are primordial, polar opposites. Hence, this is the larger issue of *why* they exist: they were divinely created *to* exist. Blackness and whiteness are ontological: blackness, as Washington states explicitly, has the essence of evil; whiteness presumably is pure goodness. Thus, the same inherent inconsistency in Hood’s thought is apparent in Washington. On the one hand both scholars argue that the hatred of blackness as evil is fundamental to the human psyche and thus manifest in all human societies; on the other hand they go on to hold that ontological blackness (essential black evil) is socially manufactured—a construct that can

⁶² Washington, xiii.

⁶³ Washington, 93.

⁶⁴ Washington, iix.

eventually be dismantled from human civilization. It seems that in trying to deconstruct the ideas of blackness as sin and evil both authors get mired in the concepts, with the result of accidentally assuming the definitions that they are trying to critique. In my view, blackness as evil is simply not primordial. The connection between blackness and evil is socially and culturally contrived, particularly since there are some societies that do not make this explicit link.⁶⁵ Thus black racism is not, as Washington states, inevitable. Recognition that ontological blackness is a socially engineered force makes deconstructing this ideology quite plausible.⁶⁶

The Hamitic Myth and Early Modern England

Washington and Hood, echoing an argument made by Winthrop Jordan, argue that the Western Christian tradition's hatred of black people was determined largely by Judaism, specifically rabbinical midrashim and Talmudic sources.⁶⁷ Washington outlines

⁶⁵ For example, another view of blackness is, "Blackness and whiteness come from before the creation of nations, before what God imprinted on the Earth and on the water before the proximity and distance of the sun, and before the strength of its heat and its brightness. It was not anything dirty, not something ugly, not a punishment and not a disadvantage." Uthman Amr Ibn Gahr Al-Jahiz, *The Book of the Glory of the Black Race*, trans. Vincent J. Cornell (Phyllis Preston Collection, 1981), 40-41.

⁶⁶ See Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1995). Postcolonialist theory attempts to deconstruct Eurocentric binaries of whiteness over blackness by calling attention to the voices that have been marginalized and silenced in period texts, yet not effectively, as some critics maintain, thus disrupting the old hierarchies.

⁶⁷ The texts include (a) one reference from the Babylonian Talmud: "Our Rabbis taught-Three copulated in the ark, and they were all punished — the dog, the raven, and Ham. The dog was doomed to be tied, the raven expectorates [his seed into his mate's mouth] and Ham was smitten in his skin...from him descended Cush (the negro) who is black-skinned." (Isidore Epstein et al., trans., *The Babylonian Talmud* (London: Soncino Press, 1978), Sanhedrin 108b). The phrase "Ham was smitten in his skin" was taken to mean that he was blackened. Also, the sin of Ham as related to the dog and the raven was sexual. (b) Another reference from the midrash—Aggadic commentary—is as follows: "R. Hiyya said: Ham and the dog copulated in the Ark, therefore Ham came forth black skinned while the dog publicly exposes his copulation." (H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, trans., *Midrash Rabah*. vol. 1, (London, Soncino Press, 1939), 293. See also Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 5 vols, (2nd ed.), trans. from the German manuscript by Henrietta Szold and Paul Radin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003). Also, there is biblical commentary from the third-century Church Father Origen on Ham. The English rendition of the

text is as follows: "Look at the origin of the race and you will discover that their father Cham, who had laughed at his father's nakedness, deserved a judgment of this kind, that his son should be a servant to his brother, in which case the condition of bondage would prove the wickedness of his conduct. Not without merit, therefore, does the discolored posterity imitate the ignobility of the race." [Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans., Ronald Heine, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), Homily 16, 215.] David Whitford clarifies that in the Latin, which reads, "non ergo immerito ignobilitatem generis decolor posteritas imitator," the words "generis" and "decolor" have a much different rendering [Origen, *Homiliae in Genesim*, ed. J.P. Minge, vol. XII Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca (Paris: 1857), 248 [PG XII]]. Although the word "generis" can be translated as race, in this context it probably means tribe or clan. And the word "decolor" does not in this instance mean "discoloration" but a more accurate rendering would be, as Whitford argues, "degenerate" or "depraved." He goes on to say, that the proper translation would read, "Not without merit, therefore, does the degenerate posterity imitate the ignobility of the clan." As Whitford notes, "This gives a much different interpretation to Origen's homily. Origen is not speaking of the 'race' of Africans, but the tribe of Egyptians that enslaved the Hebrews." (Whitford, *The Curse of Ham*, 61). In addition, several Syriac texts associate the biblical curse of Canaan with blackness. For example, "Mar Ephrem the Syrian said: 'When Noah awoke and was told what Canaan did...Noah said, 'Cursed be Canaan and may God make his face black,' and immediately the face of Canaan changed; so did of his father Ham, and their white faces became black and dark and their color changed." Paul de Lagarde, *Materialien zur Kritik und Geschichte des Pentateuchs* (Leipzig, 1867), part II. The fourth-century Syriac work *Cave of Treasures* gives the explanation that Canaan's curse was actually earned because he revived the sinful music and arts of Cain's progeny that had been before the flood. "And Canaan was cursed because he had dared to do this, and his seed became a servant of servants, that is to say, to the Egyptians, and the Cushites, and the Mûsâyê, [and the Indians, and all the Ethiopians, whose skins are black]." Ishodad of Merv (Syrian Christian bishop of Hedhatha, ninth century): When Noah cursed Canaan, "instantly, by the force of the curse...his face and entire body became black [ukmotha]. This is the black color which has persisted in his descendents." [C. Van Den Eynde, *Corpus scriptorium Christianorum orientalium* 156, *Scriptores Syri* 75 (Louvain, 1955), 139]. Eutychius, Alexandrian Melkite patriarch (d. 940) is recorded as writing: "Cursed be Ham and may he be a servant to his brothers...He himself and his descendants, who are the Egyptians, the Negroes, the Ethiopians and (it is said) the Barbari." [J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus...series Graeca*, (Paris, 1857-66), Pococke's (1658-59) translation of the *Annales*, 111.917B (sec. 41-43)]. Ibn al-Tayyib (Arabic Christian scholar, Baghdad, d. 1043) writes: "The curse of Noah affected the posterity of Canaan who were killed by Joshua son of Nun. At the moment of the curse, Canaan's body became black and the blackness spread out among them." [Joannes C.J. Sanders, *Commentaire sur la Genèse, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 274-275, *Scriptores Arabici* 24-25 (Louvain, 1967), 1:56 (text), 2:52-55 (translation).] Bar Hebraeus (Syrian Christian scholar, 1226-86) also writes: "'And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and showed [it] to his two brothers.' That is...that Canaan was cursed and not Ham, and with the very curse he became black and the blackness was transmitted to his descendents...And he said, 'Cursed be Canaan! A servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.'" (Sprengling and Graham, *Barhebraeus' Scholia on the Old Testament Gen 9:22*, 40-42). See also, Phillip Mayerson, "Anti-Black Sentiment in the *Vitae Patrum*," *Harvard Theological Review*, (71: 1978), 304-311. A mid-thirteenth century manuscript compilation of the Talmud quotes: "The teachers say that three copulated with their females in the ark: the dog, the crow, and Ham, and all were punished. The dog because it is stuck to its female when it copulates, the crow spits and copulates spitting, Ham of this was cursed" (Nicholas Donin, *Extractiones de Talmud*, 1240-48 Paris MS Bibliotheque nationale Lat. 16558). Also in the thirteenth-century mystical text *The Zohar*, Ham represents the refuse and dross of the gold, the stirring and rousing of the unclean spirit of the ancient serpent. Ham, the father of Canaan, is also known as "the notorious world darkener...The descendants of Ham through Canaan therefore have red eyes, because Ham looked upon the nakedness of his father; they have miss-shapen lips, because Ham spoke with his lips about the unseemly condition of his father; they have twisted curly hair, because Ham turned and twisted his head around to see the nakedness of his father; and they go about naked, because Ham did not cover the nakedness of his father..." [Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon, trans., *The Zohar*, vol. 1 (London: Soncino Press, 1931), 246].

this process in more detail. He writes that in antiquity, the Jewish rabbinic tradition took on the Hellenistic worldview regarding antiblackness (hatred of blackness as evil). Although this worldview may not have been dominant or particularly developed in Greco-Roman culture, Jewish thought expanded it and gave it a religious hermeneutic (e.g. in the Hamitic Myth in Gen. 9:18-28).⁶⁸ Thus the hatred of blackness as evil was sacralized to the hatred of people with black skins (anti-Blackness, or black racism). Washington writes, “if not the first or the only great religion to infer categorically that black people are eternally damned, Judaism’s oral tradition continued to pass on from generation to generation the story that black people are doubly damned: damned in the blackness of their skin and damned to perpetual slavery.”⁶⁹ Early modern English religious scholars were directly influenced by the rabbinic tradition; hence, the roots of the English Christian experience in particular are “anti-Black.”⁷⁰ Therefore, although “Englishmen did not invent the curse of blackness,” they would, through revivification of traditional, classical, and religious ideas of blackness, largely negative, turn “this ancient matter of benign neglect into a modern principle.”⁷¹ It was precisely through religious traditions, wielded through the power and authority of the Bible, that the English were to craftily propound the ideological notion “blacks are not people like ourselves,” through the biblical hermeneutic “blacks are the descendants of the curse of Ham.”⁷²

⁶⁸ There are rabbinic and midrashic texts that incorporate the story of the cursing of Canaan with blackness. See David H. Aaron, “Early Rabbinic Exegesis on the So-Called Hamitic Myth,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63.4 (1995) 721-759. [Hereafter cited as Aaron, “Rabbinic Exegesis.”] Rejoinder, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65.1 (1996) 189-192, on Responses by Steven McKenzie and Donald Matthews (183-188).

⁶⁹ Washington, *Antiblackness*, 1.

⁷⁰ Washington, 6.

⁷¹ Washington, 20.

⁷² Washington, 18.

In his study of Gen. 9:18-27, David Whitford finds that the “Hamitic Myth,” known also as the “Curse of Ham,” and its peculiar association with belief in the curse of Africans and their condemnation to servitude, arose during the early modern period.⁷³ The importance of the early modern period’s reception of the text cannot be overemphasized, because it had “its greatest impact in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the system of transatlantic slavery was created.”⁷⁴ Whitford’s book rests alongside two other works, David Goldenberg’s *The Curse of Ham* (2003), which “explores the Near Eastern and classical understandings of the Genesis text,” and Stephen Haynes’s *Noah’s Curse* (2002), which “looks primarily at the use of the myth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.”⁷⁵ Thus Whitford’s book fills an important gap, since it is a social and exegetical study of the Hamitic Myth during the early modern period.

Whitford’s thesis, that the association of the myth with blacks and slavery became predominant in the early modern period, makes his work crucial in the understanding of later interpretations and applications. These include European and American justifications for the transatlantic slave trade as well as how the practice of slavery was theologically rationalized in the United States. Whitford concludes that extra biblical sources including “exegesis, sermons, popular works of history and fiction, propaganda, necessity, and greed combined to form a deadly myth of African inferiority,” noting that in the early modern period when the myth was formed, even the question of slavery in relation to the being of Africans “was almost always a question of identity not status.”⁷⁶

⁷³ Whitford, *The Curse of Ham*, 4.

⁷⁴ Whitford, 4.

⁷⁵ Whitford, 4.

⁷⁶ Whitford, 10.

That is, as we have seen, the issue of African slavery revolved around beliefs about the ontological nature of black persons. These ideas were already in existence prior to the development of slavery. The notion of inferiority, already soundly established and inextricably linked to the justification for slavery, formed the basis of developing systemic hierarchies.

Thus, Gen. 9:18-27 became a “text of opportunity” in the early modern period.⁷⁷ After analyzing the text through historical and textual criticism, Whitford finds that in the original context, the pericope of the text had nothing to do with sub-Saharan Africans, the curse of blackness, or slavery. Instead, the text was “two stories, one that focuses on viniculture and the origins of agriculture and another that explains the origins of different types of people.”⁷⁸ The second story referenced the Israelites conquering the territory of the Canaanites, and biblical justification for ethnic warfare. This explains why Canaan is cursed instead of Ham in the text (although it is actually Ham who sins against his father Noah). The original story was later emended with the second story, to which the curse is added.⁷⁹ By the medieval period, where from earlier periods the myth was used to justify European serfdom, Whitford finds that there was no significant connection in biblical interpretation between Genesis 9 and Africans. And in the Renaissance, there were multiple views of Ham; in addition to being seen as cursed and as a slave, Ham was also viewed surprisingly as “a god and king.”⁸⁰ Simultaneously, Canaan was gradually removed from early modern homilies and biblical commentaries while the focus was made increasingly on Ham. This explains the rise of the “Hamitic” Myth, although in the

⁷⁷ Whitford, 4, 12.

⁷⁸ Whitford, 12.

⁷⁹ Aaron, “Rabbinic Exegesis,” 743.

⁸⁰ Whitford, *The Curse of Ham*, 17.

scriptural text it is Canaan who is actually cursed. But, as Whitford also crucially shows, by the early modern period multiple layers had been added onto the myth that included the elements of “skin color, sexual behavior, and religion.”⁸¹

Whitford allows for the fact that rabbinic commentaries from the Babylonian Talmud, which explicitly correlate a divine curse to the black skin of Africans, effectively established the curse of blackness, which affected the Christian tradition up to the early modern era. This places him squarely in the company of Joseph R. Washington, whose longitudinal study of blackness in English religious history also emphasizes the impact of the Judaic rabbinic tradition on Christian history. But Whitford criticizes Jordan and Washington for trying to maintain that a textual “conduit” existed between ancient rabbinic sources and the early modern period regarding beliefs about Ham and blackness.⁸² However, Whitford eventually concedes this same view, acknowledging that Talmudic and other early references to blackness were “residual motifs” that “were resurrected and distorted in the early modern era by men who knew what they were doing.”⁸³ In other words, a combination of ancient Jewish and Hellenistic religious and cultural traditions led to the development of Anti-Blackness (Washington’s term) or racism, which proliferated down to the early modern period. Similarly, David M. Goldenberg argues that ancient folktales in the Jewish rabbinic tradition were later adopted by Christian and Islamic sources, forming the basis of “raw material from which was fashioned the Curse of Ham, used to justify the social institution of Black slavery.”⁸⁴

⁸¹ Whitford, 17.

⁸² Whitford writes, “Washington.....does not prove a conduit existed. He simply asserts that one did exist” (22).

⁸³ Whitford, 17.

⁸⁴ David Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 29. [Hereafter cited as Goldenberg, *Ham*.]

Goldenberg holds that through the process of hermeneutics in the cultures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, “traditions were reappropriated and recreated as they moved into the new historical environments.” Specifically, in this case, the “Jewish etiology of black skin” was reconstructed by the early modern period to signify early iterations of the concept of racial division, in which “race” signifies not only physical difference, but also innate, ontological separateness.⁸⁵

Thus, scholars agree that Jewish myths about blackness from the rabbinical tradition formed the raw corpus from which originated beliefs about African inferiority and the Hamitic Curse.

Blackamoor Tropology in Ancient Christian Texts

The work of Gay L. Byron (2002) is a methodological model for this study because it classifies rhetorical uses of blackness and ethnic tropes in early Christian texts.⁸⁶ Byron’s work shows that language symbolism about blacks, Egyptians, and Ethiopians was expressed metaphorically in order to establish moral and theological prescriptions as well as to demarcate dimensions of sin and evil in early Christian texts. Byron shows that from common conventions in Greco-Roman literature, early Christian writers adapted “ethnic and color-symbolic language” to develop rhetorical imagery that reflected meaning with regard to contemporary Christian communities, doctrine, and religious practices.⁸⁷ Specifically, Byron finds that numerous negative references to blacks, Egyptians, and Ethiopians are used to signify sins, demons, vices, and heresies.

⁸⁵ Goldenberg, 29.

⁸⁶ Gay L. Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian literature: Blackened by Their Sins: Early Christian Ethno-Political Rhetorics about Egyptians, Ethiopians, Blacks and Blackness* (London: Routledge, 2002). [Hereafter cited as Byron, *Symbolic Blackness*.]

⁸⁷ Byron, 18.

Byron writes, the “dominant discourse defines them [the Other] in terms of bodily characteristics, and constructs those bodies as ugly...defiled, impure...or sick.” Correspondingly, throughout Christian writings, Ethiopians and blacks are ‘personalized’ as devils and demons.

Versions of the ancient euphemism based on the sixth-century BCE Aesopian fable “Aethiopem lavare,” also known as “To wash an Ethiopian (white),” found regular expression in classical texts.⁸⁸ Its usage transferred over into ancient Christian texts, with the meaning of the washing made applicable to salvation in the removal of the “blackness of sin.”⁸⁹ Christian authors, notably apostolic writers, patristic fathers, and monastic leaders, follow suit by using the “color symbolism” adopted from the mainstream culture as literary strategies. Byron suggests blacks were “recognizable” in the ancient Roman world, and on that basis, they were useful specifically in Christian texts as symbolic tropes serving as a functional “ideology of difference.”⁹⁰ Church fathers borrowed caricatures of Egyptians and Ethiopians as demons or devils from Greco-Roman writings in order to talk about morality in a Christian context.⁹¹

Byron’s work establishes that analysis of color symbolism in ancient Christian texts lends insight into intra-polemical conflicts including disputes about religious practices and theological understandings, how “the power of language [is used] to shape hostile and destructive attitudes and actions.”⁹² Thus, Byron holds that “these rhetorics are not directed specifically against these actual ethnic groups,” a statement that seems

⁸⁸ Cf. Lucian, *Adversus indoctum Satirical sketches*, trans., Paul Turner, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 28.

⁸⁹ Frank Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970), 330. [Hereafter cited as Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*.]

⁹⁰ Byron, *Symbolic Blackness*, 1.

⁹¹ Byron, 11.

⁹² Washington, *Antiblackness*, 19.

somewhat conflicted with her later conclusions about the implications of this textual language for ancient Christian views about blacks.⁹³ On the one hand, Byron claims that attacks against blacks, Ethiopians, and Egyptians were just rhetorical but on the other she also argues that this language reflects the power structure of the ancient world.

Byron cautions that whenever ethnic terms appear, they are instances of what she defines as “ethno-political rhetorics,” which occur solely when they act as “political invective for the purpose of advancing certain teachings within early Christian communities.”⁹⁴ The common tool of “ethnic-othering,” which was used frequently in antiquity and borrowed by Christian authors, was a handy way of building upon established prejudices and using those conceptualizations to distance or “other” rival individuals or groups within communities. Thus, when using prejudicial language in ancient Christian texts, the authors were not condemning the existence or use of ethnic prejudice, because these “differences were already firmly established in the literary minds of ancient Christian authors.” In fact, these writers were using existing ethnic tropes to symbolize new meaning within Christian communities. This is one reason why, as Byron finds, the “New Testament and other early Christian writings are replete with descriptions of different ethnic groups.”⁹⁵ This suggests that the power of the literary discourse itself creates “a kind of cultural imperialism that operates by making a group invisible while the group is also simultaneously marked out and stereotyped.”⁹⁶ In the final analysis, the juxtaposition of various groups along binaries of insider-outsider status provides “clues” to the broader picture of the cultural view of blacks. Thus, Byron ultimately concludes

⁹³ Washington, 19

⁹⁴ Washington, 2.

⁹⁵ Washington, 2.

⁹⁶ Washington, 25.

that the symbolic uses of blackness in many Christian and Greco-Roman texts are indicative not only of how these groups were perceived in the ancient world, but also of how they may have been treated in some instances. She writes, “No longer is it acceptable to dismiss the possibility that ethnic and color difference played a significant role in the Greco-Roman world.”⁹⁷

Byron’s position on the rhetorical uses of ethnic language in ancient Christian texts reflects the stance of renowned classist Frank Snowden. He writes, “The imagery of Ethiopians and their color was much more than a literary device: it was a dramatic means of presenting cardinal tenets of Christianity that were to be translated into practice.”⁹⁸ However, in addition to stressing the literary affects of using ethnic metaphors to elucidate Christian teaching in ancient texts, Snowden famously stresses that the imagery was not indicative of the societal treatment of blacks, Ethiopians, or Egyptians in late antiquity. As Snowden indicates, “the Christian black-white symbolism, like the antecedent classical imagery of blackness and whiteness, was rooted in a *Weltanschauung* in which skin color did not give rise to a marked antipathy toward blacks and did not evoke negative reactions in the domain of social behavior.”⁹⁹ Snowden’s position that Roman society was not racist towards blacks despite the obvious use of ethnic and color-coded rhetoric in religious and secular literature highlights the question of the exact meaning of race and racism in ancient society. As suggested above, the concept of race transcends prejudice to include systemic stratification and oppression based on the social category as defined. Thus race does not necessarily have to be defined using skin color as a characteristic. As a social construct, the concept depends on the

⁹⁷ Washington, 123.

⁹⁸ Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 105.

⁹⁹ Snowden, 107.

various forces converging to create its meaning. No matter how race was defined, what remains to be determined is whether ancient Roman society was structured in order to limit and constrict the social mobility and personal flourishing of individuals belonging to this group or type and their descendants.

Lloyd Thompson finds that classicists like Snowden apply anachronistic categories of race and racism to the ancient world in the attempt to label the socio-ethnic differences evident from iconography. Applying modern-day characteristics to the past is problematic, and thus while it is clear that there was a kind of “ethnocentrism” at play in which various groups were classified and distinguished according to certain rules in Roman society, ascribing those structural tendencies as “racist” is simply impossible to measure.¹⁰⁰ Conceding the difficulty in making do with limited texts as opposed to more realistic appraisals of a culture’s feelings and opinions, Thompson writes, “the instances of Roman disparagement of negritude must be seen as mere ethnocentric reactions to black otherness and mere expressions of conformism to the dominant aesthetic values.”¹⁰¹ And, in the metaphorical uses of blackness in scriptural and apocryphal texts, Thompson echoes Byron in maintaining that “moral and social values attached to black skin emerged early in the formation of the Christian tradition.”¹⁰² That is, white and black color was used to demarcate the separation between good and evil. Although modern-day racism cannot be affirmed, ethnic prejudices were alive and well in antiquity, affecting diverse groups. Further, negative associations with blackness were passed on to early Christianity.

¹⁰⁰ Thompson, *Romans*, 16.

¹⁰¹ Thompson, 19.

¹⁰² Thompson, 10.

This tendency to use ethnic language in order to signify theological meaning as well as characterize insider-outsider religious group status was so prevalent in the ancient world that Denise Buell argues it was adopted by early Christians in order to depict different aspects of the new faith in religious texts.¹⁰³ Thus metaphors of difference based on ethnicity and culture, denoted often by physical appearance including skin color, were signified with new meaning applicable to believers forming in Christian communities. That is, Christian writers used existing ethnic markers that were familiar in the ancient world to symbolize new meaning and practices significant for their religious groups, particularly those beliefs and forms they considered authoritative.¹⁰⁴ However, what is important about their use of ethnic terminology in this new deployment is that ancient Christians presupposed fluidity across racial and ethnic boundaries. As Buell writes, by “conceptualizing race as both mutable and ‘real,’ early Christians could define Christianness both as a distinct category in contrast to other peoples and also as inclusive, since it is a category formed out of individuals from a range of different races.”¹⁰⁵ Through the old or existing language of ethnic markers, Christians created new meanings in order to proselytize, or bring in adherents to faith communities. The ethnic terms, ironically used in contemporary culture to signify exclusion and separation, became a universalizing symbol of inclusivity. It also suggests that in the ancient world, race or ethnicity was not perceived as fixed and immutable in comparison to the modern view. Like Thompson, Buell guards against ‘presentism’ in seeking to make sense of ancient conceptions of ethnic difference.¹⁰⁶ Further, Buell emphasizes the universalizing

¹⁰³ Buell, *Why this New Race*, 2.

¹⁰⁴ Buell, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Buell, 3.

¹⁰⁶ Buell, 10.

tendency of ethnic language when used by some Christian groups to create a “new race” of the faith. Employing the old terminology of race and ethnicity to symbolize new meaning characterized by Christian identity created a new category of existence in the ancient world, according to this theory. While this language did not eradicate contemporary ethnic or cultural divisions, it established a new one, the Christian race, to be set alongside the others.

Byron’s suggestion that ethnic language in religious texts furthered the “othering” of blacks in ancient society is similar to the thesis of Ian Smith, who argues that ethnic language in Renaissance texts propagated early modern England’s xenophobic and racial agenda.¹⁰⁷ Just as in the ancient world, the ethnic prejudice blacks experienced was reflected in religious and secular texts, Smith notes the significance of English Renaissance rhetoric in the creation of racial difference in the early modern world.¹⁰⁸ But for the English, it was the ancient world that ironically created the powerful conceptual mold for constructing the other through language. Aristotelian thought had argued for the natural inferiority of the barbarian.¹⁰⁹ Thus, Renaissance Africans became surrogates of the ancient model.¹¹⁰ Race in the Renaissance, then, emerges from an English strategy to protect and defend its own national reputation at the expense of African barbarians, which was achieved, Smith argues, “through an act of deliberate misreading of classical texts.”¹¹¹ It is important to note that in this theory, race is a construct based on the establishment of merit and power within a particular matrix. In this particular case, the litmus text is barbarous speech, perceived as an early modern

¹⁰⁷ Smith, *Race and Rhetoric*, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Smith, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Collinson, 5.

¹¹⁰ Collinson, 3

¹¹¹ Collinson, 7-8.

resurrection of the ancient Greco-Roman version. Thus, with the elevation of rhetoric to the central canon in the humanist curriculum, debased, incompetent, or vulgar speech becomes barbaric in early modern English culture. Through the failure to master Renaissance literary expression, African people are racially signified as separate, apart, and ontologically distinct from the mainstream.

Methodology and Chapter Overview

This dissertation evaluates the use of black ethnic rhetorical language in early modern English religious texts. In their use of this kind of language, English divines were adapting contemporary binary readings of difference that ascribed white over black. According to many cultural and literary theorists, use of these binaries during the early modern period reflects early iterations of the modern construct of race. Indeed, employment of black ethnic literary expressions during the Renaissance contributed to the development of modern racial ideations. Therefore, this study argues that the rise of black ethnic religious rhetoric in early modern England was part of the growth of modern racial consciousness.

Further, in the history of Christian thought, images of darkness and blackness have been associated with evil and sin; thus early modern English divines, in their appropriation of black ethnic literary expressions in the signification of Protestant theology were relying on ancient models. For example, scholars agree that myths derived from the Jewish rabbinical tradition form the raw corpus of religious materials from which originates ideas of black African inferiority as well as the Hamitic Curse. This, along with latent ideas of black subordination in late antiquity, influenced the development of Western Christian images of blackness as associated with sin, evil, dirt,

and corruption. The resurrection of an emphasis on language during the Renaissance led to an adoption of various literary paradigms emphasizing these themes, which were juxtaposed with the alienation of the African as barbaric in early modern England. Hence, the study of rhetoric and literary expressions in this project appeals to a tradition in which language usage creates not only meaning, but also *being*. Language becomes more than the dividing line separating civilized and barbarian as according to Smith. After all, during the early modern period, the problem emerges how to maintain hierarchical subordination, when, as in the case of Shakespeare's character Othello, Africans manage to master Renaissance speech! Thus, the "other" remains defined or characterized through literary denigration. Signification, particularly when placed within the context of theological anthropology, is used as a mode of ontological devaluation.

Chapter One, "Introduction." This study finds that black ethnic religious rhetoric is used in early modern English religious texts to symbolize Protestant theology, specifically original sin, justification, and sanctification. However, the rhetoric itself, while characterizing a theological anthropology for all humans and elect believers, operates liturgically in a mode of double-entendre in which its racial imagery also signifies a separate and inferior ontology for Africans.

Chapter Two: "Original Sin, the Hamitic Curse, and Blackamoor Imagery." This chapter argues that many early modern English divines utilize black metaphorical imagery, popular in some media representations of mainstream culture, to teach original sin in preaching and religious texts. The introduction, the '1601 Elizabethan Edict to Expunge Negroes' is presented as material history symbolizing one aspect of the dissertation's thesis: black Africans were viewed as ontologically "other" in early modern

England due to evolving ideas on race, which in this case is defined by physical difference and interior moral characteristics. The first section of this chapter analyzes contemporary early modern material about black Africans: the writings of Leo Africanus, other popular travelogues, and Renaissance literature. All of these texts represent the African as internally evil/immoral due to his external coloring. Thus an explicit connection is being made in mainstream culture with regard to phenotype and religion. The next section traces the origin of the Hamitic Curse in early modern England. A fictive adaptation of the Genesis 9 story by George Best composed in the late sixteenth century, the Hamitic Myth explains the origins of black skin color as a curse. One hundred years later, the myth of black cursedness was being used to justify West African chattel slavery. Thus, the idea of the black curse reverberates with the doctrine of original sin, particularly in the West, where sin has been interpreted as an inherited defilement—the same language used to described black cursedness.

Therefore, perhaps due to the inherent similarity in expressions of blackness as sin and original sin as inherited, early modern English divines use the metaphor of blackness as evil in order to characterize the doctrine of original sin in religious texts. The majority of black ethnic references in early modern English texts symbolize sin because of the frequent comparison of blackness and sin or evil in the early modern period. This chapter analyzes examples of this rhetoric using a five-fold categorization schema.¹¹² Although original sin applies to all of humanity in the context of religious teaching, the trope operates based on the negative imagery of the black African as inherently sinful. The rhetoric therefore highlights the repugnant value of blackness and

¹¹² The categorization of the schema in this section is inspired by Gay Byron's taxonomic methodology in *Symbolic Blackness* (2002).

black ethnicity in aspects of early modern English religious culture. And, this reflects the societal marking involved in the formulation of the concept or ideology of race.¹¹³

Chapter Three: “*English Blackamoors, the Black Bride of Song of Songs and Justification by Faith Alone.*” The thesis of this chapter is the early modern English divines use black ethnic rhetoric to symbolize the Protestant doctrine of justification. Black ethnic rhetoric used to signify justification make up the second largest number of references in early modern English texts. The chapter begins by analyzing the Geneva Bible commentary of the *Song of Songs* on the Black Bride, comparing those writers who concentrate on her blackness abstractly and others who focus on her blackness as Blackamoor or Ethiopian ethnicity. Both elements are used as symbols of sin but the stress on black ethnicity is a key component to the argument of how the use of racial tropes are incorporated in Protestant teachings of salvation. Moreover, the figurative uses of these metaphors are prefigured in Origen’s commentaries on the *Song of Songs* who incorporates the black imagery of the bride to symbolize sin and redemption. Origen’s view arguably reflects Luther’s notion of *simul iustus et peccator*. Therefore, to provide background on the Protestant understanding of justification by faith alone, a review of that tradition is provided with a focus on the theologies of Martin Luther and John Calvin. Similarly, a more in-depth reading of Luther’s *Simul Iustus Et Peccator* in English Commentaries on *Song of Songs* follows. Further, a brief exposition of the *Song of Songs* in the Christian Tradition is given as precursor to analyzes of Origen and

¹¹³ See Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Catherine M. S. Alexander, *Shakespeare and Race* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Imtiaz H. Habib, *Shakespeare and Race: Postcolonial Praxis in the Early Modern Period* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000).

Bernard on Blackness and the *Song of Songs*, Origen and Ethiopian Beauty, and Blackness in English Commentaries on *Song of Songs*. Finally, Racial Ethnicity in English Commentaries on *Song of Songs* and Racial Ethnicity in Early Modern English Commentaries on Justification follow as studies on early modern English writings of black ethnic rhetoric symbolizing the Protestant doctrine of justification.

In responding to the metaphor of blackness as evil in commentaries on the black bride in other commentaries on the *Song of Songs*, many early modern English divines characterize the black bride as Ethiopian or Blackamoor in order to describe her sinful condition. Although this ethnicity symbolizes the universal human condition it stigmatizes these racial groups. Moreover, English divines also expound upon Origen's concept of "Ethiopian Beauty" in which the bride is simultaneously black but sinful which prefigures Luther's concept of *simul justus et peccator*. Blackness as evil becomes an important concept to stress impossibilities to signify impossibilities is also a convenient analogy for other commentaries on scripture teaching justification in early modern English religious texts. The emphasis on human impossibilities is tied doctrinally to the limited atonement in justification in which God redeems only the elect based on grace alone and not any merit or agency of the sinner. The proverb *Aethiopem lavare*, as well as Jer. 13: 23 "Can a Blackamoor change his skin?" are used both to symbolize justification by faith alone, by grace alone, in this regard.

Chapter Four: "*Masques and Mirrors: 'Aethiopem Lavare' and Sanctification in Early Modern England.*" The thesis of this chapter is that a few English divines use black ethnic rhetoric to symbolize the process of sanctification which is characterized as a black person becoming white. Thus there is a concentration on the theme of whitening

blackness in early modern England. It begins with an analysis of two of Ben Jonson's masques, *Masque of Blackness* and *Masque of Beauty*, both commissioned during the reign of King James I. The masques dramatize the physical whitening of the black African daughters of Niger. These Jacobean masques demonstrate the regime's embrace of the themes of black subjugation used to promote burgeoning policies of imperialism and colonialism in the early seventeenth century. The history of the *Aethiopem Lavare* phrase, from its classical origins and resurgence in the English Renaissance comprises the second section. Next, the Protestant doctrine of sanctification is briefly outlined, noting that there is a continual relationship between justification and sanctification although justification is understood as a forensic event occurring before sanctification, which takes place as a process. The last section of the chapter analyzes blackamoor rhetoric on sanctification in early modern English religious texts and finds that inspired by the Jer. 13:23 text, 'Can a Blackamoor Change His Skin?' and the 'To Wash a Blackamoor' proverb, changing an African's ethnicity into whiteness increasingly becomes a figurative illustration of sanctification in early modern English texts. Thus the characterization of the racial transformation or metamorphosis of an African person into a European is used to symbolize the progress towards sanctity and the life of holiness in religious texts.

In contrast to the numerous references used to symbolize sin and justification in early modern English religious texts, there are relatively few black ethnic tropes used by divines to signify sanctification. This can be accounted for as a result of two reasons: (1) the theology of sanctification itself: Reformation Protestant theology de-emphasizes the work of perfection in this life although good deeds do emerge as the fruit of justification. Yet, this lack of emphasis is one reason why divines do not use black tropes often to

signify sanctification in religious commentaries; (2) the blackness trope and its associations with race: because blackness is becoming increasingly associated with race and has the traditional connotation of evil, depicting the transformation of black ethnicity to white is problematic in a culture socially reified by racial division.

When used as a symbol of sanctification, The “Washing an Ethiopian/Blackamoor white” trope is depicted in many cases as the gradual transformation from African ethnicity to whiteness. The imagery is ultimately employed as the ultimate glorification of the human believer as the transformation of an African to a European. Those who incorporate use of the metaphor in this way vary in their emphasis on God’s ability to transform the believer in this life or in glory. There is also a difference in interpretation regarding the work of God on the believer and the cooperation of the believer in the effort of holiness.

Chapter Five: “ ‘*Absent Presence:*’ ” *The Religious Lives of Early Modern English Africans.*” This thesis of this chapter argues that at the same time English divines were using blackamoor rhetoric in preaching and religious texts to symbolize sin in Protestant salvation, and ministry to Africans was taking place in England. This chapter incorporates secondary research from the work of Imtiaz Habib, which indicates that archival records show the considerable presence of blacks in England, as well as the group’s participation largely in the ministerial activities of the church. The chapter also presents a history of blacks in England and two analyses of anecdotal accounts of black conversion stories of two seventeenth-century African women living in England, known as Francis, a “blackmore maide” and “Dinah the Black,” also known as “Dinah the More.”

Chapter Six: “*The Legacy of English Blackamoor Rhetoric*,” concludes the study, focusing on the legacy of the rise of early modern English black religious rhetoric which accompanies the African presence in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England and the black images in the popular media as well as the ongoing theological impact of these forces.

CHAPTER II

ORIGINAL SIN, THE HAMITIC CURSE, AND BLACKAMOOR IMAGERY

In 1601, Queen Elizabeth issued an edict, now famous, which called for the removal of all blacks from England.¹¹⁴ Since this well-documented edict was listed as a draft at the time, unlike most Royal Proclamations it was probably never made public.¹¹⁵ However, the edict's language about "Negars and Blackamoors" does make a symbolic statement about late-sixteenth-century English conceptions of blackness. Elizabeth writes,

After our hearty commendations; whereas the Queen's Majesty, tendering the good and welfare of her own natural subjects greatly distressed in these hard times of dearth, is highly discontented to understand the great numbers of Negars and Blackamoors which (as she is informed) are crept into this realm since the troubles between Her Highness and the King of Spain, who are fostered and relieved here to the great annoyance of her own liege people that want the relief which those people consume; as also for that the most of them are infidels, having no understanding of Christ or his Gospel, hath given especial commandment that the said kind of people should be with all speed avoided and discharged out of this Her Majesty's dominions.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ In 1596, Queen Elizabeth sent two letters to the Lord Mayor of London requesting that "blackamoors" be deported out of England and calling for the merchant Caspar van Senden to take them to Spain and Portugal. (Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Mayor et al., 11? July 1596, in *Acts of the Privy Council of England*, n.s., 26 (1596-97), John Roche Dasent, ed. (London: Mackie, 1902), 16-7. Queen Elizabeth to the Lord Mayor et al., 18 July 1596, in *Acts of the Privy Council*, 20-1). See also Frederick A. Youngs, Jr., *The Proclamations of the Tudor Queens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 38. [Hereafter cited as Youngs, *Proclamations*.]

¹¹⁵ For additional analysis of the expulsion see Kim F. Hall's "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? Colonization and Miscegenation in The Merchant of Venice," *Renaissance Drama*, XXIII (1992), 87-111 and "Reading What Isn't There: 'Black' Studies in Early Modern England," *Stanford Humanities Review* vol. 3.1 (1993), 23-33.

¹¹⁶ Youngs, *Proclamations*, 10. Elizabeth's Proclamation "Licensing Caspar van Senden to Deport Negroes" is listed as a "Draft" endorsed by the Queen in January 1601, on the Calendar, 11, 569; see also Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, eds., *Tudor Royal Proclamations, Vol. III: The Later Tudors 1588-1603* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), 221. Although it is evident that Queen Elizabeth endorsed the draft with her signature, more than likely one or more of the advisors on the Privy Council authored the royal command. However, with the endorsement, the Queen authorized the symbolic meaning that the language of the edict can be understood to carry. One year earlier, in August 1600, the Ambassador of Muley Ahmad al-Mansur, King of Morocco, Abd el-Ouahed ben Messoud, visited London with the diplomatic goal of building an alliance against Spain.

The inducement of the edict's issuance stemmed from a debt the nation owed to a Dutch merchant.¹¹⁷ In reality, Africans were not forced to leave the country. The 1601 Elizabethan edict certainly "did little to diminish the size of that population...Blacks remained in England."¹¹⁸ Yet, the edict's language represents an emerging perception of blacks in early-seventeenth-century England. The terminology makes the proclamation possibly the *first royal English text* to mark ontological boundaries of blackness—"ultimately coming as close as contemporary texts will come to categorically defining a 'black' race."¹¹⁹ Blacks are objectified as a "kinde" of people and defined largely as "infidels, having no understanding of Christ or his Gospel."¹²⁰ A separate racial identity is defined according to physical difference, upon which is assumed (non) religion.

¹¹⁷ The opportunist merchant in question was Caspar Van Senden, who in the late 1590s took it upon himself to purchase the freedom of some English prisoners in Spain, and probably spent a good deal of money doing so. Apparently he did it as a financial investment; in returning the prisoners to England, his hope and expectation was that the Elizabethan regime would compensate him with interest. But in the hard times, Elizabeth's government decided to grant Van Senden the freedom to transport blacks to Spain and Portugal for sale as slaves. This would solve the problem of rewarding him without taking resources from the Royal Treasury. However it seems that this was simply a move to placate Van Senden. Blacks never really were intended to be kicked out of England. (Cf. Miranda Kaufman, "Caspar Van Senden, Sir Thomas Sherley and the 'Blackamoor' project," *Historical Research*, 81, (15 May 2008), 212: 366). For further analysis of the event, see also Miranda Kaufman, "The speedy transportation of blackamoors': Caspar Van Senden's search for Africans and profit in Elizabethan England," *The Black and Asian Studies Association Newsletter*, 45 (2006); Robin Blackburn, "The Old World Background to European Colonial Slavery," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 54:1 (1997); Philip D. Beidler and Gary Taylor, eds., *Writing Race Across the Atlantic World Medieval to Modern* (New York: NY: Palgrave Macmillian, 2005).

¹¹⁸ Emily C. Bartels, "Too Many Blackamoors: Deportation, Discrimination, and Elizabeth I," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 46: 2 (2006), 323. [Hereafter cited as Bartels, "Blackamoors,."] See also Roger Bastide, "Color, Racism, and Christianity," *Daedalus* 96, (Spring 1967): 315. By this time, many blacks in late-sixteenth century England had been acquired through trade, a good number were associated with Spanish colonial possessions or at sea, having been stolen or "privateered" by English raiders. Thus, there is an association of blacks in England as Spanish subjects, as even one of the most popular names to describe blacks—"blackamoors"—was borrowed from Spanish usage. See also Elizabeth Mazzola, "Legends of Oblivion: Enchantment and enslavement in Book 6 of Spenser's *Fairie Queen*" in *Forgetting in Early Modern English Literature: Lethe's Legacies* (Florence, KY: Routledge, 2004), 40. For the Elizabethan English, blackness was also "symbolically and concretely speaking, identified with, the Black Legend of Spain...and the Roman Catholic Beast (the pope)" (Joseph Washington, *Antiblackness in English Religion 1500-1800* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), xii).

¹¹⁹ Bartels, 318.

¹²⁰ Youngs, *Proclamations*, 10.

The following shows that segments of early modern English society regarded black Africans as “other” partially as a combination of what was perceived as skin color and heathenism. This is evident in the writings of Leo Africanus, mainstream travelogues, and contemporary Renaissance plays. Many of these perceptions were already part of the cultural binary of blackness and whiteness present also in Renaissance texts that assigned value to color symbolism. These ideas were then crafted into a narrative of the curse of blackness modeled off the concept of original sin. This narrative is popularly known as the Hamitic Myth or Curse. Blackness, like original sin, is defined as an inherited taint or infection arising from collective guilt. Unlike original sin, black skin color is the physical manifestation of that spiritual stain. Early modern English divines adopted the rhetoric of black ethnicity by using word play on the universal condition of human sinfulness. Black rhetoric was then incorporated into the teachings on the doctrine of original sin in early modern English religious texts. The second half of this chapter is divided into a five-fold categorization schema, which analyzes early modern English black ethnic religious rhetoric on original sin.

Contemporary Religious “Othering” of Black Africans

Religious language distancing black Africans from some aspects of mainstream English society in the 1601 Elizabethan Edict is reflected in travel narratives and the theatre. For example, the influential travelogue of the converted Christian moor, (who eventually re-converts back to Islam) Johannes Leo Africanus, *A Geographical Historie of Africa*, was translated into English one year earlier than the edict’s proclamation.¹²¹

¹²¹ Joannes Leo Africanus, *A Geographical Historie of Africa, written in Arabicke and Italian*, trans. John Pory (London, 1600). [Hereafter cited as Africanus, *Historie*.] Leo Africanus managed to say some nice things about people “of a black colour” who were also “people of a courteous and liberali disposition, and

Leo Africanus's text, which served as *the* European geographical and topographical resource for Africa until the eighteenth century, purportedly describes sub-Saharan black African culture in rich, accurate, detail. The author, also known as John Leo (his Roman Catholic name, inspired by Pope Leo X, who baptized him), writes:

[L]et us consider, whether the vices of the Africans do surpass their virtues and good parts... Their wits are but mean; and they are so credulous, that they will believe matters impossible, which are told them. So ignorant are they of natural philosophy that they imagine all the effects and operations of nature to be extraordinary and divine. They observe no certain order of living nor of laws... By nature they are a vile and base people, being no better accounted of by their governors than if they were dogs... the greater part of these people are neither Mahumetans, Jews, nor Christians; and hardly shall you find so much as a spark of piety in any of them. They have no churches at all... they lead a savage and beastly life... They spend all their days either in most lewd practices... neither wear they any shoes nor garments. The Negroes likewise lead a beastly kind of life, being utterly destitute of the use of reason, of dexterity and wit, and of all arts.¹²²

Africanus's generalizations of all black Africans had especial credibility among Europeans because of his own background. Although he was Andalusian, his family immigrated to Fez, Morocco when Africanus was very young due to the Spanish Reconquista of Ferdinand and Isabella in the early 1490s. Thus he spent most of his life in North Africa and was subsequently known as 'the African.' Indeed, he comments about himself that, "I realize that it is questionable to reveal the negative qualities of Africains. Africa was my wet nurse, I grew up there and spent the longest and most

most friendly and bountifull vnto strangers," (791). See also Laura Hunt Yungblut, *Strangers Settled Here amongst Us: Policies, Perceptions, and the Presence of Aliens in Elizabethan England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 89; Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 7-19; Jonathan Burton, "'A Most Wily Bird': Leo Africanus, Othello, and the Trafficking in Difference," in *Post-Colonial Shakespeares*, eds. Ania L Loomba and Martin Orkin (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 43-63, 56; Imtiaz Habib, *Shakespeare and Race: Postcolonial Praxis in the Early Modern Period* (New York: University Press of America, 2000), 92; Michael Neill's "'Mulattoes,' 'Blacks,' and 'Indian Moors': Othello and Early Modern Constructions of Human Difference," *SQ* 49, 4 (Winter 1998): 361-74.

¹²² Africanus, *Historie*, 33. See also Crofton Black, Leo Africanus's "Descrittione dell'Africa" and Its Sixteenth-Century Translations, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* Vol. 65, (2002), 262-272.

beautiful part of my life. But I must be a historian, and am thus obligated to speak the truth with no reserve.”¹²³ The popularity of Africanus’s writings in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reflected the demand that fifteenth- and sixteenth-century travelogues had for earlier generations of English readers seeking information about Africans.¹²⁴ Many of the narratives were influenced by ancient legends of fantastical notions of monsters and sub-human beasts, apes, and other creatures as inhabiting dark, exotic lands. In fact, when “sailors and traders [were] confronted with intriguing aspects of African life...unable to explain, [they] fell back on the mythology which had already so conditioned their image of the African.”¹²⁵ Works like the first-century naturalist and philosopher Pliny the Elder’s (23-79 CE) *Natural History* were translated from Greek and Latin into vernacular languages, including English, during the sixteenth century.¹²⁶ Pliny described Ethiopians as possessing “diverse forms” and being different “kinds of men.”¹²⁷ In fact, Robert Ganish, the author of the first published record of England’s participation in the slave trade led by the infamous sea captain John Hawkins (also known as Queen Elizabeth’s slaver trader) refers indirectly to these earlier accounts, writing:

It is to be understood, that the people which now inhabit the regions of the coast of Guinea, and the middle parts of Africa, as Libya the inner, and Nubia, with diverse other great & large regions about the same, were in old time called

¹²³ Africanus, *Historie*, 65.

¹²⁴ These travel narratives include *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* in the mid-fourteenth century, along with Gautier of Metz, *The Mirrour of the World* (1481), Ranulf Higden, *Polichronicon* (1482), Wynkyn de Worde, *Proprietatibus Rerum* (1495); *Informacon for Pylgrymes Unto the Holy Lande* (1498), Richard Arnold *Chronicle* (1503), Sebastian Brant, *Ship of Fools* (1509), Roger Barlow, *A Brief Summe of Geographie* (1525), Richard Eden, *Of the Newe found Landes* (1553), and Sebastian Muster, *Cosmographie* (1544). See Ron Ramdin, *Reimagining Britain: Five Hundred Years of Black and Asian History* (London, Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1999).

¹²⁵ Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: Black People in Britain since 1504* (Humanities Press, 1984), 10.

¹²⁶ Gaius Plinius Secundus, *Historia Naturalis A summarie of the antiquities, and wonders of the worlde* (London, 1566). [Hereafter cited as Secundus, *Historia*.]

¹²⁷ Secundus, 146.

Ethiopes and Nigritae, which we now call Moores, Moorens, or Negroes, *a people of beastly living, without a God, law, religion, or common wealth*, and so scorched and vexed with the heat of the sun, that in many places they curse it when it riseth...whose inhabitants are wild and wandering people...¹²⁸

Like the Elizabethan edict, travelers' tales of sub-Saharan Africans focused on

"*difference*, implying [blacks'] natural inferiority... a special category of humankind."¹²⁹

In fact, similar to Elizabeth's writing in the proclamation, the Elizabethan Bishop George Abbot's 1599 travel guide attributed the marked difference of black Africans from the

rest of humanity to "their lack of bona fide religion, being neither Mohammedans nor

Christians."¹³⁰ Thus their so-called lack of religion seemed to many as a permanent part

of their identity. As Morgan Godwyn writes a century later in 1680, "these two

words...are by custom grown Homogeneous and Convertible; even as Negro and

Christian, Englishman and Heathen, are. . .made Opposites."¹³¹ Skin color, as an

indelible characteristic, was believed to reflect an ineluctable interior nature.¹³² Thus, the

riddle of why Englishmen, unlike the Spanish and Portuguese, did not immediately build

Christian missions in Africa during sixteenth-century expeditions to that continent lay

partly in the belief that "heathenism in Negroes was a fundamental defect which set them

distinctly apart... [they were] people who appeared...to have no religion at all

[since]...by Christian cosmology, Negroes stood in a separate category of men."¹³³

Hence the 1601 Elizabethan Edict is a symbol of a larger phenomenon regarding black

¹²⁸ Robert Ganish, "The Second Voyage to Guinea," in Richard Hakluyt, ed., *The principall navigations, voyages and discoveries of the English nation*, (London, 1589), 94-97. Emphasis added.

¹²⁹ Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, "Before *Othello*: Elizabethan Representations of Sub-Saharan Africans" *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series: *Constructing Race: Differentiating Peoples in the Early Modern World* Vol. LIV, No. 1: 42-43.

¹³⁰ George Abbot, *Briefe Description of the Whole Worlde* (1599).

¹³¹ Morgan Godwyn, *The Negro's and Indians Advocate*, (1680), 20; 36. [Hereafter cited as Godwyn, *Negro*]

¹³² Bartels, "Blackamoors," 306.

¹³³ Godwyn, *Negro*, 20.

identity in the early modern period. It encapsulates the convenient position that black Africans were viewed as non-religious (neither Christian nor Muslim) and therefore heathens. This idea, perpetuated in travel books and other early modern resources, had served to support the Iberian pattern of colonization and enslavement based on earlier papal bulls that sanctioned slave trafficking amongst “infidels.”¹³⁴ And, it was a strategy embraced by England when it began to surreptitiously compete with Spanish and Portuguese privateers for slaves in the mid sixteenth century.

The extent of the association between black identity and non-religion in early modern English culture is apparent in English Renaissance culture, particularly the plays of Shakespeare. By the early 1600s English audiences had been introduced to blackamoor characters in the theatre.¹³⁵ The image of the black man was quite popular due to the visual impact of color and the shock value it produced.¹³⁶ Thus the effect of the play *Othello* depends on the hero’s darkness, and the way he was regarded as “Other” by the culture. The emphasis on color, since “blackness became so generally associated with Africa that every African seemed a black man” is evident in a review of the character Othello’s dramatic antecedents. Three figures—Muly Hamet, Aaron the Moor, and Eleazar—symbolize the raw theatrical association of blackness with evil.¹³⁷ For example, Muly Hamet is a thief and conniver in the revenge play, *The Battle of Alcazar* (1591) and is described in the play’s opening lines as:

¹³⁴ See Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).

¹³⁵ Elliot H. Tokson, *The popular image of the black man in English drama, 1550-1688* (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall, 1982), 135.

¹³⁶ Gabriel Egan, *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2006), 30-33.

¹³⁷ Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama* (Gainesville, FL: University Presses of Florida, 1991), 106.

Blacke in his looke, and bloudie in his deeds,
And in his shirt staine with a cloud of gore,
Presents himselfe with naked sword in hand,
Accompanied as now you may behold,
With deuils coted in the shapes of men.¹³⁸

Muly Hamet is also known as “the Negro Moor.” His blackness is directly associated with satanic evil. In the story, he inexplicably murders his family. When his devious designs fail, he not only curses his fate but also his black mother. Similarly, the character Aaron in the play *Titus Andronicus* is the embodiment of blackness and evil. Nevertheless, blackness remains the sign of Aaron’s largely unmotivated, satanic villainy. While the play’s white characters commit grossly despicable acts, they seek vengeance for injuries to themselves or their families. Aaron does evil for evil’s sake.

Let fools do good, and fair men call for grace.
Aaron will have his soul black like his face. (3.1.4)

But Aaron also displays an early form of race pride. He exclaims,

Ye white-lim’d walls! Ye alehouse painted signs!
Coal-black is better than another hue,
In that it scorns to bear another hue;
For all the water in the ocean
Can never turn the swan’s black legs to white,
Although she lave them hourly in the flood. (4.2.98-103)

Aaron denies that blackness can wash off, presumably as a defiant gesture at the white world that rejects him. But Aaron’s villainy is all the more intensive because his evil motives are never really explained. He is evil incarnate. For the English, his blackness would be interpreted as the source of his malfeasance. Like Aaron, the character Eleazar

¹³⁸ William Shakespeare, *The Battle of Alcazar*, W. W. Greg, ed., the Malone Society Edition, (London: Chiswick Press, 1907), A2r.

of *Lust's Dominion* (ca. 1600), written by Thomas Dekker, is also an evil black Moor.

Eleazar exclaims:

The Queen with me, with me, a *Moore*, a Devil,
A slave of *Barbary*, a dog; for so
Your silken Courtiers christen me, but father,
Although my flesh be tawny, in my veines
Runs blood as red, and royal as the best
And proud'st in Spain.¹³⁹

Interestingly, Eleazar verbally challenges the black stereotype, but his evil character only serves to reinforce it:

Think you my conscience and my soul is so,
Black faces many have hearts as white as snow
And 'tis a generall rule in moral rowls,
The whitest faces have the blackest souls. (3607-10)

Therefore black Shakespearean roles before *Othello* (1603) confirm the themes of the writings of Leo Africanus.¹⁴⁰ Black skin was considered a manifestation of sin, an inherent aversion to true religion. The character Othello is a subtle defiance of the stereotype, because he is not ostensibly evil, albeit flawed. Ironically, it is the white character, Iago, who is the villain of the play. Yet the black stereotype is alive and well in the play *Othello*. English audiences would have been well aware of it, and the tension of the concept of blackness as evil propels the action in the drama. Just as articulated in the Elizabethan edict, the black Moor's physical differences symbolized to early modern English culture religious otherness, that is, basic unbelief.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Thomas Dekker, *Lust's Dominion: or The Lascivious Queen*, J. Le Gay Brereton, ed., (Louvaine: Libraire Universitaire, 1931), 227-34.

¹⁴⁰ Emily C. Bartels, "Making More of the Moor: Aaron, Othello, and Renaissance Refashionings of Race," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 41 (1990): 433-54.

¹⁴¹ Kwame Anthony Appiah notes that during the Renaissance both Moors and Jews were considered "others" in nature because of religion. See "Race," in *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, Frank Lentricchia

The Hamitic Myth and the Origins of Black Skin Color

The omnipresent societal view of black Africans as irreligious symbolized in the 1601 Elizabethan Edict to Expunge Negroes, early modern travel narratives, and English Renaissance culture influenced many to make theological interpretations about the origins of blackness. Because of negative associations of black skin in English culture, the roots of blackness were imagined as developing around a curse. The most famous early modern English narrative concerning the creation of black skin comes from the sea captain George Best, who had sailed with the privateer Martin Frobisher in 1577 in search of the Northwest Passage to trade routes to the East. Best wanted to encourage English settlement and habitation in North America. Therefore, he wrote a fictive narrative based on Gen. 9. In the actual scriptural text, Noah is naked and passed out from wine. After being disrespected by his son Ham, Noah's other sons, Shem and Japheth, cover their father's nakedness. Later, when Noah awakes and realizes Ham's actions, he curses Ham's son Canaan, saying, "Cursed be Canaan, lowest of slaves shall he be to his brothers" (Gen. 9:25). He also blesses his sons Shem and Japheth, pronouncing, "Blessed by the Lord my God be Shem and let Canaan be his slave. May God make space for Japheth, and let him live in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his slave" (Gen. 9:26-27). However, in Best's sixteenth-century rendition of the biblical story, Noah, his sons, and their wives, all born white, are the only remaining humans left on earth after the Flood. While they were on the Ark, Noah had commanded that they all remain continent, but Cham had sinned against this order. Thus Best writes, the "wicked

and Thomas McLaughlin, eds., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 274-87; see p. 277. See also Arthur L. Little, Jr., "'An Essence That's Not Seen': The Primal Scene of Racism in *Othello*" *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 44 (1993): 304-24.

sonne Cham disobeyed” the rule of Noah on the ark, and “as an example for contempte of Almightye God, and disobedience of parents, God would a sonne shuld be borne, whose name was Chus.”¹⁴² ‘Chus’ is the early modern English spelling for Cush, associated in Gen.10, the Table of Nations, with Ethiopia.¹⁴³ Further, God declared regarding Chus that “not only it selfe, but all his posteritie after him, should be so blacke & loathsome, that it might remain a spectacle of disobedience to all the World.”¹⁴⁴ What is interesting is the way that Best describes the manner in which Chus’ descendants inherit the curse of blackness: “Thus you see, that the case of the Ethiopians blacknesse, is *the curse & infection of bloud*, & not the distemperature of the climate, which also may be proved by this example, that these black men are found in all partes of Africa.”¹⁴⁵ Moreover, Best wants to stress that even when these people leave the continent, they carry the contagion with them, so that “the first originall of these blacke men...and so all the whole progenie of them descended...by lineall discente.” Regardless where these particular people live on the earth they “are still poluted with the same blot of infection.”¹⁴⁶ The evidence for this theory comes from Best’s own experience of living among black Africans in England. He writes, “We also among vs in England, haue blacke Moores, Ethiopians, out of all partes of Torrida Zon, whiche after a small continuance, can wel endure the colde of our Countrey.”¹⁴⁷ Specifically, he has witnessed the transmission of Africans’ blackness in intermixture with the English:

¹⁴² George Best, *A true discourse of the late voyages of discoverie* (1578), 31. [Hereafter cited as Best, *Discourse*.]

¹⁴³ Thus Gen. 10:6 reads “The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan.”

¹⁴⁴ Best, *Discourse*, 30-31.

¹⁴⁵ Best, 30-31. This quotation is important in its emphasis of blackness as an “infection of bloud” and one wonders about the connection to the Spanish understanding of “limpieza de sangre” or if Best would have borrowed from this meaning to talk about blackness.

¹⁴⁶ Best, 30-31.

¹⁴⁷ Best, 20.

Therefore to returne again to the blacke Moores, I my selfe haue séene an Ethiopian as blacke as a cole broughte into Englande, who taking a faire Englishe woman to Wife, begatte a Sonne in all respectes as blacke as the Father was, al|though England were his natiue Countrey, & an English woman his Mother. Whereby it séemeth this blacknesse procéedeth rather of some naturall infection of that man, whiche was so strong, that neyther y^e nature of the Clime, neyther the good complexion of the Mother concurring, coulde any thing alter, and therefore we can not impute it to the nature of y^e Clime.¹⁴⁸

Thus, according to Best, the method of transmission of the curse took place through the spreading of contagion, and not the geographical environment. The strength of their blackness can be observed in propagation, even with the “faire” English. For Best, as a result of Cham’s sin, his descendants (through Chus) were the “Africans...a cursed other, distant and different from the rest of humanity—set apart by their skin color as a marker to all of their cursedness.”¹⁴⁹ Relatedly, since the change in climate for Africans does not alter their skin color, because the latter arises from a curse, English emigrants settling in more tropical climates should not affect them physically.

Best’s narrative evolved into the Hamitic Myth during the early modern period.¹⁵⁰ Among critical thinkers, the myth had mixed reception in seventeenth-century England. For example, Sir Thomas Browne, an author with immense learning, explored the Hamitic Myth in detail in search of the origins of black skin color. He writes, “Whereas men affirm this colour was a Curse, I cannot make out the propriety of that name, it neither seemingly so to them, nor reasonably unto us; for they take so much content therein, that they esteem deformity by other colours, describing the Devil, and terrible

¹⁴⁸ Best, 29.

¹⁴⁹ David Whitford, *The Curse of Ham in the Early Modern Era: The Bible and Justifications for Slavery* (Surrey: Ashgate Publ, 2010), 117.

¹⁵⁰ This is part of David Whitford’s argument in *The Curse of Ham*.

objects, white.”¹⁵¹ Browne evokes cultural relativity in order to question whether blackness is really a curse in the first place. After all, black Africans, supposedly in reverse, view whiteness not as the color of divinity and purity, but of evil. The question is, what group is right? Browne’s musings are similar to those of Bishop Joseph Hall, who argues blackness is neither a “curse” nor “deformity,” and further, beauty is “determined by opinion.”¹⁵² However, by the late seventeenth century, cultural relativity was not the dominant position. Despite enlightened thinkers like the editors of *The Athenian Mercury*, who tried to displace the Christian association between blackness and evil, the white body remained the ideal, universal form.¹⁵³ All other bodies, including black ones, were “accidental monstrosities,” much like any other human defect, which would be corrected in the bodily resurrection.¹⁵⁴ During this life, it was possible to possess varying opinions on the constitution of beauty. This reconciled with the Christian ideal of human unity reflected by Browne and Hall with regard to physical diversity and sundry cultures on earth. However, the white English body represented God’s perfect form, into which all restored bodies and souls in heaven would be ultimately homogenized.

Due to the rise of slavery after the Restoration, the Hamitic Myth went on to become a convenient justification for the degradation of black bodies. Even the historian Peter Heylyn, who initially reacted negatively to the theory of the curse of Ham during the Jacobean period (only to grudgingly concede the point in subsequent editions of his

¹⁵¹ Thomas Browne, “Of the Blackness of Negroes,” *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 4 vols. (London, 1964), 460.

¹⁵² Joseph Hall, *The contemplations upon the history of the New Testament* (London, 1661), 320-2.

¹⁵³ Catherine Molineux, *Faces of Perfect Ebony: Encountering Atlantic Slavery in Imperial Britain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 97.

¹⁵⁴ Molineux, 90.

1621 *Microcosmus*) responded to the idea of God punishing the descendants of Ham with blackness, not perpetual slavery. This became apparent to the missionary Morgan Godwyn in his attempt to proselytize black slaves in the late seventeenth century. In Godwyn's late-seventeenth-century encounters with planters on the English colonies of Barbados and Virginia, as well as others who justified black African slavery, he was confronted with frequent recourse to the interpretation of the Hamitic curse based on "certain impertinent and blasphemous distortions of Scripture."¹⁵⁵

Godwyn outlines his understanding of the Hamitic myth based on his interviews with English slave owners while preaching in favor of the evangelization of slaves (although not their emancipation). This understanding varies from Best's version of the myth due to its emphasis on enslavement as punishment. In fact, Best and Godwyn's theories represent two versions of the Hamitic myth in early modern England. The first is the late-sixteenth-century "classical English statement of the 'curse of Ham' theory."¹⁵⁶ The second arises about a century later from the evangelical writings of Godwyn. In both cases, blackness, like original sin, is defined as an inherited corruption or taint stemming from collective guilt. Unlike original sin, black skin color is the physical manifestation of that spiritual stain. In the one hundred years separating Best's narrative from Godwyn's reflections there is a noticeable development: the rise of English slavery. Black reproduction (and English migration to the New World) was partially the basis for Best's anxieties. But, notably, Best ignores slavery in his narrative. This is because he wrote at a time in which the early modern black subject had not yet reached the universally acknowledged position of slave in England (although becoming increasingly established in

¹⁵⁵ Molineux, 14.

¹⁵⁶ Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: Black People in Britain since 1504* (Humanities Press: Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1984), 143.

practice).¹⁵⁷ By the late seventeenth century, of course, after the Restoration, the case was entirely different.

Godwyn specifically defines “these People as Negro’s” and “Natives of Africa.” This group is “believed to be Descendants from Cham, and under the Curse.”¹⁵⁸ It is explained that the Africans are of “Cham’s Race” because

they tell us (or at least do insinuate) that Noah and his Sons descending from the Ark, did, as it were all upon the suddain (as if afraid of each other), instantly retire into the most distant parts of the World (for so Guinea is to Mount Arrarat); of whom Cham directed his course to Africa, his Posterity the Negro’s (they are sure) there keeping possession till this very Day, notwithstanding the great alterations elsewhere.¹⁵⁹

Biblically, the curse arises as a result of the “severe Imprecation of Noah” which actually was not “denounced against the whole Family of Cham” but in fact was levied against “none besides Canaan his youngest Son” since “Gen. 9. expressly said, that Canaan should be their Servant.” Indeed, euphemistically, the curse is said to be of ‘Cham’s race,’ when in reality it is actually the son of Cham, Canaan, who is cursed to perpetual servanthood: “*Cursed be Canaan, a Servant of Servants shall he be.*” Ontologically, “the fancied nature and design of this curse” is “a kind of transubstantiating of [Africans] into beasts.”¹⁶⁰ Godwyn notes that there are multiple versions of the curse, for in other renditions it is observed that God’s wrath will “strike not only their souls (in this life) but to be an irrecoverable devoting them to perdition and misery in the life to come.”¹⁶¹ The effects of the curse are “perpetual, even to the last generation” and are “extended to their

¹⁵⁷ Fryer, 123.

¹⁵⁸ Fryer, 43.

¹⁵⁹ Fryer, 44.

¹⁶⁰ Fryer, 50.

¹⁶¹ Fryer, 50.

very souls” as “a kind of reprobation.”¹⁶² It is upon this foundation, or “sufficient ground” that is used to justify “enslaving them” and “for keeping them from the exercise of religion.”¹⁶³ He writes, “[slavers] make [Negroes] the posterity of that unhappy son of Noah, who, they say, was, together with his whole family and race, cursed by his father.”¹⁶⁴ English planters “infer their Negro’s Brutality,” depriving them “of their reason, and so metamorphose them into brutes.” For Godwyn, only leads these slavers to “unman and unsoul so great a part of the creation.”¹⁶⁵ This is because in the eyes of many of the slaveholders, “the Negro’s, though in their Figure they carry some resemblances of Manhood, yet are indeed no Men.”¹⁶⁶ As a result, in “Cham’s African Race” it is believed there is no “pretence to Religion” owing to their beastly natures. Consequently, “their owners are hereby set at liberty” from ensuring religious catechism, worship, or baptism for black slaves.¹⁶⁷ For this reason, slaves were often denied the teachings of the gospel.

For example, Godwyn complains he was told “with no small passion and vehemency, and that by a religious person...that I might as baptize a puppy, as a certain young Negro, the mother whereof was a Christian.”¹⁶⁸ Godwyn adds that the objections of the “gentlewoman” had nothing to do with infant or child baptism since she was not “in the least infected with Anabaptism” and she demonstrated in her “very carefully procuring always for her own, what she thus denied to her Negro’s children.”¹⁶⁹ Godwyn also bemoans the fact that “another of the same Sex, upon my baptizing a Male Negro of hers...caused this Message to be delivered to me, That Baptism, I was to understand, was

¹⁶² Fryer, 50.

¹⁶³ Fryer, 50.

¹⁶⁴ Godwyn, *Negro*, 14.

¹⁶⁵ Godwyn, 14, 19, 21.

¹⁶⁶ Godwyn, 3.

¹⁶⁷ Godwyn, 3.

¹⁶⁸ Godwyn, 38.

¹⁶⁹ Godwyn, 38.

to one of those no more beneficial, than to her black Bitch.”¹⁷⁰ Thus it was believed that the natures of Africans, due to the Hamitic curse, relegated them to a subhuman state, and thus made them fit only for bondage.

Godwyn acknowledges that the English are perceived as “the Brethren whom [Africans] were to serve; and that the Curse did confer on us a full and perfect right of dominion over them.”¹⁷¹ They therefore go about “treating their Slaves with far less Humanity than they do their Cattel.”¹⁷² Other atrocities and “inhumanities” are reported, included “emasculating and beheading them” and “cropping off their ears which they usually cause the wretches to broyl, and then compel to eat them themselves” as punishments for not working, along with the more drastic “amputations of legs, and even dissecting them alive.”¹⁷³ Daily treatment includes the “scant allowance for clothes, as well as diet” which amounts to “starving them to death.”¹⁷⁴ Not all slave owners employ the Hamitic Myth as the psychological reasoning to support the practice of enslavement. Yet as Godwyn notes, for a good many, the inhumane treatment of bondage is considered biblically justified because of the curse of the blackness imposed through Noah on Ham’s descendants, now considered to be the black Africans who serve the English. Thus, the impact of Best’s narrative of blackness as a curse transmitting “infection” through the skin color of black Africans can be demonstrated in the adoption of the Hamitic Myth to justify slavery in early modern England.

¹⁷⁰ Godwyn, 38.

¹⁷¹ Godwyn, 38.

¹⁷² Godwyn, 40.

¹⁷³ Godwyn, 40.

¹⁷⁴ Godwyn, 41.

History of the Doctrine of Original Sin in the West

There is a similarity between George Best's myth of the origin of blackness, its development into the Hamitic Myth, and the black ethnic rhetoric of some English divines describing the doctrine of original sin. Best argues that black skin color is a curse transmitted by propagation to black Africans, the descendants of Ham, who sinned against his father Noah. Just as in Best's myth, black skin color is the inherited curse arising from Ham's sin for Africans, so too original sin is described as the defiled condition deriving from Adam's sin for all humans. The Hamitic Myth formed part of the religious culture in early modern England that deemed blackness as evil and was subsequently incorporated rhetorically into teachings on the doctrine of original sin.

In the Christian tradition, Adam's disobedience to the Divine command in Gen. 2:16-17 and 3:6 had an effect not only on his own relationship to God, but also on those of his descendants as well. This is because "all souls, actual or potential, were contained in Adam," being "ultimately detached portions of the original soul breathed into him by God."¹⁷⁵ The impact of the change in Adam's relationship to God subsequently caused a shift in human nature, for "all human beings thereafter are born into a state of estrangement from God."¹⁷⁶ The estrangement that exists between humans and God is due to what Tertullian calls "the evil that exists in the soul" having "become in a way natural to us" so that "the corruption of nature" becomes "second nature." Therefore, "our whole substance has been transformed from its primitive integrity into rebellion

¹⁷⁵ J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine* (New York: Harper Collins, 1978), 175. [Hereafter cited as Kelly, *Early*.]

¹⁷⁶ Ian A. McFarland, *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 29-30. [Hereafter cited as McFarland, *Adam*.]

against its Creator.”¹⁷⁷ Gregory of Nyssa writes, “Evil was mixed with our nature from the beginning...sin takes its rise in us as we are born; it grows with us and keeps us company till life’s term.”¹⁷⁸ Thus original sin is the inherited condemnation arising from the first human beings’ failure to obey God, itself the result of turning away from God. In support of this view, scriptural reference was made to Ps. 51.5, “Behold I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother bear me.”

Moreover, regarding the pivotal text signifying original sin, Rom. 5:12, there is some patristic controversy. The Greek translation reads, “so death passed to all men inasmuch as all sinned.” But the Old Latin version, which the commentators in the West used, had the translation “so death passed to all men *in whom* all sinned.” This reading became the basis of the doctrine of original sin.¹⁷⁹ Ambrosiaster comments, “He said ‘in whom’...It is therefore plain that all men sinned in Adam as in a lump. For Adam himself was corrupted by sin, and all whom he begat were born under sin.”¹⁸⁰ Thus we are all sinners from him since we all derive from him.”¹⁸¹ Through Adam, “the entire race...became a *massa damnata*, sinful itself and propagating sinners.”¹⁸² For Augustine, all of humanity participated in, and therefore shares responsibility for, Adam’s decision. Augustine writes, “In the misdirected choice of that one man all sinned in him, since all were that one man.”¹⁸³ Augustine locates the source of sin in the will, thereby implicating the wills of all human beings in Adam’s actual willful act of rebellion. He notes “all

¹⁷⁷ Kelly, *Early*, 176.

¹⁷⁸ Kelly, 176.

¹⁷⁹ Kelly, 353.

¹⁸⁰ Kelly, 354.

¹⁸¹ Kelly, 353.

¹⁸² Kelly, 363.

¹⁸³ Kelly, 301.

sinned in Adam on that occasion, for all were already identical with him in that nature of his which was endowed with the capacity to generate them.”¹⁸⁴

The generational inheritance of Adam’s condemnation is a key marker distinguishing the doctrine of original sin in the West, and is the theoretical basis for infant baptism, which removes the guilt of physically transmitted sin. Cyprian speaks of baptism as “cleansing us from the stain of the primeval contagion.”¹⁸⁵ However, while the inherited guilt is removed with baptism, an “irrational element” remains in the nature, which is the “inclination to sin.”¹⁸⁶ Thus the baptized are still capable of sinning and are also culpable for their personal sins without God’s grace, for the congenital state of sin results in the actual sins that all humans eventually commit in their lifetimes.¹⁸⁷ Thus, Augustine indicates, “helpless children dying without the benefit of baptism must pass to eternal fire with the Devil, although their sufferings will be relatively mild as compared with those of adults who have added sins of their own to their inherited guilt.”¹⁸⁸

Consequently for Western thought, the question of the origin of evil is addressed by the fall, the attribution of all wickedness finding its source in “creaturely transgression” and not with the Divine Creator.¹⁸⁹ Indeed, iniquity is transmitted in the creaturely act of generation, Augustine believing that the stain of sin is propagated physically along with the “carnal excitement, which accompanies it.”¹⁹⁰ Augustine also leaned in the direction of traducianism, the theory that held that each soul was generated directly from the souls of the parents. This is in contrast to the prevailing theory of

¹⁸⁴ Kelly, 301.

¹⁸⁵ Kelly, 176.

¹⁸⁶ Kelly, 176.

¹⁸⁷ Kelly, 176.

¹⁸⁸ Kelly, 366.

¹⁸⁹ Kelly, 32.

¹⁹⁰ Kelly, 363.

creationism, which held that the human soul was created by God at its placement in the physical body in the womb. Augustine's understanding of traducianism taught "that the soul came into existence simultaneously with the body and was inseparable from it."¹⁹¹ Although Augustine de-emphasized the materialism inherent in traducianism (due to the influence of Stoicism) the theory itself provides one explanation for how the corruption of human nature is passed directly from generation to generation.¹⁹² Admittedly, on this question, Christian theologians "have come up with a range of theories. For example, some proponents of the contrasting view of creationist thought held that the body (itself generated directly from the parents in the womb) was corrupted by the fall, and when the soul was infused with the body at conception, this taint was passed on. Yet this brings into the question the issue of the corporeal nature of the soul. Arguably remnants of the anthropology of Stoicism, held famously by Tertullian, which held that the soul was material and intrinsically united to the physical body, conceptually remained in the Christian notion of the physical generation of original sin, whether traducianist or creationist."¹⁹³ In fact, one of Pelagius' most trenchant criticisms of Augustine's doctrine of original sin is that this view reflects Manichaeism, pure and simple, for its negative assessment of the flesh.¹⁹⁴ Certainly, in creationism, the flesh is the conduit of sin, and in traducianism, the soul itself is material, and thus stained with irrationality. Hence, despite the Judaic legacy of the goodness of nature, Western Christian thought is permeated by negative assessments of the body.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Kelly, 345.

¹⁹² Kelly, 346.

¹⁹³ Kelly, 175.

¹⁹⁴ Traducianism is associated with the dualism of Gnostic thought.

¹⁹⁵ In *Race: A Theological Account*, J. Kameron Carter writes about Irenaeus and the Gnostics.

As aforementioned, Augustine's characterization of sin, which is the "turning" away from God and to self, the essence of pride, has a consequence in the actual sins of disobedience, or breaking of God's law, beginning in Adam himself and inevitable in his descendants. Augustine writes, "the will, which turns from the unchangeable and common good and turns to its own private good or to anything exterior or inferior, sins."¹⁹⁶ Yet the fundamental transformation rests not simply in the sins committed but in human nature, or more specifically, in the soul itself, which loses its participation in ultimate being, or God.¹⁹⁷ Thus the soul becomes defective, that is, lacking, for, as Augustine indicates, "all defect comes from nothing."¹⁹⁸ This in turn cripples the ability of the will to choose the good, or God, without grace. Augustine's contribution to the notion of original sin as "lack" or "loss" stressed that humanity's subjection to sin was reflected in the partial corruption of the human soul.¹⁹⁹ This is demonstrated in Roman Catholic teaching, which officially defines sin as "a deprivation of original holiness and justice" so that human nature "is wounded in the natural powers proper to it, subject to ignorance, suffering and the dominion of death, and inclined to sin."²⁰⁰ Thus, humanity was not "totally corrupted" in the loss of God's gift of "original justice or righteousness."²⁰¹ This "original justice or righteousness," referred to by Thomas Aquinas as "a gift of grace," had maintained the balance or order between the soul's

¹⁹⁶ Augustine, "On Free Will" in *Readings in Christian Theology*, Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King, eds., (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 176. [Hereafter cited as Hodgson and King, 'Augustine.']

¹⁹⁷ Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1967), 127.

¹⁹⁸ Hodgson and King, 'Augustine,' 178.

¹⁹⁹ McFarland, *Adam*, 37.

²⁰⁰ The Roman Catholic Church, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana), 400.

²⁰¹ McFarland, *Adam*, 37.

faculties, therefore inhibiting the body's passions in relation to the soul.²⁰² That is, it “served to block or restrain inappropriate movements of the soul and thereby secured its proper submission to God.”²⁰³ Referred to by the Council of Trent as “the holiness and justice in which [Adam] had been constituted,” the loss of this gift therefore opened the floodgates to the performance of sinful acts.²⁰⁴ Indeed, the deprivation of this original holiness affected “the entire Adam” who “was changed as respects the body and soul, for the worse.”²⁰⁵ The change, resulting in sin, which is “the death of the soul,” affected “the whole human race.”²⁰⁶ Yet late medieval and scholastic formulations of human nature before the fall that stress the gift of grace in the original harmony or righteousness that preempted the inclination to sin in paradise imply that the result of Adam's disobedience “simply amounts to humanity's existing according to its natural capacities and thus does not constitute a fundamental distortion of human nature.”²⁰⁷ Thus a leader in the Counter-Reformation, the Jesuit and Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, argues, “the corruption of nature did not flow from the lack of some natural gift nor from the accession of some bad quality but only from a loss of the supernatural gift occasioned by Adam's sin.”²⁰⁸ This position maintains the partial corruption of the human soul as a result of original sin, and may be partly a reaction to the Reformation era's stress on total depravity. Euan Cameron notes, “sin was a far more all embracing, sweeping concept in the writings of the

²⁰² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. by Robert Pasnau. (London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1964-81), 1.100.1.

²⁰³ McFarland, *Adam*, 37.

²⁰⁴ H.J. Schroeder, O.P., ed., “Decree Concerning Original Sin,” in *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1978), 21. [Hereafter cited as Schroeder, “Decree.”]

²⁰⁵ Schroeder, 21.

²⁰⁶ Schroeder, 21.

²⁰⁷ McFarland, *Adam*, 37. This reflects semi-Pelagian thought.

²⁰⁸ Robert Bellarmine, “De gratia primi hominis,” in *Controversiis* 5; cited in Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 97.

reformers.”²⁰⁹ That is, it was depicted “in terms far more sweeping and overpowering” by protestant writers.²¹⁰ In this sense, the reformers were actually more true to the Augustinian legacy of original sin. Martin Luther holds that the law of God, as Paul indicates in Rom. 3:20, reveals, in addition to God’s wrath, the knowledge of the corruption of nature, so that “sin...seems almost always to refer to the radical ferment which bears fruit in evil deeds and words.”²¹¹ This inward evil, “an evil which inclines us to evil from our youth up,” indeed “that deeply hidden root of sin,” that “bottomless,” well of sin, is “a universal corruption of nature in all its parts.”²¹² John Calvin notes that the original image or righteousness of God that was reflected in human nature “was destroyed, effaced...so deeply corrupted that all that remains of it is a horrible deformity.”²¹³

Difference of emphasis of the extent or degree of the corruption of original sin in postlapsarian human nature in the Catholic and Protestant positions is evidenced in their respective interpretations of concupiscence. Thus, what the Council of Trent defined as “concupiscence, which the apostle sometimes calls sin, the holy synod declares that the Catholic Church has never understood to be called sin, as being truly and properly sin in those born again, but because it is of sin, and inclines to sin,” is in contrast defined by Calvin to be sin itself. Indeed, rather than an inclination to sin, Calvin argues that,

²⁰⁹ Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 113. [Hereafter cited as Cameron, *European*.]

²¹⁰ Cameron, 112.

²¹¹ Martin Luther, “Sin and Grace,” in *Readings in Christian Theology*, Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King, eds., (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 180.

²¹² Luther, “Sin and Grace,” 182.

²¹³ John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans., Henry Beveridge, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), I.15.4.

“whatever is in man from intellect to will, from the soul to the flesh, is all defiled and crammed with concupiscence.”²¹⁴

Therefore there is an apparent contradiction in the Catholic and Protestant understandings of concupiscence, which exists partly because “Augustine’s own views on concupiscence are unsystematic enough to lend support to both the Catholic and Protestant positions.”²¹⁵ In fact, Augustine’s position is broad enough to encompass the Catholic and Protestant views, for his interpretation of concupiscence “is and is not to be identified with sin.”²¹⁶ It is both congenital sin and what remains of original sin after baptism. As we have seen, in the Catholic view, concupiscence is not properly sin, but is the inordinate desire that corrupts the will, which leads to actual sinning. That is, originally understood as disordered desire it leads to the defective wills of postlapsarian human nature. But for the Catholic Church, this is not understood to be sin because disordered desire by itself does not incur guilt—only the actions that take place through the decision of the will influenced by concupiscence. After baptism, concupiscence remains in the human soul; however, the taint of congenital sin and the guilt of original sin are removed—for without baptism there is eternal damnation. Thus, concupiscence is the source of the desire to sin, but does not become sin until it is willed and performed. Romans 7:20, which states, “It is not I who do it, but the sin that dwells in me,” therefore refers to the concupiscence that is in the soul which remains inactive without the assent of the will. However, in the Protestant view, as Luther states, there is no distinction in sin between the “radical ferment,” or the source of “wanton itching,” as well as the “fruit in

²¹⁴ Calvin, *Inst.*, II.1.8.

²¹⁵ McFarland, *Adam*, 55.

²¹⁶ McFarland, 66.

evil deeds and words.”²¹⁷ Thus, when Christ states in Matt. 5:28 “that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart,” there is an association between the inordinate desire of concupiscence and the willing to sin. For Protestant thinkers, even the desire that infected the will is sin, so that “the inner state of mind which disposed one to sin was as much forbidden as the act itself.”²¹⁸ Hence Phillip Melancthon defines sin as a “state of mind contrary to the law of God” in which man “knows, loves, and seeks nothing but the carnal.”²¹⁹ John Milton conflates inordinate desire and the defective will when he writes that concupiscence is both “the general depravity of the human mind and its propensity to sin.”²²⁰

The definition of concupiscence as sin in Protestant thought is indicative of the general trend of the reformers, which stressed the extensive impact of sin on human nature. Calvin writes, “Wherefore those who have defined original sin as a lack of the original justice which ought to be in man, although in these words they have comprehended all the substance, still they have not sufficiently expressed the force of it. For our nature is not merely empty and destitute, but it is so fecund of every kind of evil that it cannot be inactive.”²²¹ Thus sin, “implied the presence of evil.”²²² This “heightened and more articulated” definition of sin contrasted with the patristic notion that sin was merely a weakness or disease that did not confer guilt.²²³ In contrast to the idea of void or privation, sin was understood according to Luther’s words, as “always the

²¹⁷ Luther, “Sin and Grace,” 180-181.

²¹⁸ Cameron, *European*, 112.

²¹⁹ Cameron, 113.

²²⁰ John M. Patrick, *Milton’s Conception of Sin as Developed in Paradise Lost* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1960), 28.

²²¹ Calvin, *Inst.* II, 1, 8-9.

²²² Cameron, *European*, 113.

²²³ Cameron, 113.

innermost evil.”²²⁴ It follows that the postlapsarian inability of the human reason to function properly arises not simply from the absence of good, but from the presence of evil.²²⁵ Theoretically, ever since Adam, the defect has been congenital, passed on somehow to the entire human race, so that an ontological reading of Paul’s statement in Rom. 5:12—“just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned”—suggests a unity in human nature. This “ontological account of human unity”²²⁶ is upheld by a scriptural interpretation that organically unites ancestral identity, as in Heb 7:9-10, in referring to the original gift of Abraham to the priest King Melchizedek of Salem, “that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.” The bonds of nature therefore ensure that all collectively bear the taint of original sin. As Paul states, “There is no one who is righteous, not even one; there is no one who has understanding, there is no one who seeks God” (Rom. 3:10-11) and the writer of Ecclesiastes, traditionally known as Qoheleth, or of course, Solomon, writes “Surely there is no one on earth so righteous to do good without ever sinning.” However, the prophet Isaiah expresses the unity of human nature when he exclaims, “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips” (Isa. 6:5). The collective inheritance of sin, as we have seen, affects the will, so that it is tainted, diseased, infected. As Calvin states, since the fall, humanity “has not been deprived of will, but of healthy will.”²²⁷ Thus, the will can

²²⁴ Luther, “Sin and Grace,” 182.

²²⁵ Francois Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1963), 185. [Hereafter cited as Wendel, *Calvin*.]

²²⁶ Two theories of original sin’s transmission in the Reformed tradition are the realist and the federalist model, the former, which upholds the ontological transmission of evil and the latter lifts up a covenantal unity in humankind.

²²⁷ Calvin, *Inst.*, II.3.5.

only strive for evil, although it may be convinced that it is pursuing the good. However, postlapsarian humanity, unlike Adam before the fall, could not effectively choose between good and evil because the fallen will was predisposed to evil. Hence, human beings could not do what lies within them (*facere quod in se est*) as the first step towards grace as advocated by scholastics like Gabriel Biel in the late medieval ages, because that which lay within them was rotten to the core. Instead, due to the sick nature of the soul, as Calvin affirms, “it is certain that man has had no free will to do good.”²²⁸ This condition, which is, as Luther states, that the “soul is full of sins, death, and damnation,” is inherited, and shared by all of humanity.²²⁹ Thus, Luther indicates, “original sin has *ruined* us.”²³⁰ Calvin concurs, writing, “after the fall...the infection of euill doth infect all parts, there shall no sincere thing be founde in vs.”²³¹ It is a total, collective malady, inflicted upon the entire human race.

Still, the question remains as to how this affliction is transmitted. The Catholic view, which had limited concupiscence to the “lower man,” insisted that it was an inherited predisposition to sin, albeit not fully realized until exercised in the will.²³² However, the Protestant view, which enlarged the understanding of concupiscence to encompass a broader comprehension of congenital sin in human nature, stresses the notion of total depravity decreed by God, thereby ironically deemphasizing the concept of physical inheritance. Calvin explains:

²²⁸ Calvin, II.2.6.

²²⁹ Luther, “Freedom of a Christian,” in John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1962), 60.

²³⁰ Luther, “Bondage of the Will,” in Dillenberger, 203.

²³¹ Jean Calvin, *A harmonie vpon the three Euangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke* (1584), 61. [Hereafter cited as Calvin, *A harmonie*.]

²³² Cameron, *European*, 112.

For it seemed an absurd thing, that original sin which hath his proper place in the soule, shoulde be spreade abroad from one man into all his posteritie, vnlesse all soules had flowed from his soule, as from a fountaine. And truly the wordes of Christe seeme to import thus much at the first sight, that we are therefore flesh, because we are borne of fleshe. I answered, that as touching the wordes of Christe, this is the only meaning thereof, that we are all carnall as we are borne: and that forasmuch as we come abroad into this worlde mortall men, our nature sauoureth of nothing els but flesh. For he doth heere make a plaine distinction betweene nature, and the supernaturall gift. For whereas all mankinde was corrupt in the person of Adam alone, *it commeth not so much by begetting as by the ordinance of God*: who, like as hee had decked vs all in one man, so he spoyled vs of his giftes. Therefore euerye one of vs doeth not so much drawe vice and corruption from our parents, as we are all corrupted together in Adam alone, because so soone as hee was fallen away, God did by and by take away that which he had giuen mans nature.²³³

For Calvin, God had declared a supernatural relationship between man and God in paradise before the fall. However, with Adam's sin, God had removed those gifts, imposing the total corruption that arose in man's nature, effective for all of humanity. Thus humans inherit the effects of original sin from God's ordinance although the language of scripture suggests that it comes from generational transmission. Calvin stresses that all humans were condemned in Adam in order to avoid a sense of attenuation of responsibility that is passed on by physical inheritance. Therefore, he sought "to forestall the objection that fallen man would be suffering punishment for a sin he had not committed."²³⁴ Yet Calvin himself continues to use the language of inheritance, itself inspired by scripture, writing "Adam at his first creation was very different from all his posterity, who, having their origin a corrupted and rotten stock, derived from it a hereditary contagion."²³⁵

As we shall see, in their doctrinal preaching and teaching of original sin, early modern English religious writers do not abandon the idea of physical generation, but to

²³³ Calvin, *A harmonie*, 61.

²³⁴ Wendel, *Calvin*, 195.

²³⁵ Calvin, *Inst.*, I.15. 8.

the contrary, continue to stress this concept, many allying it figuratively with racial tropes, namely black and blackamoor metaphors. For example, in early modern English religious texts, divines use the metaphor of blackness as evil in order to characterize the doctrine of original sin. This understanding of blackness as evil rests on the binary reflected in English Renaissance texts that signify whiteness or fairness as good and beautiful. Application of these characteristics is made to moral virtue in religious texts. As Thomas De Laune writes, “Black by nature, fair by grace, black in original sin, fair by regeneration.”²³⁶ Whether blackness, and by association, black skin color, was literally believed to be a divine curse is ambivalent. In rare instances, divines directly clarify the matter. Of course, according to Best’s narrative, blackness and black skin color were defined as anathema. However, English divines employed the figurative language of blackness to symbolize evil using word play in order to preach the doctrine of original sin. Thus, black ethnicity is a *symbol* for original sin in early modern English religious texts. And original sin applies to all of humanity in the context of religious teaching. This is similar to how the black, Egyptian, and Ethiopian tropes in ancient Christian texts, while representing negative stereotypes of these groups, symbolized universal meaning within that religious community. The word play therefore highlights the repugnant value of blackness and black ethnicity in some aspects of early modern English religious culture. Arguably, this reflects the societal marking involved in the formulation of the concept or ideology of race, which was also taking place during this period.²³⁷

²³⁶ Thomas De Laune, *Tropologia, or, A key to open Scripture metaphors* (1681), 168.

²³⁷ See Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Catherine M. S. Alexander, *Shakespeare and Race* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Imtiaz H. Habib, *Shakespeare and Race: Postcolonial Praxis in the*

Based on a five-fold categorization schema,²³⁸ the following analyzes the blackamoor rhetoric used to symbolize original sin in early modern English religious texts. Black ethnic tropes emerge stylistically out of the language of the doctrine of original sin. Human sin reflects the language of propagation or generation, which is often juxtaposed with Blackamoor and Ethiopian tropes to signify the inheritance of defilement and corruption. Further, these metaphors are also used to signify the nature of human depravity as well as habitual sinful acts. The tendency of many early modern English ministers to engage in word play using imagery from Jer. 13:23 raises questions about the cultural implications of this rhetoric on black Africans in early modern England. Comparison of the racial/ethnic hermeneutics of Jer. 13:23 in the ancient Israelite context with early modern England sheds insight into the evolving objectification of blackness, particular black skin color, as a symbol for sin and evil.

Introduction: The Language of Original Sin

England's original move to break with Rome was not theologically motivated. However, once the ties with the Roman Catholic Church were severed, it was the English monarch, who became Supreme Head of the established Church of England, and not the pope, who now oversaw doctrinal controversies. In 1552, during the reign of Edward VI, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, influenced largely by Calvinist thought, wrote the *Forty-Two Articles*. However, due to the king's untimely death these doctrinal prescriptions remained inactive until the reign of Queen Elizabeth when they were established as the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*. The influence of the Articles was felt throughout the

Early Modern Period (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2000).

²³⁸ The categorization of the schema in this section is inspired by Gay Byron's taxonomic methodology in *Symbolic Blackness* (2002).

church as a result of their practical institution in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Article IX, “Of Original or Birth-Sin,” broadly defines original sin as “the fault and corruption of the Nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam” in which man is not only “inclined to evil” but is also of itself an “infection of nature” that afflicts “every person born into this world.” In early modern English religious writings, the foundations of doctrinal belief regarding original sin transcend ecclesiology. For example, the nonconformist to the established Church of England, Thomas Adams, in an exposition of Christian doctrine, speaks in 1675 of the “corruption of [the] whole nature” of humanity since the guilt of Adam’s sinful act is “justly imputed to all the degenerate and sinful race.”²³⁹ Not only does this sickness afflict everyone equally, but it also is a great malady. Richard Baxter, a moderate Presbyterian, and also later ejected from the restored established Church for refusing to conform, reflects on the “depraved and miserable condition of Mankind.”²⁴⁰ This condition results in “misery” and “desperate wickedness” as well as “mans insufficiency and impotencie to good.”²⁴¹ Original sin in the nature is therefore the cause and source of the evil actions in humans. As the Anglican clergyman Anthony Horneck cries, “What can I do of my self? I am naturally defiled, original sin sticks to me, Proneness to Evil follows me.”²⁴² Sinful acts arise from a depraved mind, which is part of the sinful nature. Thus the radical Presbyterian Vincent Alsop describes the human being as one who “carries about with him daily a depraved nature, enclined to evil, running counter to God’s will.”²⁴³ Consequently, the evil-doings

²³⁹ Thomas Adams, *The main principles of Christian religion* (1675), 32.

²⁴⁰ Richard Baxter, *Cain and Abel malignity* (1689), 1.

²⁴¹ Richard Baxter, *A Christian directory, or, A summ of practical theologie* (1673), 236.

²⁴² Anthony Horneck, *The crucified Jesus, or, A full account of the nature, end, design and benefits of the sacrament of the Lords Supper* (1695), 115.

²⁴³ Vincent Alsop, *Anti-sozzo, sive, Sherlocismus enervatus* (1676), 232.

of people account for the sufferings and oppressions in the world. Wherever men and women go, they carry their debauched natures with them, infecting whatsoever they touch. The Anglican Nathaniel Hardy simply describes human “nature [as]...defiled with the stain of original sin.”²⁴⁴ Bishop Lewis Bayly uses the same description, writing in more detail about “the secret of shame and stain of original sin.”²⁴⁵ In fact, the average person is “but a brute” having been “cast naked upon the earth, all embrewed in the blood of filthiness.”²⁴⁶ The Congregationalist preacher Jeremiah Burroughs also notes that humanity is “wrapped up in original sin and filth, more then their bodyes are wrapped up in blood and filth in the wombe.”²⁴⁷ Hence the Laudian Bishop Lancelot Andrewes calls man “a feeble creature, a true embleme of infirmity.”²⁴⁸ According to the Quaker Elizabeth Bathurst, this weakness is due to “the inward Corruption and Seed of Sin, which Satan hath sown in us, and wherewith we are defiled.”²⁴⁹ In *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, John Bunyan writes that humanity comes from the “dust,” a symbol of “original sin and inward Corruptions that have defiled the whole Man.”²⁵⁰ This “defiling,” according to Anthony Burgess, leads to “cursed effects” so that “we are not merely deprived of all good but positively inclined to all evil, and filled with a cursed opposition to what is holy.”²⁵¹ Elsewhere Burgess states that contrary to Pelagian thought, original sin is not to be understood as an “acquired habit, polluting the powers of

²⁴⁴ Nathaniel Hardy, *The first general epistle of St. John the Apostle* (1656), 232.

²⁴⁵ Lewis Bayly, *The practice of piety directing a Christian how to walk* (1695), 39.

²⁴⁶ Bayly, 39.

²⁴⁷ Jeremiah Burroughs, *An exposition of the prophesie of Hosea* (1652), 173.

²⁴⁸ Lancelot Andrewes, *The pattern of catechistical doctrine at large* (1650), 15.

²⁴⁹ Elizabeth Bathurst, *Truth’s vindication, or, A gentle stroke to wipe off the foul aspersions, false accusations, and misrepresentations cast upon the people of God called Quakers* (1679), 12.

²⁵⁰ John Bunyan, *The pilgrim’s progress* (1678), 21.

²⁵¹ Anthony Burgess, *CXLV expository sermons upon the whole 17th chapter of the Gospel according to St. John*, (1656), 252.

the soul, but as the internal defect and imperfection that is cleaving to them.”²⁵² There are multiple expressions in early modern English religious writings on how precisely sin is generated. These ideas are later modeled in black rhetorical language.

The Generational Nature of Original Sin

English divines, operating within wide theological parameters, express different and often conflicting positions with regard to the inheritance of original sin. These positions can be summed up as encompassing the classical theories of traducianism and creationism. Sometimes divines depict racial images to signify natural propagation in imitation of the hereditary contagion of sin. First, the language of generation, the classic theory of traducianism, in its various forms implies some kind of physical propagation. Many divines use this language of transmission to describe original sin, speaking of it pouring forth “from the loins of our first parents.”²⁵³ Hence, for the late seventeenth-century religious writer Richard Younge, “*we brought a world of sin into the world with us* and were condemned...so soon as conceived, we were adjudged to eternal death.”²⁵⁴ That sin came with us in our natures and we were guilty of it as well. Richard Baxter notes, “We now call it [Original] sin, because it is in us *ab origine*, or by propagation.”²⁵⁵ He also writes, “Adam’s Generation being the Communication of a Guilty Nature with personality to his Sons and Daughters...cometh to us by Natural Propagation, and resultancy from our very Nature so propagated.”²⁵⁶ This is the generation that includes the body. William Bates writes that original sin, “distilled” like a “poison...through all

²⁵² Anthony Burgess, *A treatise of original sin* (1658), 20.

²⁵³ Richard Younge, *A short and sure way to grace and salvation* (1658), 8.

²⁵⁴ Younge, 8.

²⁵⁵ Richard Baxter, *Two disputations of original sin* (1675), 65.

²⁵⁶ Richard Baxter, *Of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers* (1675), 123-124.

the faculties of man by propagation” affects the “Temperaments of Mens Bodies” and as “an universal supreme evil” causes the derivation of “actual sins.”²⁵⁷ The Scottish minister Hugh Binning concurs, writing, “there is much more propagated unto all, and that is a total corruption and depravation of nature in soul & body whereby man is utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite unto all that is truly and spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil.”²⁵⁸ Thus there is implied a relationship between the soul and the body in the act of generation so that the sin encompasses both. Several divines, although expressing incomprehensibility at how *precisely* the process of transmission takes place, intimate that it is indeed fleshly. Thomas Watson begins by describing Adam as “a Representative Person” so that “we sinn’d in Adam” and goes on to clarify his point by stating:

Adam was the Head of Mankind, and he being guilty, we are guilty, as the Children of a Traytor have their Blood stained...All of us, saith Austin, sinn’d in Adam, because we were part of Adam. We are in Adam’s loins; as a Child is a Branch of the Parent, we were part of Adam, therefore he sinning, we sinned. The Pelagians of old held that Adam’s Transgression is hurtful to Posterity by Imitation only, not by Imputation. But the Text confutes that, in whom all have sinned.²⁵⁹

Watson wants to emphasize that we were physically in Adam and thus shared in the imputation of his transgression. William Bates also uses physical language in his description of the process, writing of “the nakedness and misery of the humane Nature” impacted through “the transmission of original sin, from the first Man to all his Posterity, wherewith they are infected and debased” and “dead in sins and trespasses.” Yet, precisely how this takes place is “a Mystery so far from our knowledge.”²⁶⁰ John Brown

²⁵⁷ William Bates, *The sure trial of uprightness* (1689), 9.

²⁵⁸ Hugh Binning, *The common principiles of Christian religion* (Glasgow, 1666), 257.

²⁵⁹ Thomas Watson, *A body of practical divinity* (1692), 82-83.

²⁶⁰ William Bates, *The harmony of the divine attributes* (1674), 322.

also ponders “[how] came this change upon the whole Nature, or Race of mankinde, immediatly after the fall?” He wonders “Or did the posterity of Adam come under this power of Nature, and of the Seed of Satan, so soon as they had a being, and a Soul and a Body?”²⁶¹

However, other divines are more resolute in explanation. The Anglican Thomas Wilson uses the familiar language of original sin, writing, “Adam sendeth ouer to all that come of him guilt of sinne and death by his disobedience imputed” since “all men were in Adams loynes when he sinned, and so sinned in him.”²⁶² However, he specifies further that the precise way that “sinne is propagated and deriued to vs,” is “by the Father then by the Mother, because he is the principall agent in generation.”²⁶³ Thus, not only is sin transmitted through physical generation, but this also occurs through the father’s semen. Richard Baxter concurs on this point, writing,

We were seminally or virtually in Adam when he sinned. As soon as we were persons, we were persons derived generation from Adam: Therefore with our persons we derived guilt and pravity: For he could beget no better than himself that when that Semen became a person (Cain) it became a guilty person, the guilt following the subject according to its Capacity: And so downward by Propagation to this day.²⁶⁴

Baxter explains that though “we receive our Original Guilt and Pravity immediately from our next Parents” it comes “remotely from Adam.”²⁶⁵ Elsewhere, he elaborates, “we sinned in Adam because we were seminally in him; and so are our Children in us.”²⁶⁶

Bishop Ralph Brownrig also writes that “original sin is virtually and seminally every

²⁶¹ John Brown, *Quakerisme the path-way to paganisme* (1678), 96.

²⁶² Thomas Wilson, *A commentarie vpon the most diuine Epistle of S. Paul to the Romanes* (1614), 303.

²⁶³ Wilson, 303.

²⁶⁴ Richard Baxter, *An end of doctrinal controversies* (1691), 96.

²⁶⁵ Baxter, 96.

²⁶⁶ Richard Baxter, *The catechizing of families a teacher of housholders how to teach their households* (1683), 331.

sin.”²⁶⁷ Samuel Gott indicates that all human beings (except Christ) were “born according to this Law of Natural Generation” the “Proper Creation of his Intellective Soul, and Improper Creation of his Sensitive Body.”²⁶⁸ Samuel Slater incorporates the traditional imagery of original sin as an (male) inherited disease by using racial imagery in this way, writing,

the Son of a Blackmoor will be a Blackmoor too. You know there are hereditary Diseases, as the Gout, Stone, Spleen, Lethargie, which commonly run in the blood, and are transmitted by the Parents to their Children; Sin is one of them, it is the worst of them, it sticks close, and descends from Parents to Children, and that from Generation to Generation, without interruption, without exception.²⁶⁹

Hence the language of traducianism, which explains the physical generation of original sin, mirrors some images of blackamoor tropes that symbolize the inheritance of sin as disease.

However, other divines reject traducianism in favor of creation theory in order to describe the process of transmission of original sin. Among these thinkers there is variance in descriptions of how God’s creation of the soul becomes infected or defiled with sin. For example, Anglican George Lawson describes God “as a Creatour” who “makes a Soul, and gives it Essence, and all things necessary flowing from the Essence, and appertaining to it.”²⁷⁰ Moreover, “As a Judge, [God] denies that person, as one with Adam sinning, his sanctifying Spirit which Adam received for him, and his; and in

²⁶⁷ Ralph Brownrig, *Twenty five sermons* (1664), 355.

²⁶⁸ Samuel Gott, *The divine history of the genesis of the world* (1670), 441.

²⁶⁹ Samuel Slater, *An earnest call to family-religion, or, A discourse concerning family-worship being the substance of eighteen sermons* (1694), 121-23.

²⁷⁰ George Lawson, *Theo-politica, or, A body of divinity containing the rules of the special government of God*, (1659), 75.

him sinning, was lost to him and his.”²⁷¹ Without the supernatural presence of sanctification, evil infects the soul, not as in a bodily organism, but more so as declaration from God. As we saw earlier, this is a similar position expressed by Calvin.

Of the relation between the body and the soul, Lawson indicates:

It is evident, that the Soul is not so much polluted by the body, as the body by it, and it from it self. For there are many Spiritual sins; as Pride, Envie, Malice, and such like, which are purely from the Soul, and in the Soul, as they are in Angels, who have no bodies, but are spirits. And those sins which have their Rise from the sensitive appetite, could not pollute the Soul, except it were depraved in it self. And the first sin began in the Soul, as may easily be understood from Gen. 3 and was there compleatly moulded, before Eve looked upon the forbidden fruit to covet it, and desire it as a bodily food.²⁷²

Consequently, Lawson adds, “All the evils are reduced to Sin and Death. We participate with him in some manner in the first sin; and in him sinning, we sin; and in him being guilty, we are guilty; in him dying, we die.”²⁷³ In the inheritance of being from our ancestors, originating in Adam, we also receive corruption, or non-being. Thus, it is an error to think that the body infects the soul at creation. After all, as Edward Leigh insists, “a spiritual substance cannot take taint from a corporal.”²⁷⁴ But in Leigh’s view, the transmission of original sin affects the body and soul in a simultaneous event.

When we say the soul by conjunction with the body is desiled with sin, we mean not that the body works upon the soul and so infects it, as pitch doth desile with the very touch: but that at the same instant at which God gives the spirit, puts it in the body, *Adams* disobedience is then imputed to the whole person, and so by consequent corruption of nature and inclination unto evil, the pain of sin by Gods just appointment follows.²⁷⁵

William Bates describes a similar process, writing, “That the Soul of Man in its state of Union, has a continual dependance upon the Body...gross matter...a strange circling

²⁷¹ Lawson, 75.

²⁷² Lawson, 75.

²⁷³ Lawson, 75.

²⁷⁴ Edward Leigh, *A systeme or body of divinity consisting of ten books*, (1654), 314.

²⁷⁵ Leigh, 314.

Influence between the Soul and the Body: The Dispositions of the Body suitably incline the Soul, and the Inclinations of the Soul affect the Body.”²⁷⁶ Therefore, this position is different from generation, which is based on bodily transmission. John Owen explains this view of creation:

God is a Creator of the soul in respect of the substance, so it is pure; but he is also a Judge, and so he creates the soul not simply as a soul, but as the soul of one of the sons of *Adam*, in which respect he forsakes it touching his Image which was lost in *Adam*, and so it is deprived of original justice, whence followeth original sin.²⁷⁷

Others are even more verbally explicit in their rejection of the theory of generation but describe the very opposite process in the relation between the body and the soul. John Flavel writes, “to me it’s clear, that the Soul receives not its being by Traduction or Generation; for that which is generable is also corruptible.”²⁷⁸ He thus clarifies, “We receive our flesh or body from our Parents, but our souls from God.”²⁷⁹ Indeed, since the soul is immortal, and endowed with reason, “Adam’s Soul and the Souls of his posterity spring not from each other, but all from God by Creation.”²⁸⁰ Souls become tainted with original sin “as soon as they are united with their bodies.”²⁸¹ Samuel Slater writes, “those pure Souls which were created by God, were polluted and spoiled as soon as they entered into those bodies that came of you.”²⁸² Thus, whereas some proponents of creationism advocate a simultaneous affection of sin upon both body and soul, others suggest that souls become infected with sin at the merger of body and soul at creation. This explains the variance among divines in their understanding of the process

²⁷⁶ William Bates, *The sure trial of uprightness* (1689), 9.

²⁷⁷ John Owen, *A continuation of the exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews* (1680), 30.

²⁷⁸ John Flavel, *Pneumatologia, a treatise of the soul of man* (1685), 35.

²⁷⁹ Flavel, 36.

²⁸⁰ Flavel, 39.

²⁸¹ Flavel, 39.

²⁸² Samuel Slater, *An earnest call to family-religion* (1694), 121-123.

how original sin is transmitted to human nature, despite the overall general doctrinal consensus that the crippling and debilitating effects of Adam's fall are inherited to all posterity. Enduring concepts of the despoiled nature of the flesh in particular transfer into black ethnic imagery signifying the imputation of original sin, to which the discussion now turns.

Black Ethnicity as Symbolic of Original Sin

As we have seen in Protestant thought, consupiscence is not removed with baptism. Article IX also equates consupiscence with sin, noting that even after regeneration this sickness “doth remain” indeed since “consupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin.” Humans are born with it, as Bishop Lancelot Andrewes states, commenting on Psalm 51, writing “I, as all man-kind, was shapen in the iniquity of original sin from which fountain springeth my misery: and in sin, and concupiscence did my mother conceive me, from whence groweth the infirmity of my flesh.”²⁸³ The poet and preacher John Andrewes thus equates “original sin, concupiscence, or lust,” which “haue we one in our selues and of our selues” and that “neuer resteth attempting, entising, and alluring vs from good vnto euil, and to desile or staine vs with al kinde of pollution and vncleanenesse,” in *Christ His Crosse*, a meditation on the passion of Jesus Christ.²⁸⁴ This condition “hath infected the whole ofspring of Adam.”²⁸⁵ Moreover, the reality of this existence, or, as Anthony Burgess deems it, “defiled nature” convinces the sinner “that I am beyond all expression sinfull, now I see every day I am more and more

²⁸³ Lancelot Andrewes, *Holy devotions* (1663), 363.

²⁸⁴ A.B. Grosart, ‘Andrewes, John (b. 1582/3)’, rev. Elizabeth Haresnape, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/526>, accessed 5 May 2013]

²⁸⁵ John Andrewes, *Christ his crosse or The most comfortable doctrine of Christ crucified and ioyfull tidings of his passion* (1614), 22.

abominable! O Lord, formerly I thought all my sinne was in some words, in some actions, or in some vile thoughts, but now I see, this was the least part of all that evil that was in me; Now I am amazed, astonished to see what a sea of corruption is within me, now I can never go to the bottom, now I find something like hell within me, sparks of lust that are unquenchable.”²⁸⁶ William Ames writes of the sinful nature of concupiscence, that “innate, and inbred lust in us” which foster[s] “inordinate desire” and lead[s], not only to the performance of actual sins that are contrary to God’s law but reflect[s] the opposite of “the perfection of Gods Image.”²⁸⁷

The metaphor of black ethnicity is used to signify the nature of concupiscence in original sin. For example, in *A Body of Practical Divinity*, published in 1692, which is a massive sermonic work based on the shorter catechism of the Westminster Assembly, Thomas Watson writes,

this Original Concupiscence is called, the adherency of original sin. *It cleaves to us as blackness to the skin of the Ethiopian*, we cannot get rid of it. Paul shook off the Viper on his hand, but we cannot shake off this inbred Corruption.²⁸⁸

Use of this metaphor therefore stresses the steadfast nature of original sin. Moreover, it is the ongoing condition of sin or concupiscence in human nature that results in the constant return to actual sins even after the attempt to reform one’s actions. Thus black skin color is a symbol for the resiliency of original sin in human nature. The moderate Presbyterian John Collinges writes, “I...am by Birth an Ethiopian, black with original corruption.”²⁸⁹ By claiming to be Ethiopian, Collinges is using the ethnic trope for rhetorical flourish in

²⁸⁶ Anthony Burgess, *A treatise of original sin* (1658), 8.

²⁸⁷ William Ames, *The substance of Christian religion* (1659), 261.

²⁸⁸ Thomas Watson, *A body of practical divinity* (1692), 82-83. Emphasis added.

²⁸⁹ John Collinges, *The intercourses of divine love betwixt Christ and his Church* (1683), 851.

order to emphasize his inherent sinful nature. The correlation between original sin and blackness is evident in Edward Phillips' reflection upon the early days of humanity's first parents:

when wrath had ouerspread the earth, and the curse of God for disobedience had runne through the end of the world, and that we were besmeared and misshapen with sinne as vgly as the Ethiopian and condemnation as due to vs as to them that alreadie hang in hell.²⁹⁰

Phillips uses a simile in order to juxtapose Ethiopian identity with the sinful nature of humanity, presupposing the ugliness of this ethnic group to correspond to original sin. Similarly, James Wadsworth asks, "If the black More looke vpon himselfe, he cannot chuse but say that he is blacke: and if we looke vpon our owne soules, will not our cōscience conuince vs that we are lothesome?"²⁹¹ However, some divines make use of scripture and metaphors that suggest dual applicability of their rhetoric. For example, Nicholas Lockyear hints at the Hamitic myth by referring to the story from Gen. 12. He then goes on to assume the word Ethiopian is synonymous with sin,

If thy soule were never so poore, never so blinde, never so wretched, never so naked, yet Christ having promised to come to thee, hee will make good his word; though he come backward, with a mantle to cover thy nakednesie, as Shem and Iaphet did to Noah...If thy soule were full of wounds; if thy soule were full of running putrifying sores; if thou wert as black with sin as an Ethiopian.²⁹²

Christ will not hesitate to come to one even in the blackest sin, like an Ethiopian. Use of these similes indicating similarity to Ethiopian or Blackamoor ethnicity suggest that these groups are not intended to be signified as cursed by this form of language, but this is certainly implied. By referencing the scripture that serves as the basis of the Hamitic

²⁹⁰ Edward Philips, *Certain godly and learned sermons* (1607), 493.

²⁹¹ James Wadsworth, *The contrition of a Protestant preacher, Converted to be a Catholique Scholler* (1615), 19.

²⁹² Nicholas Lockyer, *Christs communion with his church militant* (1640), 95.

Myth, Lockyear suggests that he may be embracing the curse of blackness literally while also employing it figuratively to symbolize original sin in human nature. On the other hand, Anthony Burgess expressly indicates that his understanding of original sin is metaphorical:

Original sinne is universal subjectively, there being no part of a man, no not his mind, or his conscience, but it is all over defiled, whereas no actual sinne hath such a general defilement with it: Oh then what cause is here, why our hearts should bitterly mourn and even roar out, for this sinne makes thy soul all over like a Blackmoor! Thou mayest behold thy self in the glass of Gods word, and not see one fair spot; it is a leprosie upon the whole soul, so that it leaveth nothing good in thee. It's true, the substance and faculties of thy soul are left still, yet they are so corrupted and vitiated, that in a moral consideration there is nothing whole or sound in them.²⁹³

Blackamoor ethnicity is like the original birth sin, also synonymous with leprosy, corruption and defilement that corrupt the human soul. Although the diseased qualities are indirectly associated with black ethnicity, Burgess's language is symbolic. In the same way, Sir Henry Finch uses 'Blackamore' imagery to figuratively describe the condition of every human sinner:

Wee confesse our owne wretchednesse of ourselues more black then any blackamore and therefore vnworthy to be matched with so great a King: for wee are borne in sinne and conceiued in iniquity, and are by nature the children of wrath, euen wee that liue in the Church, and are borne within the outward couenaunt, aswell as other men.²⁹⁴

Finch stresses that the family of human sinners, of whom he confesses himself to be a member, are blacker than blackamores. This figurative emphasis stresses the degrading condition of the lost in relation to the King, Christ. But the rhetorical use of blackamores in this instance suggests that this group is considered the lowest or most debauched element in society. To willingly place oneself beneath such people before God (in Finch's

²⁹³ Anthony Burgess, *A treatise of original sin* (1658), 294-5.

²⁹⁴ Sir Henry Finch, *An exposition of the Song of Solomon* (1615), 79.

case) represents true humility. In this case, the treatment of actual blackamores is somewhat ambivalent, if not denigrating. They certainly are given a very low status in the scheme of things. In contrast, William Bates' treatise on *Spiritual Perfection* engages the color black aesthetically as representing the sins of humanity:

'Tis true there is a mixture of Principles in the best here, of Flesh and Spirit, inherent Corruption, and infus'd Grace, and the operations flowing from them accordingly are mixt. But as one who has not the brightest Colours of white and red in the Complexion, appears an Excellent Beauty, set off by the presence of a Blackmoor, so the Beauty of Holiness in a Saint, though mixt with blemishes, appears complete when compar'd with the foul deformity of Sinners.²⁹⁵

Bates uses a series of comparisons in order to demonstrate his meaning with regard to sin and righteousness. Thus he appeals to Renaissance notions of beauty and ugliness—whiteness and blackness—to correspond to definitions of purity and evil. A Blackamoor is compared to one with a “white and red” complexion to symbolize sinful deformity juxtaposed with holiness. This reifies the cultural associations of black ethnicity as ugly or deformed and further links these physical characteristics with immorality.

Interestingly, the use of these blackamoor tropes even expanded into religious texts written for children during the early modern period. In 1686, John Bunyan published *A Book for Boys and Girls, or Country Rhimes for Children*, a didactic tool designed to engender knowledge and faith in spiritual matters for young people. One particular verse is based on Num. 12:1, the story of Moses and his Cushite (Ethiopian) wife. Bunyan describes Moses' wife as “a swarthy Ethiopian” who “came out thence as black as she went in” since her husband's own “Milk-white Bosom” a symbol of the Law, could not “change her skin.” That is, although Moses married the Ethiopian, he only represents the Law and not the transforming grace of Christ. Thus, he could not turn her

²⁹⁵William Bates, *Spiritual perfection, unfolded and enforced from 2 Cor. VII* (1699), 125-26.

black skin color, representing her sins, to white, representing redemption. The rhyme is used to inculcate the message that salvation cannot come by the Law, but only through grace. Thus, as the rhyme concludes, “he that doth the Law for Life adore/ Shall yet by it be left a Black-a-more.”²⁹⁶ Moses’ wife remained black because she was only equipped with the Law. Unjustified believers, steeped in works, remain black in sins. Yet, by implication, late seventeenth-century young people were being taught that those who refuse to accept the grace of God in Christ are black Africans. Did this mean that blacks were not considered part of the body of Christ? Was this because of the nature of their blackness? Or could they convert? If so, what would happen to their blackness? It is not clear how literally the little ones applied their lessons. But in this theological context, it is not surprising that late seventeenth-century English laypeople wondered about the proper designation of black bodies in heaven and earth. Marked for rhetorical emphasis in order to demonstrate the power and impact of sinful human nature, black ethnic linguistic trends in religious texts suggest negative implications for early modern Africans in English culture.

Actual Sins Represented by Black Ethnic Euphemisms

In addition to symbolizing concupiscence, or the sin in human nature, blackamoor tropes in religious texts are also used as metaphors of the actual sins humans commit. Of the origin of actual sins, Richard Baxter explains that “in Adam himself the first sin was actual” but afterwards in us, the descendants, “is Adam’s sin imputed justly.”²⁹⁷ Humans, having inherited the nature of original sin formed from Adam’s first actual sin, then go on to actualize the evil latent in their nature. The moderate Presbyterian Edward Reynoldes

²⁹⁶ John Bunyan, *A book for boys and girls, or Country rhymes for children* (1686), 43.

²⁹⁷ Richard Baxter, *Two disputations of original sin* (1675), 75.

describes the tendency of evil thoughts and actions, including “pride, covetousnesse, adultery, [and] vanity of a lustfull eye” to “clease as fast therunto as blacknesse to the skinne of an Ethiopian, or sinne to the soule of man.”²⁹⁸ Thus, black ethnic euphemisms (Ethiopian and Blackamoor) are used not only to symbolize original sin, but also actual sins. For example, John Collinges describes that humans afflicted by the condition of original sin, “art by nature an Ethiopian, and by thy renewing actuall Sins, hast made thy self much more black and ugly.”²⁹⁹ Here he distinguishes between Ethiopian ethnicity as the symbol for the human born in sin, and the actual sins the persons commit (which are symbolically described as having the effect of continuing to darken the skin). John Downname asks,

Possibly thou mayest see and finde presidents of actuall sinners, born as black as the Ethiopian, and that have made it their work to colly themselves with the soot of sins, as much as thou hast, and that have dried in sin with as long customary continuance, as thou hast done.³⁰⁰

Again, the word Ethiopian is a frequent ethnic trope for original sinner, but actual sins have the image of blackness as well—in this case “soot.” In stressing the impossibility of changing one’s sinful habits without the grace of God due to the powerful nature of evil in the soul, Michael Wigglesworth writes in apocalyptic verse that, “The Blackmore may as eas’ly change his skin/ As old trangressours leave their wonted sin.”³⁰¹ The actual sins that arise from the nature of sin in the soul are as impossible to remove as the color of the skin. Similarly, Henry Smith writes of the futility of

²⁹⁸ Edward Reynoldes, *An explication of the hundreth and tenth Psalme* (1632), 145.

²⁹⁹ Reynoldes, 454.

³⁰⁰ John Downname, *The Christian warfare* (1604), 80.

³⁰¹ Michael Wigglesworth, *The day of doom; or A description of the great and last judgment* (1666), 87.

the repentance of them which sinne by custome, for when sinne is rooted it sticketh fast, and will hardly be weeded out, though God should send vs dreames, though he should shewe vs visions, though he should raise vp Prophets, Daniel himselfe cannot make this blacke Moore white, which alwaies hath been black before.³⁰²

The rootedness of sin comes from its nature just like the skin color of a blackamoor, and the ability to change evil acts resulting from that nature is impossible through any human effort.

Rhetorical Word Play Using Black Ethnic References from Jeremiah 13:23

It is important to emphasize that Ethiopian or blackamoor ethnicity, not simply abstract blackness, or black skin color alone, is frequently likened unto the nature of sin in early modern English religious texts. Even when abstract blackness is referenced, *black ethnicity* is often qualified in the distinguishing of the symbolic nature of the sin. This occurs often when divines cite Jer. 13:23. For example, the Scottish minister Samuel Rutherford writes, “As sin is a blacknesse contrary to the innocency that the Law requireth, and as it blotteth and defileth the soul, it is a Macula, a spot, a filthy and deformed thing, abasing the creature, making the creature black, crooked, defiled, like the skin of the Ethiopian, or spotted like the Leopard, Jer. 13.23.”³⁰³ Actual sins transgress the Law whereas a sinful nature is like black skin color or a leopard’s spots. Nathanael Culverwel chooses to improvise on the trope, writing,

Thou hast not the black skin of the Ethiopian; thou hast not those eminent spots of the Leopard: I, but thou hast the plague of the heart, thou hast the Leprosie within, and is not that more deadly and dangerous? The heart of a Publican is far whiter then thine.³⁰⁴

³⁰² Henry Smith, *The sermons of Maister Henrie Smith gathered into one volume* (1593), 363-64.

³⁰³ Samuel Rutherford, *The tryal & triumph of faith* (1652), 244.

³⁰⁴ Nathanael Culverwel, *An elegant and learned discourse of the light of nature*, (1652), 63.

Culverwel's usage indicates such familiarity with the expression that he plays upon the rhetoric. He exhorts the sinner, incorporating the conventional language of Jer. 13:23. But then he downplays the traditional metaphors in the scriptural reference to stress the worse condition of the listener in order to motivate him/her to repent, even using color symbolism to stimulate envy by referring to the sinful publican's heart as "white" in comparison. John Downname also manipulates the rhetoric by stating the ironic. He writes, "A Leopard can as well cleanse himselfe of spots, and an Ethiopian as well wash away the blacknesse of his skin, as I can wash my black soule, &c."³⁰⁵ Yet he concedes this is very difficult "when wee are most filthily defiled, and our polution is ingrayned in vs as it were with a scarlet die; when our vncleane corruptiō sticks as fast to our soules, as the Ethiopian blacknesse to their skins."³⁰⁶ John Andrewes also complains that human beings "are so frozen in their sin, and so wedded in their wickednesse that a Leopard may sooner change his spots, and a blacke Moore become white."³⁰⁷ The scriptural metaphor of Ethiopian skin is therefore expanded rhetorically once again to emphasize sin in human nature. This occurs also when Francis Roberts likens the "Skin of an Ethiopian, and spots of a Leopard" to the "Vomit of a Dog" and the "filthy mire wherein a Sow walloweth" which is the "inherent Stain spot and defilement of Sin."³⁰⁸ Ethiopian skin is juxtaposed with denigrating animalistic conditions. Extension of the scriptural reference is therefore evident in the application of other metaphors to further symbolize the state of sin in the human condition. And the term 'Ethiopian' becomes such a common euphemism for sin and evil that when John Hagthorpe seeks to portray the "naked

³⁰⁵ Culverwel, 198.

³⁰⁶ Culverwel, 450.

³⁰⁷ John Andrewes, *A golden trumpet sounding an alarum to judgement* (1648), 52.

³⁰⁸ Francis Roberts, *Mysterium & medulla Bibliorum the mysterie and marrow of the Bible* (1657), 1447.

Damsell” of his four poems as “filthy” and “cruel,” his recourse is to state that her “painted brow” is really but a “vizard painted on” disguising an “Ethiopian” or scandalous nature.³⁰⁹ In this case, ‘Ethiopian’ is not a simile, but a metaphor for scandalous behavior defining the evil human constitution of the woman. Evidence of the word play of the metaphors in Jer. 13:23 can also be demonstrated as divines fail to quote the scripture reference directly. As John Bunyan simply asks “Can the Ethiopian change his skin?”³¹⁰ John Flavel writes,

The spots of a Leopard, and hue of an Ethiopian, are not by way of external accidental adhesion, if so, washing would fetch them off; but they are innate and contemper’d, belonging to the constitution, and not to be alter’d: so are sinful habits and customs in the minds of sinners; by this means it becomes a second Nature, as it were, and strongly determines the mind to sin.³¹¹

Emphasizing the intractability of black skin color and leopard’s spots serves as a convenient symbol to stress evil in nature while preaching. Their innate characteristics make even removing through washing futile. As Anthony Horneck states,

But sin being by age, as it were, caked and baked together, mocks the Fullers-earth, and the help of Soap and Snow-water. The blackness becomes purely Ethiopian and the spots turn into tokens of the Leopard, which makes the change more difficult, if not impossible.³¹²

Sin, already ensconced in human nature, takes on an anthropomorphic quality and “mocks” soap and its whitening affects. Evil turns not only into blackness itself, but also to Ethiopian ethnicity; and the spots are not just ordinary ones, but those of the Leopard.

³⁰⁹ John Hagthorpe, *Visiones rerum. The visions of things. Or Foure poems* (1623), 903.

³¹⁰ John Bunyan, *Reprobation asserted, or, The doctrine of eternal election & reprobation* (1674), 29.

³¹¹ John Flavel, *Pneumatologia, a treatise of the soul of man* (1685), 410.

³¹² Anthony Horneck, *The first fruits of reason* (1686), 30.

Importantly, the blackness is “purely” Ethiopian, which seems to stress the quality of the evil. If the challenge seemed great before, the upgrade from abstract blackness to black ethnicity makes the goal even more unattainable. Richard Baxter declares,

it is past all doubt that the sinners own personal nature is made worse by his own actual sin: experience proves it too fully: Scripture saith, that they that have been accustomed to do evil, can no more learn to do well, than a Blackmoor can change his skin, or a Leopard his spots.³¹³

Linguistically these turns of phrase are meant to impress the reader or listener through the word play as meanings are conveyed through symbols.

Unlike those who imaginatively construct images using the metaphors from Jer. 13:23, other divines defer to tradition and directly quote and reference the scriptural passage. The Anglican Tory John Kettlewell notes:

A compleat habit, and a perfect custome shall make them sin beyond all liberty, because they will sin without all deliberation...Can the Ethiopian Blackamoor change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? When they can do that, then, saith Jeremy, may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil, Jer. 13.23.³¹⁴

However, Kettlewell does oddly combine both the ethnicities of Ethiopian *and* Blackamoor, common terms for black Africans in early modern England. What Bible translation was he using? The Geneva Bible, arguably the most popular Protestant bible in the early modern period, first published in 1560 and reprinted in several editions up to the year 1644, uses the word “*black More*” in Jer. 13:23 and Jer. 38:7. ‘Black More’ in Jeremiah replaces ‘Ethiopian’ elsewhere in the Old and New Testaments (cf. Num. 12:1 and Acts 8:37) in the Geneva Bible. Theodore

³¹³ Richard Baxter, *Two disputations of original sin* (1675), 168-9.

³¹⁴ John Kettlewell, *The measures of Christian obedience* (1681), 423.

Beza's Latin translation of the Geneva Bible also uses "blacke- Moore" in these passages. John Wyclif's 1382 English manuscript Bible translation from the Vulgate uses '*man of Ethiope*' in both places. Of English bible translations, the bible compiled by Myles Coverdale in 1535, the first English bible in print, the 1537 Matthew Bible, which combined portions of Coverdale's translations of the Old Testament with William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, the 1538 Great Bible, authorized by Henry VIII, and the Bishops' Bible, first published in 1568 under the authority of Queen Elizabeth's administration, *all* use the phrase "man of Inde" for Jer. 13:23 and "Morian" in Jer. 38:7. The Authorized Version of 1611 and the Douay-Rheims Bible both use the term "Ethiopian" for Jeremiah 13:23 and 38:7. Yet Blackamoor and Ethiopian are the most common terms in seventeenth century commentaries on Jer. 13:23. This is probably indicative of the popular use of 'Blackamoor' and 'Ethiopian' in contemporary culture, bringing more relevance to the hermeneutics of this passage in evangelical preaching. Therefore, it is clear that the majority of seventeenth-century Anglicans, Laudians, Baptists, Quakers, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists who use black ethnic tropes referencing Jer. 13:23 do so similarly in order to symbolize sin in humanity. Yet how far off is this hermeneutic from Hebrew scholarship on this scriptural passage? The following discussion centers on literary criticism of the text as well as one early modern English ecclesiastic who comments extensively on its ethnic metaphors, the Rev. Thomas Horton.

As demonstrated above, the passage in Jeremiah becomes a key reference among many early modern English religious divines stressing the inability of the human temperament to change due to original sin. Yet this scripture ironically uses black ethnic symbols, which are culturally significant to England during this period. What is the consensus of Hebrew scholarship on Jer.13:23 with regard to the treatment of Ethiopians, or, the Hebraic term, Cushites, in ancient Israelite society? Is this view different from the approach that the majority of seventeenth-century English ministers take in their use of the text? In the early modern English commentary, the metaphors of Ethiopian skin and leopard's spots are used in varying ways to symbolize the indomitable nature of human sin without the influence of God's redeeming power. During the ancient context, scholars have deduced that the prophet Jeremiah was probably active during the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah (ca. 609-597 BCE).³¹⁵ In Jer. 13:23, the seer is forecasting doom against the nation because of its sinfulness. This evil has embedded itself in the hearts of the people so deeply that there is no hope of healing or reform. The prophet's use of the symbolism of the Cushite's skin and the leopard's spots is to accentuate the evil condition of the people. Thus, Jeremiah warns them of terrible pending destruction as a result of their guilt, since it is simply impossible that Judah is capable of change.³¹⁶ Allusion to the ethnicity or color of the Cushites in the text does not reflect prejudice or vilification towards that group. Indeed, text, historical and literary critics of this biblical passage as well as other passages that reference the term argue that ancient Israelite society did not

³¹⁵ D.T. Adamo. *Africa and Africans in the Old Testament*, (Bethesda, MD: International Scholars Publications, 1998), 109.

³¹⁶ Rodney S. Sadler, Jr., *Can a Cushite Change His Skin?: An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Othering in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2001), 210.

harbor negative associations towards the color or ethnicity of Cushites.³¹⁷ Utilization of the Cushites' skin color serves instead as a powerful symbol regarding the guilt of the Judahites and the pending divine judgment.

However, the juxtaposition between skin, spots, and sin in the scriptural text arguably remains problematic because it paves the way for later interpretations that symbolically denigrate black ethnicity in relation to human evil. This is precisely what occurs in many seventeenth-century English commentaries. Sermons published in 1679 by the former head of Queen's College, Cambridge, the Presbyterian Thomas Horton, compare the "double resemblance" of "the blackness of the Ethiopian and the spots of the Leopard" in order to express "the defilement of sin" which is also a kind of entanglement in the sense that it becomes "as hard, and difficult, and impossible to do the one, as it is to do the other; as hard for those to do good which are accustomed to do evil, as it is for the Ethiopian to change his skin, or for the Leopard to change his spots."³¹⁸ Horton goes on to describe the defilement of sin once more "in the resemblance of the Ethiopian and Leopard," metaphors for "a polluting and of a deforming nature" which symbolize "the person in which it is, who is fill'd and overgrown with it, ugly, and very unlovely."³¹⁹ Horton then mitigates the extent of the rhetoric, stating, "there is no Ethiopian or Black-moor which is so unamiable in reference to the Body, as a sinner is in reference to the Soul."³²⁰ Thus he expressly distinguishes between the figurative language and the meaning the rhetorical tools are used to signify.

³¹⁷ Sadler, 210.

³¹⁸ Thomas Horton, *One hundred select sermons upon several texts fifty upon the Old Testament, and fifty on the new* (1679), 390.

³¹⁹ Horton, 390.

³²⁰ Horton, 390.

Horton goes on to make a very significant turn in his incorporation of blackamoor tropes to symbolize sin based on Jer. 13:23, however, He also states that sinners, ensconced in their own malice, turn a blind eye to their evil nature just “as the Ethiopians and Blackamoors...do not perceive their own blackness, nor are much sensible of it; nay they think themselves the much the fairer hereupon, they count their Blackness their greatest beauty.”³²¹ At first glance, Horton’s reasoning appears to reflect the cultural relativity argument. He seems to be taking into account contemporary views regarding the relative cultural perceptions of beauty in different societies, including African ones. Yet, in reality, this is not the case, for Horton quickly states: “how much the fouler they are in the truth and reality of their complexion, by so much the fairer they are in their own thoughts and conceits.”³²² To Horton, in the Ethiopians’ arrogance and ignorance, they presume their blackness to be beautiful, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Thus, black-skinned people become symbolic of the “most ugly and deformed creatures” in sin because of their natural ugliness and deformity in the flesh. Horton directly states this, writing first about sin that “this defilement and deformity” is “natural...as the sinner does contract from his very birth.” And then he makes clear this correlates the same way as “the blackness of the Ethiopian, and...the spots of the Leopard...are both of them natural to each. Horton explains:

The Ethiopian, he is black from the womb, and the Leopard, he is spotted from the birth; *what ever deformity there is in either of them, it is rooted in their very nature it self.* Why thus now it is likewise with sin, in the heart of a sinner: See it (for example) even in him, who is said to have been after Gods own heart, the Prophet David himself; yet he, for his nature was polluted, as we have his own acknowledgment for it in Psal.51.5. Behold, I

³²¹ Horton, 390.

³²² Horton, 391.

was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. And so St. Paul, another of the same temper, he puts himself there in the number, Ephes. 2.3. We are all by nature the children of wrath, even as others. As for those which are absolutely naught, it is taken for granted in them, Psal. 58.3. The wicked they are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. This is their condition. In a word, it is the condition of all. Whosoever has sin in them (as there is none but have) that their sin is natural to them. We are all Ethiopians by our birth, even the best that are. Our father an Amorite, and our mother an Hittite, as it is in Ezek. 16.2.³²³

Horton uses figurative *and* literal readings of Ethiopian ethnicity to stress the evil nature of original sin. That is, symbolically, black ethnicity is used to signify the sinful human condition. As a rhetorical strategy, it is designed to draw attention to the pernicious qualities of men and women. However, unlike the writer(s)/redactors of the Book of Jeremiah, for Horton, Ethiopians' skin and leopards' spots are not simply innocuous symbols highlighted for their natural proclivity towards intransigence. Black skin and spots are deformed and defiled by nature. And specifically, Ethiopian beauty is non-existent due to the foulness of the black complexion. Therefore, Horton is certainly not neutral with regard to blackness. He has taken the supposed neutrality of the scriptural metaphor and imposed definitive value upon it. Horton states once more, "the Inherence of sin; it is Natural, and such as the sinner does bring with him into the world, like the skin and spots of the Leopard and the Ethiopian." But he stresses that this natural state was caused by a fall from grace and that original sin was not God's original plan for humanity. Sinfulness is the postlapsarian condition of humanity. Horton states that this iniquity is a disease, and he goes on to explain the impact of its change:

³²³ Horton, 392. Emphasis added.

It is such as turns the sinner into a nature far inferiour to him, and worse than his own. It alters the condition of a man's Country, turns an Israelite into an Ethiopian; and it alters the frame of a man's Being; turns a man into a Leopard, that is indeed, into a very Beast...So that here now in this expression of the Ethiopian, there seems to be a secret gird, and exprobration, and upbraiding of this people, who had so far debased themselves by their miscarriages, as that they had now lost the very name of the Country whereunto they did belong...Thus does sin alter a mans Country, makes an *Israelite* an Ethiopian, and causes a degeneracy in him...Thus does sin even alter a man's nature: And so ye have also the strangeness and monstrosity of it; it degenerates, and debases, and puts the sinner far below himself and makes him an Ethiopian and a Leopard.³²⁴

Here, Horton stresses the degeneracy of original sin in terms of ethnicity or nationality. The nature of humanity has changed. But the symbols that are used to illustrate this transformation appear more than rhetorical illusion. Although he states that there is "in this *expression* of the Ethiopian" suggesting figurative language, and thus goes on to suggesting a castigated people, punished for their wrongs, one is nevertheless led to question the route of the devaluation from Israelite to Ethiopian. Why does such a hierarchy exist, even metaphorically? Thus, Horton's figurative language is ambivalent about the implications that its meaning has for early modern blacks. This ethnic classification scheme prioritizing Israelites over Ethiopians reflects contemporary Renaissance binaries, which structure whiteness over blackness. Further, it demonstrates an evolution in the view of symbolic blackness as evil based on the biblical exegesis of Jer. 13:23.

³²⁴ Horton, 392-93.

Conclusion

Lord I an Ethiopian was
fall'n, and born in sin;
Till thou (in pity) by did pass
and love, so didst begin.³²⁵

And so begins the hymn “The Spouses beauty in Christs sight,” written by John Reeve, co-founder of the seventeenth-century apocalyptic sect the Muggletonians. As believers gathered to sing this song of faith, both during and after the lifetimes of the two founders and witnesses Reeve and Lodowicke Muggleton, they affirmed a creedal belief in an interior human evil.³²⁶ Symbolically, this inner malevolence was vocalized as Ethiopian identity. Despite the stark theological differences between this sect and the established Church as well other nonconformist religious movements, similarities existed in thought among varying groups regarding the depravity of the human soul *and* its rhetorical representation as Ethiopian or Blackamoor ethnicity in religious expression. Thus another hymn composed by the Anglican minister John Mason, “A Song of Praise for Holy Baptism,” includes the words—‘Lord, What is Man, that Lump of Sin/Made up of Earth and Hell...a Leper from the Womb/ An Ethiopian born.’³²⁷ Many late-seventeenth-century English Christians claimed to be Ethiopians in nature, not unfortunately, in gestures of cultural exchange, but symbolic affirmations of human depravity.

Black ethnic images in early modern English religious texts symbolize sin and evil in human nature, from the depraved constitution of body and soul to the acquired evil

³²⁵ John Reeve, *Hymnes and spiritual songs* (1682), 167.

³²⁶ William Lamont, ‘Reeve, John (1608-1658)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/23297>, accessed 6 May 2013] John Reeve (1608–1658): doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/23297

³²⁷ John Mason, *Spiritual songs, or, Songs of praise to Almighty God* (1699), 29.

habits of ordinary sinners. Expressive word play graphically depicts not only black skin color, but also Blackamoor and Ethiopian terms as metaphors for the intransigence of immorality and demonic forces against divine redemptive power. Moreover, employment of the scriptural tropes Jer. 13:23 and the classical proverb *Aethiopem lavare* contribute to the substantiation of blackness and black skin color as loathsome beyond the rhetoric used to represent the universal human condition. In this way, these divines contributed to contemporary mainstream Renaissance society already at work formally subverting blackness to whiteness. Importantly, some divines expressly disavow negative or prejudiced associations towards black Africans based on literary convention. For example, Richard Baxter argues that contrary to contemporary idiom, the color of the blackamore is not his fault, nor is it the source of divine opprobrium.³²⁸ He writes,

I know you wrote not against Me, but against my Errors, reall or supposed. And truly, though I would not be shamelesse or impenitent, nor go so far as Seneca, to say we should not object a common fault to singular persons...*no more then to reproach a Blackmore with his colour*; yet I see so much by the most Learned and Judicious, to assure me that humanum est errare, and that we know but in part, that I take it for no more dishonour, to have the world know that I erre, then for them to know that I am one of their Brethren, a son of Adam, and not yet arrived at that blessed state where that which is childish shall cease, and all that is imperfect shall be done away.³²⁹

Baxter, who readily incorporates Blackamoor and Ethiopian euphemisms into his sermons and religious writings—expressions, which invariably signify black skin color as evil, makes it a point to distance himself from the actual condemning of Africans on this basis. In a similar vein, Anthony Burgess admits that “the Ethiopians, though Christians, yet worshipping the Virgin Mary, paint her like a Blackmore, because they are black.” But unlike other divines who express or imply revulsion at this cultural difference, he

³²⁸ Richard Baxter, *Rich. Baxters apology against the modest exceptions of Mr. T. Blake* (1654), 1-2.

³²⁹ Baxter, 1-2.

confesses that English Christians often “deceive our selves about God, about sin, about godliness, our own souls.”³³⁰

Despite the careful disclaimers of a few and regardless that the overall meaning of the language of blackness is that of universal malediction, black people understood as symbolic representatives of sinful imprecation was a powerful force in the minds of early modern English audiences. Indubitably the influence of religious rhetoric would have a powerful impact on perceptions and treatment of blacks in the seventeenth century. Regardless of the universal language of original sin, the metaphor of black ethnicity, as in Bishop John Hacket’s words from 1675, “We are all black before God like the Children of an Ethiopian,” stigmatizes the African.³³¹ And, such religious language indirectly provides theological justification for societal inequities and oppression.

³³⁰ Anthony Burgess, *A Treatise of Original Sin* (1658), 217.

³³¹ John Hacket, *A century of sermons upon several remarkable subjects* (1675), 904.

CHAPTER III

ENGLISH BLACKAMOORS, THE BLACK BRIDE OF *SONG OF SONGS*, AND JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH ALONE

The 1604³³² Hampton Court Conference was convened as a result of fervent petitions³³³ calling for the redress of various concerns of the Puritans, including the cause of further reformation in the Church of England. On day three, King James I³³⁴ famously complained that the marginal notes of the Geneva Bible (1560) were “partial, untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of dangerous and trayterous conceites.”³³⁵ In other words, he felt they threatened what he deemed to be divinely

³³² At the time of the Hampton Court Conference, England was still under the Julian calendar, and recognized March 25 as the beginning of the new year. The Gregorian calendar, promulgated in 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII, subtracted thirteen days from the month of October to correct for errors in the Julian calendar, and mandated that the new year begin on January 1. It was not until 1752 that Great Britain and its colonies shifted to the Gregorian calendar.

³³³ This was the Millenary Petition, the first, and most influential, of several petitions presented to the king by Puritan clergyman. It was called “the Millenary Petition” because “we, to the number of more than a thousand, of your Majesty’s subjects and ministers, all groaning as under a common burden of human rites and ceremonies, do with one joint consent humble ourselves at your Majesty’s feet to be eased and relieved in this behalf.” Thus, it had over a thousand signatories. It begins with a preface reading: “The humble Petition of the Ministers of the Church of England desiring reformation of certain ceremonies and abuses of the Church.” The moderate demands of the Puritans were subsumed under four heads: (1) In the Church Service, (2) Concerning Church ministers, (3) For Church livings and maintenance, (4) For Church Discipline. This was followed by the mention of a conference: “These, with such other abuses yet remaining, and practised in the Church of England, we are able to show not to be agreeable to the Scriptures, if it shall please your Highness farther to hear us, or more at large by writing to be informed, or by conference among the learned to be resolved.” James of course eventually called the Hampton Court Conference in reaction to the petition.

³³⁴ James ultimately ignored the Puritan calls for reform except for a new translation of the bible—The Authorized Version of 1611.

³³⁵ Quoted in Elizabeth Clarke, *Politics, Religion, and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan), 106-107. [Hereafter cited as Clarke, *Politics*.] On studies on the Geneva Bible see John D. Alexander, “The Geneva Version of the English Bible,” (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1956); Hardin Craig Jr., “The Geneva Bible as a Political Document,” *Pacific Historical Review* 7 (1938): 40-49; Charles Eason, *The Genevan Bible* (Dublin, 1937); Basil Hall, *The Geneva Version of the English Bible* (London, 1957); Stanley Morison, *The Geneva Bible* (London, 1966); Lewis Lupton, *A History of the Geneva Bible* (London: The Fauconberg Press, 1966). See also Bruce M. Metzger, “The Geneva Bible of 1560, *Theology Today* 17 (1960) and idem, “The Influence of Codex Bezae upon the

ordained monarchical power.³³⁶ The Geneva Bible (GB) annotations were revolutionary, exhibiting the Reformation's call to *sola Scriptura* by making the text come alive through vivid commentary and interpretation. The scripture was translated by English Protestant exiles. They were ensconced safely in Geneva from Queen Mary's reign of horrors during the mid to late 1550s. John Calvin reviewed the text himself. Some passages were glossed to challenge unquestioned obedience to, for example, evil kings.³³⁷ James, a firm proponent of "the divine right of kings," was highly opposed to any form of republican ecclesiology. An episcopal system provided the right kind of bureaucratic chain of command that would support a monarchy, and thus the king's mantra "No bishop, no king!" encapsulated his view on the subject.

Despite his rigid position on church government, James, due in part to his Scottish Presbyterian upbringing, remained committed to upholding and even defending Calvinist theology. Thus ironically, he presumably would not have found fault with the GB commentary of *Song of Songs* 1:4.³³⁸ The scriptural text reads, "*I am blacke, O daughters*

Geneva Bible of 1560," *New Testament Studies* 8, no. 1 (1961): 72-77; Ira Jay Martin III, "The Geneva Bible," *Andover Newton Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (1961); Contra Basil Hall, "The Genevan Version of the English Bible: Its Aims and Achievements," in *The Bible, the Reformation and the Church*, W. P. Stephens, ed., (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 124-49; Daniell, *The Bible in English*, 305-309. For more extensive studies on Calvinism in the notes of the Geneva Bible see Dan G. Danner, "The Contribution of the Geneva Bible of 1560 to the English Protestant Tradition," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 12, no. 3 (1981); Charles C. Ryrie, "Calvinistic Emphasis in the Geneva and Bishops' Bibles," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 122, no. 485 (1965): 23-30; and Alister McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, a Language, and a Culture* (New York: Anchor, 2001).

³³⁶ James's own distinct views on the subject are expressed in his own published writings. Cf. James I, King of England, *The true lawe of free monarchies: or The reciproock and mutuall dutie betwixt a free king, and his naturall subiectes* (Edinburgh, 1598); idem, *Basiliakon Doron: Devided into three books* (Edinburgh, 1599).

³³⁷ A few of those texts include Dan. 6:22; Dan. 11:36; Exodus 1:19; 2 Chronicles 15:15-17; and Psalm 105:15. King James mentioned two passages (Exodus 1:19 and 2 Chronicles 15:16) where he found the notes to be offensive.

³³⁸ Authorized Version of 1611 is 1.5.

of Jerusalem, but comely, as the tentes of Kedar, and as the curtaines of Salomon.” And the GB gloss for “blacke” in 1:4 is, “The Church confeseth her spots and sinne, but hath confidence in the favor of Christ.”³³⁹ Here, blackness is interpreted as sin. Even the annotation for “*Kedar*” also in 1:4, who is described as “Ishmael’s sonne, of whom came the Arabians that dwell in tents,” signifies darkness. Thus, the Songs’ theme regarding the bride’s black skin color is transposed into the problem of the Church’s battle against evil. Moreover, the bride’s voice in 1:5, “*Regarde me not because I am black, for the sunne hath looked upon me*” is annotated in the notes as: “The corruption of nature, through sinne, and afflictions.”³⁴⁰ Here, the bride’s color is allegorized as symbolizing individual human sin. Blackness is interpreted as the symbol of personal and collective malevolence.

The theological remedy for sin is further explained in the GB commentary. In fact, one of the unique features of the GB is an opening summary of each book of the Bible. For the *Song of Songs*, it partially reads,

here is declared the singular love of the bridegroom toward the bride, and his great and excellent benefits *wherewith he doeth enrich her of pure bounty and grace without any of her deservings*. Also the earnest affection of the Church which is inflamed with the love of Christ, desiring to be more and more joined to him in love, and not to be forsaken for any spot or blemish that is in her.³⁴¹

The bride does not “deserve” the enrichment of “pure bounty” given by the bridegroom; yet it is given anyway. Justification is by faith alone, the gift of God’s grace alone through Christ alone. Throughout the GB commentary on the *Song of Songs*, there is indeed a stress on Protestant doctrine. For example, 5:5, which reads, “*I rose up to open*

³³⁹ *The Bible translated according to the Ebrew and Greeke, and conferred with the best translations in diuers languages*, (1598), 256.

³⁴⁰ *Geneva Bible*, 256.

³⁴¹ *Geneva Bible*, 256. Emphasis added.

to my well beloved, and mine hands did drop down myrrh, and my fingers pure myrrh upon the handles of the bar,” is annotated—“The spouse which should be anointed of Christ, shall not finde him, if she thinke to anoint him of her good workes.”³⁴²

Redemption comes not through the merit or deeds of the sinner, but through the grace of Christ, attainable through faith. In short, the *Song of Songs* commentary of the Geneva Bible establishes a relationship between the Protestant doctrine of justification of faith alone and the black skin color of the bride in 1:4-5.

Reflection on the GB’s use of Protestant doctrine in the marginal notes of the *Song of Songs* is relevant in this chapter for several reasons. First, many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English divines also use justification by faith alone to interpret the passage. Moreover, like the GB biblical annotation, they de-emphasize the bride’s actual black skin color in the text by stressing figurative blackness in order to symbolize sin. However, as the following analysis demonstrates, another group of seventeenth-century English divines treat the black skin color of the bride in the *Song of Songs* differently. Unlike the commentators who reflect the GB annotations in 1:4-5, these divines interpret the bride’s blackness by specifically symbolizing Ethiopian or Blackamoor identity. Instead of abstract or figurative blackness used as a symbol of the bride’s color to represent sin, the Ethiopian or Blackamoor “race” becomes a metaphor for evil. These Blackamoor tropes are also used in the signification of Christ’s redemption of human sinners on commentary on the *Song of Songs* and other scriptural texts. Tropes include references to Jer. 13:23 and include the classical saying, *Aethiopem lavare*, ‘to wash the Ethiopian.’ The declarative phrase, “You can’t wash a Blackamore white,” constructed from the classical reference *Aethiopem lavare*, is frequently incorporated to stress the

³⁴² *Geneva Bible*, 257.

inability of human effort to effect salvation alone or even in cooperation with God, and thus, justification by faith alone. Thus, the Protestant doctrines of *sole fide* and *sole gratia* are depicted in the use of racial tropes throughout various early modern English biblical commentaries.

An example of using black ethnicity as a symbol for sin and salvation as commentary on the *Song of Songs* is prefigured in the writings of the third-century Christian theologian Origen. The black bride is interpreted as being Ethiopian in ethnicity in the *Commentary on the Song of the Songs* and *Homilies on the Songs*. The ‘Ethiopian’ is not only the symbol of the sinful human, but also represents the Gentile believer included in Christ’s kingdom. With his conception of ‘Ethiopian beauty,’ a sinner who while black skinned is thus considered beautiful and hence righteous in God’s sight, Origen prefigures Martin Luther’s notion of *simul iustus et peccator* in the Protestant doctrine of justification.³⁴³ For Origen, the Ethiopian race is a metaphor for redeemed sinners because he uses the analogy of the blackness of the skin to symbolize the ongoing state of sin despite the concurrent beauty of redemption. The bride is simultaneously black and beautiful, sinful and righteous. Moreover, because justification is inextricably united to sanctification, Origen also conceptualizes the blackness of the bride gradually fading as she is slowly transformed into righteousness. Indeed, according to the text itself, the bride becomes a lighter shade of black than before, which indicates to Origen that upon her acceptance by the bridegroom, she begins to change to a “better” hue (although she never fully becomes white in this life). Early modern English divines comment on the black bride similarly in this manner, often alternating between the terms

³⁴³ Cf. Thomas P. Scheck. *Origen and the History of Justification: The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

Blackamoor and Ethiopian to stress that God can do the impossible, even (figuratively) correcting black racial identity as an analogy of redeeming the sinful soul.

This chapter sets out to explore blackness and justification in early modern English religious texts. Specifically, it compares references to the black bride in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English commentaries on the *Song of Songs*. As mentioned, some divines read the bride's black color as figurative blackness, which symbolizes sin, evil, and affliction. Others interpret the bride's skin color as indicative specifically of Ethiopian or Blackamoor "race" or national identity, which is in turn used to signify humanity's sinful nature. Both abstract blackness and Ethiopian or Blackamoor identity are used in religious commentaries on the *Songs* to demonstrate justification by faith alone. Second, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English puritans in particular incorporate abstract images of blackness in the *Song of Songs* in order to signify sin. These images of blackness therefore also reflect unconditional election, since the human incapacity of the will to effect salvation is overshadowed by God's sovereign power in justification. Third, in addition to analyzing references to the black bride in the *Songs*, this chapter also evaluates the trope "Can a Blackamoor Change His Skin," based on Jer. 13:23 as well as the classical euphemism *Aethiopem Lavare*, 'to wash an Ethiopian.' These sayings, in addition to representing human sin, also highlight impossibilities, and are used by many early modern English religious writers to emphasize the Protestant belief in humanity's inability to redeem the soul. Black skin color therefore becomes not only a symbol of total depravity but also of the limited atonement. Finally, in their use of racial tropes to signify sin in justification by faith alone in their analysis of other

scripture, many early modern English Calvinist writers articulate their opposition to the seventeenth-century rise of Arminian believers' emphasis on human agency in salvation.

The Emergence of Justification by Faith Alone

Before embarking on an analysis of early modern English divines' use of Ethiopian and Blackamoor images in their conceptualization of the black bride of Christ in descriptions of the doctrine of justification, it will be helpful to reflect briefly on a Protestant understanding of justification itself with a focus on the theologies of Martin Luther and John Calvin. The Pauline scriptural texts on justification as well as Augustine's theology of grace will elucidate this presentation of mainline Reformation thought. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians clearly lay out the basic understanding of the sinner's position vis-à-vis a just and righteous God. According to Rom. 3:23, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." For, "in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners" (Gal. 2:17). Hence, "There is no one who is righteous, not even one" (Rom. 3:10). Righteousness is the key to understanding the concept of justification. Indeed, righteousness is particularly elusive for human beings, because of their inability to obey the requirements of the law. In fact, any benefit from the law "comes [with] the knowledge of sin" at best and condemnation at worst (Rom. 3:20). It is at this point that Paul makes clear that "through faith in Jesus Christ" sinners "are now justified by his grace as a gift" (Rom. 3:22, 24). The gratuitous giving of God is emphasized in justification—"not by the works of the law" (Gal. 2:16). Moreover, God actively justifies due to the "sacrifice of atonement by [Christ's] blood" (Rom. 3:25). How is this possible? Jesus Christ, "who was descended from David

according to the flesh...was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:3-4). Justification, a legal declaration of divine acceptance, is the method by which God establishes a relationship with sinners through the divine/human mediator, Jesus Christ. In fact, God uses the righteousness of Christ (who was able to fulfill the requirements of the Law of Moses) in the stead of sinners, so that this very righteousness “will be reckoned to us who believe in him...who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification” (Rom. 4:24-25). This is a reversal of the condition, which was passed down from Adam. Hence Paul states, “just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one’s man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all” (Rom. 5:18). As we shall see, Protestant thinkers appropriate and expand the Pauline concept of imputed righteousness in a reformed understanding of justification by faith alone.

In response to the medieval philosophical tenet *facere quod in se est*, Martin Luther revitalized the Augustinian concept of the incapacity of the will, burdened by the effects of sin (ideas appropriated by late medieval systems including the *schola Augustiniana moderna*). Augustine argues that humans need God’s grace for salvation because free will can only function by sinning; it is impossible for the will *not* to sin. Therefore, human works cannot earn redemption. Instead, justification is established by divine, not human, initiative. Augustine writes, “we gather the proof that God’s grace is not given according to our merits.”³⁴⁴ Luther borrows Augustine’s understanding of the “righteousness of God,” which was crucial to the reformer’s personal development as well as his intellectual conceptualization of justification. Through righteousness God justifies unrighteous believers, as opposed to judging them on the basis of their ability to

³⁴⁴ Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, (Waxkeep Publishing, 2012), 5:449.

merit redemption. Previously, as a follower of the *via moderna*, Luther had operated under the notions of congruent merit—putting forth one’s humble, active effort at faith—and God rewarding that faith with justifying grace. But Luther came to deny that humanity was even capable of putting forth any effort towards the righteousness of God, and instead began to argue that believers remain completely passive in contrast to God, who, as sole mover, actively justifies. This is the basic principle of justification by faith alone, or, as Martin Luther called it, *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae*- the article on which the church stands or falls.³⁴⁵

The goodness of God lies in His willingness to completely forgive sinners, despite their sins and failures to obey the commandments of the law. In fact, it is this juxtaposition between law and gospel that was crucial for Luther’s demonstration of the righteousness of God as the

grace to forgive sinners in spite of the requirements of justice. The Englishman John Trapp portrays the reality of human sin and the demanding judgment of the law:

Reflect, and see, your own miserable condition, by reason of sin imputed to you, sin inherent in you, and sin issuing from you: together with the deserved punishment, all torments here, and tortures hereafter, which are but the just hire of the least sin. Your utter inability to free your selves either from sin, or punishment.³⁴⁶

Again, because “human beings have no intrinsic capacity that entitles them to a relationship with God,” they are not able to establish divine communion, without which they are hopelessly lost.³⁴⁷ But the good news of salvation is defined, according to

³⁴⁵ Quoted in Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 208. [Hereafter cited as McGrath, *Iustitia*.]

³⁴⁶ John Trapp, *A commentary or exposition upon the XII minor prophets*, (1654), 810-811.

³⁴⁷ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 68.

Calvin, as “the acceptance with which God receives us into his favour as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins.”³⁴⁸ The Swiss Reformer Huldrych Zwingli writes, “it follows that he who trusts in Christ receives remission of sin.”³⁴⁹ The English Reformer Thomas Cranmer defines justification as “the forgiveness of [one’s] sins and trespasses.”³⁵⁰ This is reflected further in scripture, “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; And by [Christ] all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39). In that God not only initiates this forgiveness, but also does so not on the basis of human merit, but solely by divine grace, Luther cries, “A wonderful, new definition of righteousness!”³⁵¹ This is the righteousness that is received as a gift. Thus, it “is not what the sinner achieves, but what the sinner receives.”³⁵² And what is received is the gift of faith, that is, “trust and confidence in God’s promise of acceptance in spite of being unacceptable.”³⁵³ And so John Preston states rhetorically, acknowledging the source from which faith comes, “O how doe I desire faith, would God I had but one drop of it.”³⁵⁴ Salvation comes through faith alone—*sole fide*, the gift of God. As Paul indicates in Rom. 3:26, God in Christ “justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” Phillip Melanchthon asks, “Why is it that justification is attributed to faith alone? I answer that since we are justified by the mercy

³⁴⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* J.T. McNeill, ed., F.L. Battles, trans., (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.11.2. [Hereafter cited as Calvin, *Inst.*]

³⁴⁹ Quoted in Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 122; Huldrych Zwingli, *Huldreich Zwinglis Werke*, vol. 1, M. Schuler and J. Schulthess, eds., (Zurich, 1828-42), 60. [Hereafter cited as Cameron, *European*.]

³⁵⁰ Quoted in Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical Theology 1640-1790 An Evaluation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 170; Thomas Cranmer, *Sermons or Homilies, Appointed to be Read in Churches* (London, 1595), 13. [Hereafter cited as Clifford, *Atonement*.]

³⁵¹ McGrath, *Iustitia*, 223.

³⁵² McGrath, 66.

³⁵³ McGrath, 66.

³⁵⁴ John Preston, *Foure godly and learned treatises* (1633), 84.

of God alone, and faith is clearly the recognition of that mercy.”³⁵⁵ Because faith is given in Christ, Luther avoids the scholastic conception that justification is given in response to one’s effort at faith (as in the human affirmation of belief in the existence of God). As Melancthon adds, “wherever you turn, whether to the works preceding justification, or to those which follow, there is no room for our merit. Therefore, justification must be a work of the mercy of God alone.”³⁵⁶ Forensically, the sinner is declared righteous by God through the work of Christ. Therefore, because the sinner’s meritorious standing before God is not the issue, the focus turns towards the grace of God alone—*sola gratia*. Paul states, “It is God who justifies” (Rom. 8:33). Luther writes, “we are justified, but by grace.”³⁵⁷ As briefly mentioned, God initiates the bond with the elect. Luther indicates, “we do not depend on our own strength, conscience, experience, person, or works, but depend on that which is outside ourselves, that is, on the promise and truth of God.”³⁵⁸ Thus, believing sinners are imputed with the alien righteousness of Christ, received passively through faith, the gift of God’s grace, which justifies.

One significant distinction between the thought of Augustine and Luther is that the former assumed that in the act of justification, the status and nature of the soul changed at the same time. That is, a person was declared righteous while becoming inwardly righteous as well. Augustine states, “it is necessary for a man that he should be ...justified when unrighteous by the grace of God—that is, *changed* from unholiness to

³⁵⁵ Cameron, *European*, 122; see also Phillip Melancthon, in *Melancthons Werke in Auswahl*, R. Stupperich, ed., (Gutersloh, 1951) II. I. 107-9.

³⁵⁶ Cameron, 122.

³⁵⁷ Cameron, 123; see also Martin Luther, *M. Luther Werke: Kristische Gesamtausgabe*, viii. (Weimar, 1883-1948), 92-3.

³⁵⁸ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, J. Pelikan and H.T. Lehmann, eds., (Philadelphia and St. Louis, 1955), 26:386-7.

righteousness—when he is requited with good for his evil.”³⁵⁹ Thus, in Augustine’s thought, there is an inward transformation that takes place at the moment one is justified, an impartation of righteousness, an intrinsic change which is part of the renewal process in which a person is not only righteous in the sight of God, but actually becomes so. In contrast, Luther’s understanding of justification was forensic and external, at least in the beginning. Luther writes, “if you take mercy away from the godly, they are sinners, and really have sin, but it is not imputed to them because they believe and live under the reign of mercy.”³⁶⁰ Thus, the sin of sinners actually remains after justification, but God does not credit that sin to them because of grace. Thus, as Luther states, the justified remains “a sinner in fact, but a righteous man by the sure imputation and promise of God that He will continue to deliver him from sin until He has completely cured him. And thus he is entirely healthy in hope, but in fact he is still a sinner.”³⁶¹ The sinner’s status before God has changed although the nature of sin remains the same. Hence Luther’s phrase *simul iustus et peccator*- describes this condition- simultaneously righteous and sinful. Forensically, the justified is declared righteous but the sins remain. The difference from Augustine is evident in that this understanding “introduced a decisive break with the western theological tradition as a whole by insisting that, through their justification, humans are intrinsically sinful yet extrinsically righteous.”³⁶²

These ideas find fuller expression in the writings of John Calvin, who definitively affirms Luther’s conception of the forensic nature of justification. Initially expressed in Paul’s description of the “reckoning” of righteousness to those “who believe” in Rom.

³⁵⁹ Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, 5:449.

³⁶⁰ Luther, *LW*, 22:208.

³⁶¹ Luther, *LW*, 25:260.

³⁶² McGrath, *Iustitia*, 213.

4:24, the concept of imputation is also expressed in Rom. 4:5, which states, “to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.” Calvin makes clear his interpretation of justification by faith alone in the *Institutes*; and he devotes more space to this teaching than to any other doctrine. Like Luther, Calvin stresses that justifying grace is unmerited, that is, there is absolutely nothing the sinner can possibly do to earn salvation. This is because God requires perfect and absolute obedience to the law. Yet humanity, because of its brokenness due to original sin, cannot fulfill this requirement. Only Christ was perfectly able to fulfill the law, and therefore God accepts His righteousness in place of humanity. With the perfection of Jesus Christ attributed to the status of sinful humans, it is possible to achieve forensic righteousness in God’s sight. Justification is the declaration by God of forensic righteousness on the sinner. Calvin writes, “Justified by faith is he who, excluded from the righteousness of works, grasps the righteousness of Christ through faith and, clothed in it, appears in God’s sight not as a sinner but as righteous man.”³⁶³ Righteousness is gained through Christ’s obedience unto death on the cross (which paid the penalty for sin) as well as His merits, which covers the sins of believers. When a sinner is touched by God’s grace and comes to believe that Christ has died in substitution for his or her sins, thus granting the righteousness of God imputed unto them, then the believer has become justified. This is contrast to Augustine’s understanding of justification, which imparts righteousness into the believer at salvation, so that righteousness continues to “accompany him on his way, and he should lean upon it, lest he fall,”³⁶⁴ Calvin, like Luther, thus initially locates righteousness outside of the believer,

³⁶³ Calvin, *Inst.*, III.11.2.

³⁶⁴ Augustine, *On Grace and Free Will*, 5:449.

in Christ. Christ's righteousness is graciously declared to be that of the sinner's in the "acceptance" by which God acknowledges and regards sinners as redeemed. The righteousness of the just clearly arises not from her works or human nature, but through the righteousness of Christ, which is put upon the sinner. God then sees Christ covering the redeemed sinner and not the sinner herself who is forensically deemed right with God. Indeed, in justification, "Calvin understands that human beings are not made righteous, but are reckoned as righteous by faith."³⁶⁵ The verdict about the human is that she is innocent when she should have been guilty, because Christ stands in for the accused.

Calvin, like Luther, explains the process of imputation as taking place as union of the soul with Christ, a concept not fully developed in Augustine.³⁶⁶ This is a highly important point, because it is an element that some English divines incorporate in their symbolic depiction of the relationship between the black bride and the bridegroom in the *Song of Songs*, as we shall see later. Luther uses the marriage imagery of Paul in Eph. 5:31-32, who writes, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church." Depicting the process as kind of mutual exchange, Luther comments, "it follows that Christ and the soul become one body, so that they hold all things in common, whether for better or worse. This means that what Christ possesses belongs to the believing soul; and what the soul possesses, belongs to Christ."³⁶⁷ Hence Paul explains how the righteousness of Christ becomes imputed unto believers. As briefly

³⁶⁵ Paul Chulhong Kang, *Justification: The Imputation of Christ's Righteousness from Reformation Theology to the American Great Awakening and the Korean Revivals* (New York: Peter Lang), 51.

³⁶⁶ Kang, 35.

³⁶⁷ McGrath, *Iustitia*, 225.

noted above, this extrinsic process in justification is a beginning for Luther, signifying the hope of God's continual restoration of the sinner. But ultimate restoration is intrinsic—the goal of regeneration, an internal liberation from the debilitating effects of sin, not fully effective in this life. How does this happen if justification is understood as solely external and forensic? Transformation happens gradually beginning with justification. In fact, “Luther does not make the distinction between justification and sanctification associated with later Protestantism.”³⁶⁸ Human souls, once forensically justified by Christ, now “wait in hope for the consummation of their righteousness.”³⁶⁹ Unlike later thought which conceived of justification as an event and sanctification as a process, for Luther, justification was “all-embracing,” and included spiritual healing as well as growth.³⁷⁰ For Calvin, union with Christ takes place through ‘engrafting’ and also results in the “distinct but inseparable” aspects of justification and sanctification. Thus, “Calvin believes that Christ the Justifier cannot be separated from Christ the Sanctifier. For Calvin, a Christian who lives by faith after being reckoned as righteous by God will show the evidence of his sanctification.”³⁷¹ This is similar to Luther's thought, only more articulated. In Calvin's understanding “the process of salvation is a continuum of “justifying-sanctifying instants, in which the believer's deficiencies are constantly remedied by remission of sin and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit.”³⁷² Calvin himself writes, “[t]he Spirit cannot regulate without correcting, without reforming, without renewing.”³⁷³ Thus, both Luther and Calvin, unlike Lutheran and Reformed

³⁶⁸ McGrath, 227.

³⁶⁹ McGrath, 227.

³⁷⁰ McGrath, 233.

³⁷¹ Kang, *Justification*, 48.

³⁷² Clifford, *Atonement*, 175.

³⁷³ Calvin. *Inst.*, II.5.15.

orthodoxies (which decidedly separate justification into a forensic event and sanctification into an internal process) incorporate Augustine's understanding of justification as both event and process, but with a difference. Despite the Augustinian position of the union of the soul with Christ at justification by God's grace resulting also in the infusing of righteousness, Luther and Calvin distinguish their understanding of justification by the concept of alien righteousness, in which the believer is declared 'just' forensically, while retaining the concept of mystical union. This accompanies their understanding of imputation, in which the imputation of Adam's sin is replaced by the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

Whereas Augustine conceived justification accompanying an infusion of righteousness transforming the believer, for Luther and Calvin, the initial phase of justification is forensic in which the believer was declared righteous while the sins remained. Over time, there is evidence of gradual change in the life of the believer, who is never completely transformed in this life. Understanding this doctrine fundamentally will aid in interpreting the metaphorical uses of blackness that early modern English divines employ when teaching these concepts. If black skin color signifies the state of sin when justification occurs, that blackness remains due to the forensic nature of salvation. It is only later, as some degree of internal regeneration begins to occur, that the symbolism of lightening is portrayed. As discussed below, in many English divines' readings of the *Song of Songs*, the marriage metaphor becomes juxtaposed with the Pauline scriptural imagery of union. The sinful characteristics of the believer (blackness) and Christ's righteousness (whiteness) are transferred, first forensically in justification, and then gradually, but not completely, in sanctification, which produces good works.

This analysis of the *Song of Songs* is preceded by a general introduction to the scriptural text itself and its use in the early modern period.

The *Song of Songs* in the Christian Tradition

The *Song of Songs* is a book of poetry about love dating arguably from the fourth or third century B.C.E.³⁷⁴ The voices in the narrative are of a man and a woman, who, beginning with courtship, together experience betrothal, nuptials, and consummation. The relationship in the poem has often been interpreted as an analogy of the connection between God and Israel. Thus in the Judaic tradition, the *Song of Songs*' love rhetoric has been read with a focus on theological meaning that transcends the surface romance and eroticism. Broadly speaking, early Christian commentators appealed to this ancient tendency in Jewish exegesis. The text, designated by some as an epithalamion, wasf, or marriage lyric, was interpreted to symbolize spirituality and faith.³⁷⁵ For Christians, Christ and the Church symbolize the bond as well as Christ and the soul. This tradition of interpreting the *Song of Songs* is interwoven into the various dimensions of meaning that have been uncovered in the text.³⁷⁶ Indeed, creative writing invokes multiple levels of interpretation and this has formed the history of the tradition of the *Songs*' interpretation. As ancient scriptural exegesis applied two different layers of meaning to text—the literal and the spiritual sense—the poem was often literally read as a shepherd seeking out his love, while spiritually interpretations varied.³⁷⁷ Traditionally, beginning with the Church

³⁷⁴ Clarke, *Politics* 6.

³⁷⁵ Clarke, 6.

³⁷⁶ Russell J. DeSimone, *The Bride and the Bridegroom of the Fathers: An Anthology of Patristic Interpretations of the Song of Songs* (Roma: Istituto patristico Augustinianum, 2000), 13. [Hereafter cited as DeSimone, *The bride*.]

³⁷⁷ DeSimone, 14.

Fathers, the spiritual sense was emphasized in order to draw Christological meaning.

Thus, the Christian community has been in a continual faith dialogue with the story.³⁷⁸

Indeed, interpretations of the Church Fathers on the Songs influenced the development of doctrine. Many Fathers incorporated allegory in order to avoid scandal due to the sexual language in the text. A wealth of theology emerged on “the Trinity, Incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Christ, the Church, the motherhood and perpetual virginity of Mary, the sacramental life of Christians and the means to [the] Last End.”³⁷⁹ In fact, ancient interpreters embraced allegory because they were open to all aspects and possibilities of meaning. They believed that scripture was living, breathing, and speaking as the voice of God to the faithful. In addition to the broad theological currents of the Christian tradition, patristic writers also found within the text clues about individual, ascetic spirituality. For example, Tertullian likens the bride in the *Songs* to “voluntary eunuchs” and “virgin spouses of Christ” eschewing physical companionship for the benefit of prayerful closeness to the Divine.³⁸⁰ This parallels traditional readings of the bride in the *Songs* that have been applied to the individual soul and the community. Hence Cyprian compares the bride to the true Church, which alone can validly confer sacramental baptism. Indeed, salvation can only take place through the spouse of Christ, the Church.³⁸¹ Similarly, Clement of Alexandria compares the bride of the Songs to Mary, mother of Christ, as well as the Church, emblematic of pure virgin and yet a mother birthing believers. Hippolytus of Rome interpreted the bride of Christ as the communal Church as well as the individual soul in the first Christian *Commentary on the*

³⁷⁸ It was expanded into the allegorical, moral, and anagogical.

³⁷⁹ DeSimone, *The Bride*, 14.

³⁸⁰ Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem*, trans. E. Evans (Oxford, 1972), 307.

³⁸¹ DeSimone, *The Bride*, 28.

Song of Songs.³⁸² Hippolytus' presentation was considered the traditional, ecclesial interpretation until Origen's spiritual reading in his *Commentary on the Song of the Songs* and *Homilies on the Songs* became the standard patristic model.³⁸³ For Origen, the *Song of Songs*, unlike other books of the bible, is a drama, a story, in which "different characters are introduced and the whole structure of the narrative consists in their comings and goings among themselves."³⁸⁴ Thus while stressing the historicity of the narrative, he also emphasizes the "divine reality" that exists beyond the corporeal and visible.³⁸⁵ In this way Origen combines a historical feature with the figurative elements of meaning.³⁸⁶ Thus in the Prologue to his *Commentary*, Origen asserts that the text is a wedding song written in dramatic form by King Solomon. As author, Solomon writes "under the figure" of the voice of a bride who is about to marry the bridegroom, who is figured as Christ, also known as the Word of God. Origen's template for the *Songs* definitively allegorizes the book's sensuality into spiritual, contemplative meaning.³⁸⁷ In Origen's reading, the identity of the Church takes on deeper realization to include not just the ecclesial institution but what would later be known as the church invisible, or the pre-determined elect.³⁸⁸ The bride, the Church, is given significance because a typological interpretation is associated with her representation in the text while the literal or historical origins of the bride are also emphasized. Moreover, with regard to asceticism, Origen

³⁸² Hippolytus of Rome, *Beati Hippolyti Sermo, Interpretatio Cantici Canticorum*, trans. into Latin by G. Garitte, CSCO 264 (Louvain 1965), 23-53.

³⁸³ Rufinus translated the three books of Origen's *Commentary on the Song of Songs from Greek to Latin*; Jerome translated the two *Homilies* into Latin.

³⁸⁴ Origen, *The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies*, trans., R. P. Lawson, (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1957), 22. [Hereafter cited as Origen, *Song of Songs*.]

³⁸⁵ Origen, 41.

³⁸⁶ This directly challenges the so-called Origenist heresy, more of which is spoken of below.

³⁸⁷ See E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990). Origen wrote in Greek. Rufinus and Jerome respectively translated into Latin both the exegetical commentary and homily on the *Song of Songs*.

³⁸⁸ Based on Eph. 1:4.

incorporates mystical theology as a spiritual exercise in the progression of the soul to achieve greater heights of contemplation.³⁸⁹ The *Songs of Songs* symbolize metaphysical scales which are ascended by the soul in devotion and which are only overcome by the most devoted to the faith. Stress on the distinction between the visible body and the invisible soul is dialectical with the manner in which the letter of the text is transcended to apprehend the Spirit.

By the twelfth century, Bernard of Clairvaux extended this formula of the Song by concentrating on images that highlight the bond of marriage. This was in order to symbolize the mystical union of Christ with the individual soul.³⁹⁰ As a Cistercian monk, Bernard was a proponent of daily devotional practices that focused on the relationship with God. His belief was that spiritual identification with the bride in the Song enables the contemplative human soul to ‘marry’ God in a process of mystical prayer and devotion. This, however, potentially presents a problem, as the devotee, male or female, must adopt a stereotypically feminine weak and passive role in order to unite with God. Bernard himself addresses this issue by claiming that despite the soul’s innate femininity, itself seen as a negative condition, the problem is overcome through connection with the divine power. That is, although weak, the human becomes strong through the relationship with Christ. As long as the bond to God is strong, feminine weakness becomes divine strength. Designated as “*fortis femina*,” this characteristic is associated with powerful female figures such as “Sophia, the figure of wisdom [and] the Virgin Mary.”³⁹¹ The newfound virulence of the soul, (symbolized by the bride yoked in martial bliss to her

³⁸⁹ DeSimone, *The Bride*, 39.

³⁹⁰ Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 25. [Hereafter cited as Longfellow, *Women*.]

³⁹¹ Clarke, *Politics*, 6.

groom), arises from its initial experience of intimacy with Christ and the resulting yearning for renewed contact with the presence of God.

Yet, for some medieval women, the juxtaposition between the passive femininity of the bride with the strength arising from the power of God elicited concern for social gender issues.³⁹² Indeed, the bridal mysticism of the *Song of Songs* influenced spiritual leaders like Catherine of Siena, Bridget of Sweden, Hadjewich of Brabant, Mechtild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete. They not only sought to achieve spiritual transcendence with God in ways like contemplative devotion, but also to use that power to undercut patriarchal church authority, however subtly. Thus the spiritual equality achieved by union with God through devotion was used as leverage in the bargaining for increased gender roles within the institutional church. This achieved relatively disappointing results.³⁹³ Ironically, in early modern England, the image of the empowered female in the Song allowed men to appropriate the feminized role of the bride as a source of figurative and spiritual power. This did not lead directly to increased opportunities for women in English society. Unfortunately, the “mere availability of ways of identifying with the feminine may not in itself be empowering to women, and may at times act as part of the process of controlling women, who are encouraged to imagine their devotional life in stereotypically subordinate ways.”³⁹⁴ In this sense, the feminine image, even the concept of female virility, becomes a controlled literary trope whose sense of liberation transcends the practical lifestyles of everyday women. Regardless, for many seventeenth-century English laywomen, the Protestant revolution that resulted in

³⁹² Longfellow, *Women*, 26.

³⁹³ See Merry Wisener-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³⁹⁴ Longfellow, *Women*, 26.

biblical access allowed them to appropriate spirituality inspired in large part by the *Song of Songs*. This not only gave them unmediated communion with the empowering love of Christ, but also emboldened a significant number to write literature and commentaries based on the Song.³⁹⁵ These texts emphasize the bride's strength as arising from a response to the unconditional and insatiable love of God. Empowerment, initiated by Christ, comes from within. However, even in some of these cases, the Song's imagery becomes used as a model for evangelical teachings about earthly marriage. A number of female writers challenged this traditional view, arguing that based on the mutuality of love and desire between bride and bridegroom in the text, interactions between husband and wife should operate with "companionship and respect." But other contemporary writers, in contrast, use the text to maintain the defense of traditional marriage roles.³⁹⁶ These writers clearly perceive the institution of marriage as operating generally in terms of "inequality and obedience." Just as the mystical female, symbolized by the Church or the soul, is called to be submissive and subordinate to God, so too is the earthly wife expected to defer to her husband.

As evident from the example of Origen's casting of the literal and historical background of the text into spiritual realities, many Catholic writers traditionally were able to make use of explicit references of the Song in their interpretations of meaning. However, Protestant reformers consciously sought to corral the surface eroticism of the Song into spiritual meaning.³⁹⁷ Despite their general appeal to *sola Scriptura*, which

³⁹⁵ Clarke, *Politics*, 6. The 1543 Act for the Advancement of True Religion restricted private Bible-reading to noble women and men above the rank of yeoman.

³⁹⁶ Longfellow, *Women*, 19.

³⁹⁷ This is particularly evident in the devotional life of the post-Tridentine Church. Famously, for example, the mystic Teresa of Avila used the imagery of sexual union in the Songs to describe the piercing of her soul by the Holy Spirit. See Stephen Haliczar, *Between Exaltation and Infamy: Female Mystics in the*

advocated the plain, literal sense of scripture in textual exegesis, Protestant commentators refused to address the sexual imagery in the Song. Avoiding direct exegesis of the scripture, and appealing to allegorical interpretation, many come up with interesting readings.³⁹⁸ Martin Luther, for example, argues that the imagery in the *Song of Songs* reflects praise and thanksgiving to God for an organized and peaceful government.³⁹⁹ He interprets the text as a symbol for the ecclesiology represented by the church and magisterial system in the Electorate of Saxony.⁴⁰⁰ The significance of this perspective lies not only in Luther's unique political reading of the Song, but also in his use of allegorical reasoning. Normally his eschewing of metaphor or similitude required him to forego such a literary strategy. Elsewhere Luther writes assuredly of scripture, "Each passage has one clear, definite, and true sense of its own...An interpreter must as much as possible avoid allegory, that he may not wander into idle dreams."⁴⁰¹ Despite this seemingly ironclad rule with regard to biblical hermeneutic, the Song represents for Luther a unique instance in which the guideline to abstain from allegory in scriptural interpretation can be ignored. Similarly, Theodore Beza, who also typically disliked allegorical interpretation, calling it "hermeneutically unsound," reads the *Song of Songs* as an allegory of church history from the patristic fathers to the Reformation.⁴⁰² For Beza, the text symbolizes the meaning of the true church through the metaphor of the authentic bride of Christ, who is purely devoted to her bridegroom and lover. Conversely, the false

Golden Age of Spain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Catherine Medwick, *Teresa of Avila: The Progress of a Soul* (London: Duckworth, 2000).

³⁹⁸ George L. Scheper, "Reformation Attitudes Towards Allegory and the Song of Songs," *PMLA* 89 (1974), 558. [Hereafter cited as Scheper, "Reformation."]

³⁹⁹ Scheper, 557.

⁴⁰⁰ Clarke, *Politics*, 11.

⁴⁰¹ Scheper, "Reformation," 551.

⁴⁰² Tadataka Maruyama, *The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza: The Reform of the True Church* (Geneva, Switzerland: Librairie Droz, 1978), 150.

spouse, fallen into the errors of popery and idolatry, that is, Roman Catholicism, is easier to identify through her heretical beliefs and devotion.⁴⁰³ Thus through the use of allegory, Beza employs the Song to represent the so-called true church's historical tradition of salvation and ongoing quest for reform on the basis of doctrinal orthodoxy. Unlike Beza, who refused to acknowledge any literal reading of the text, John Calvin accepted literal as well as allegorical interpretations.⁴⁰⁴ Even though Calvin held that the text was indeed a love poem describing the physical intimacy between a man and woman, he also believed, borrowing freely from Bernard, that the significance of this imagery symbolized the divine/human union, initiated by God and Christ with the believer.⁴⁰⁵ This position was worth defending. One of Geneva's own rectors and scholars, Sebastian Castellio, rejected the allegorical interpretation entirely and harkened back to an ancient view of Theodore of Mopsuestia that the literal content of the Song is too lewd and therefore unworthy of the biblical canon. In reaction, Calvin hindered Castellio's ordination and had him banished from the city.⁴⁰⁶ Castellio is now regarded as the author of the first manifesto of religious toleration in the preface (dedicated to Edward VI, King of England) of a 1551 Latin translation of the Bible. But Calvin would not countenance attacks on the authority of Scripture.

Many seventeenth-century English Puritans would emulate Beza in reading the Song as a gloss on the true identity of the Reformed Church as opposed to the Catholic

⁴⁰³ For example, the Italian Antonio Brucioli's *A commentary upon the Canticle of Canticles* (London, 1598), translated into English by Thomas James, builds upon Beza's theme of anti-Catholicism and the true Church.

⁴⁰⁴ Clarke, *Politics*, 7. See Theodore de Beze, *Master Bezaes sermons upon the three chapters of the canticle of canticles* trans. John Harmar (Oxford, 1587), sig. ¶4r. John Calvin's unorthodox position on the literal interpretation of the Song of Songs influenced the English Puritan Edmund Spenser (e.g. *Amoretti and Epithalamion*, London, 1595 and *Prothalamion or A spousall verse*, London, 1596).

⁴⁰⁵ Tremper Longman, *Song of Songs: New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ., 2001), 39.

⁴⁰⁶ Longfellow, *Women*, 7.

Church. By taking firm hold of the ancient tradition of allegorical interpretation of the Song (which had ironically in the medieval period championed the Roman Catholic Church as the true bride of Christ), Protestant commentators created new vistas of meaning heralding Reformed thought as the historical birthright of the authentic church. This is because the Song had become the allegorical template for discerning “the true people of God.”⁴⁰⁷ Thus use of this book became highly ubiquitous and influential in seventeenth-century English sermons, commentaries, and poetry. Over five hundred commentaries, paraphrases, translations, and poems on the *Song of Songs* were published in the seventeenth century alone. Popular awareness of the *Song of Songs* reflected the traditional detachment from a literal or historical understanding in favor of a figurative perspective.⁴⁰⁸ Although the central motif of the text is the consummation of love between two persons, the relationship in the narrative was readily embraced as symbolizing the divine marriage between Christ and the Soul and/or the Church, a prominent view during this period.⁴⁰⁹ Indeed, allegorical readings of the text variously led to identifications of the speakers of the Song “as...Christ and all individual Christians, Christ and his bride the Church, Christ and the soul (always female) or even Christ and the ‘Christian man’.”⁴¹⁰ Theologically, as a figure for the individual soul, moderate or more zealous ‘godly’ (Puritan) writers interpreted the bride as representing the human state of total depravity, denoted metaphorically by the helplessness of femininity. Weakened by her lack of strength, the symbolic female always surrenders and is receptive to the will and power of her lover, her bridegroom, the Christ. However, the

⁴⁰⁷ Clarke, *Politics*, 10.

⁴⁰⁸ Clarke, 1.

⁴⁰⁹ See Ann W. Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990) for the medieval mystical marriage tradition that established this paradigm.

⁴¹⁰ Longfellow, *Women*, 2.

bride is also characterized by longing and desire for the lover/bridegroom. This the Puritans interpreted as a sign of election. Thus, early modern commentaries on the Song frequently use the adjective “love-sick” to describe the believer’s state of mind in relation to Christ.⁴¹¹ Moreover by insisting on what appears to be nuptial imagery in the text, the actual union of Christ and the soul symbolizes the doctrine of justification. Calvin’s description of the “mystical union,” which he likens also to the concept of “sacred wedlock,” is the “joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts” which “makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed.”⁴¹² Salvation takes place through the “engraft[ing] into [Christ’s] body,” or spiritual bonding of the believer with Christ as the grace of God “illumines us into faith by the power of his Spirit.”⁴¹³ Justifying faith therefore entails union with Christ.⁴¹⁴ The usefulness of the bridal image in the Song in the concentration on allegorical relationship between Christ and the church or Christ and the soul is evident in the poetry, for example, of the great John Donne who describes the bonding between Christ and soul as a purification,⁴¹⁵ as well as the satirist George Wither, who stresses the relationship between Christ and the Church.⁴¹⁶

Catholic and Protestant controversies of early modern England as well as other politico-religious movements also appropriated the “insider/outsider” theme of the Songs. Based on these readings, the text assumed a political identity for various elements in society, albeit ensconced within the spirituality of biblical exposition. Because a core

⁴¹¹ Longfellow, 12.

⁴¹² Calvin. *Inst.* III.11.10.

⁴¹³ Calvin, III.2.25.

⁴¹⁴ Dennis E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 85. [Hereafter cited as Tamburello, *Union*.]

⁴¹⁵ George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, eds., *The Sermons of John Donne*, vol. III (Berkeley, California: Univ. of California Press, 1953-62), 251.

⁴¹⁶ George Wither, *The hymnes and songs of the church* (London, 1623).

theme of the Song was understood, particularly among English puritans, to be about the true Church—that is, those who constituted God’s elect, the true people of God, it came to occupy a polemical place in sectarian controversies.⁴¹⁷ This can be seen in demonstrations of bible translations of the Song. The Bishops’ Bible, commissioned by Queen Elizabeth translates chapter 1:4 as “I am blacke...but yet fayre and well favored.” This can be interpreted “to express the paradox of Anglicanism, neither decorated like the Catholic church, nor plain, like the Protestant sects in Geneva.”⁴¹⁸ As we have seen, the Geneva Bible translation for the same passage is “I am black, O daughters of Jerusalem, but comely.” The smooth transition from black to “fair” in verse 15 is read as the Protestant conversion based on faith alone as opposed to Catholic teachings, which emphasize faith and works.⁴¹⁹ That is, through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, sinners are declared fair, or justified in spite of their blackness, or sinfulness. Thus, as a symbolic narrative about the true church, this translation of the text can represent the theological struggle against the Catholic Church.

Indeed, one can survey aspects of the history of the “revolutionary century,” or the English seventeenth century, through religious and political commentaries of the Song. Since the poem was regarded as representing the marriage between Christ and the church, the “true Bride of Christ” was considered to be the Church of England. As the century wore on, anti-Catholic nationalism eventually gave way to factionalism within church and state caused by the rise of Arminianism in the 1620s. The godly, those who came to embody a Puritan identity formed initially during the Elizabethan era, became

⁴¹⁷ Wither, 11.

⁴¹⁸ Sujata Iyengar, *Shades of Difference: Mythologies of Skin Color in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 44-45.

⁴¹⁹ Iyengar, 44.

even more defined by their opposition to the policies of William Laud during the reign of Charles I. Their Calvinist theology, which dominated biblical commentaries, formed the substance of their frustration regarding the rising tide of Arminian policy in the government. From the beginning, English Reformed thought had taken a kind of theological ownership of the Song, and by the 1630s, “the text was deeply implicated in a religious politics that was oppositional to Archbishop William Laud.”⁴²⁰ Further, anti-papal sentiment merged with anti-Laudian rhetoric. This fed the religious zeal contributing to the Civil War. In this setting, use of the rhetoric and interpretation of the *Song of Songs* became a tool against the Royalists. Spiritual metaphor, which was used as a code to protest Laudian policies while escaping censorship, employed mystical marriage tropes, in which union with Christ was stressed as the primary condition of the elect. For Puritan writers, the imagery of the mystical marriage allowed them to recast their vision of the true Church, symbolized by the bride in the text, “all the while damning other systems, Roman, Laudian or radical Protestant, as merely whorish impostors.”⁴²¹ On the other hand, officially, after the Restoration, the Song was used as a tool to “control...sectarianism and political subversion” in a Royalist revisionist effort to recast the theological reading of a text suspected of inspiring Puritans during the Civil War.⁴²² But when radical Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists were ejected from the Church of England in 1662 for refusing to abide by the Act of Uniformity, the Song continued to be a subversive text. Indeed, after the refusal to sign the oath of allegiance to the king, persecuted Independents, Presbyterians, and Baptists all rallied around the *Song of Songs* in a new-found sense of calling as God’s chosen, beleaguered elect—the true

⁴²⁰ Clarke, *Politics*, 76.

⁴²¹ Longfellow, *Women*, 3.

⁴²² Longfellow, 174.

church of Christ. In fact, many of those very Presbyterians and Independents who had convened during the Westminster Assembly at mid-century found themselves employing the text during the 1670s in opposition to the restored Anglican regime. Thus, “the struggle over the identity of the Church of England in the seventeenth century is a conflict over the meaning of the Song of Songs.”⁴²³

Even if just implicitly, some divines who tended, at least ostensibly, to ignore politico-religious controversy, also at times challenged allegorical reading. Instead, they focussed on the assumption that historically the Song was an actual epithalamion written and celebrated by King Solomon for a real queen—perhaps the Queen of Sheba or a princess of Egypt. In this sense, “the literal meaning of the Song of Songs had its own integrity,” and the question of the bride’s ethnicity comes into play.⁴²⁴ Not all divines of course, address this question, but the ones who do, combine a literal *and* spiritual technique in interpreting the theological significance of the bride’s identity and origins. As discussed below, English divines who focus on the bride’s blackness in the *Song of Songs* detour from the polemical place occupied by the text in the seventeenth-century wars of church identity. Instead, the bride’s ethnic identity becomes a focus for the theology of salvation. However, before studying early modern English methods of using blackness, it will be helpful to review Origen, who creates a complex theological and ethnic rubric on the Songs. This prefigures the technique taken by subsequent generations, including medieval exegete St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

⁴²³ Longfellow, 33.

⁴²⁴ Longfellow, 45.

Origen and Bernard on Blackness and the *Song of Songs*

The standard hermeneutical approach to the Song's description of the bride's black or dark skin is to allegorize or mystify it into abstract meaning. This is evident in Hippolytus' reading of *Song of Songs* 1:5 where the bride is reprimanded for "the blackness of her faults."⁴²⁵ Just as in the later gloss of the Geneva bible, Hippolytus interprets black color as a metaphor for sin. Origen's reading of 1:5 in his *Commentary* also incorporates this traditional interpretation, which downplays the issue of physical skin color or blackness by distancing the body from the soul. However, Origen also incorporates a literal and historical reading of blackness as well. In Book Two of the *Commentary* and in the *First Homily*, Origen configures the meaning of the dark or the black bride. In his association of the dark or black skin of the bride with Ethiopia, Origen draws comparisons with actual Ethiopian historical personages in scriptural texts—Moses' Ethiopian wife, Ebdimelech the Eunuch, and the Queen of Sheba. Thus he does not ignore a literal/historical reading. To the contrary, it is upon the basis of a literal and historical approach that he establishes an allegorical analysis. By referring to biblical "passages containing types foreshadowing this mystery," Origen constructs similar Ethiopian characteristics of the bride. The foreshadowed types are entrenched in historical references. For example, Origen's reference to the biblical account of the Queen of Sheba, detailed in 1 Kings 10:1-13 and 2 Chron. 9:1-12, and mentioned by Jesus Christ Himself in Matt. 12:42 and Luke 11:31, is associated with Josephus' historical chronicle of Sheba in *The Antiquities of the Jews*.⁴²⁶ Thus the Origenist heresy, which asserts that the allegorical approach negates historical readings of the text, is not

⁴²⁵ Longfellow, 33.

⁴²⁶ Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 8.165-75.

substantiated in Origen's actual approach to the dark or black bride.⁴²⁷ He writes in the *Commentary*, for example "this 'black and beautiful' woman is one and the same as the Ethiopian who is taken in marriage by Moses."⁴²⁸ In the *First Homily*, Origen goes on to write, "Moses weds an Ethiopian wife, because his Law has passed over to the Ethiopian woman of our Song."⁴²⁹ As a type, Moses' Ethiopian wife of Numbers 12:1-16 symbolizes the Church of the Gentiles entering into holy union with "the Word of God and Christ." Likewise, Ebedmelech the Ethiopian Eunuch of Jer. 38:7-13 "represents the people of the Gentiles."⁴³⁰ In the eunuch's loyal and obedient act of drawing Jeremiah the prophet from the pit, he foreshadows faith in the resurrection of Christ. And just like Moses' Ethiopian wife and Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, the Queen of Sheba is a figure of the Church of the Gentiles. The incorporation of Ethiopian historical figures into a typological reading of the bride in the *Song of Songs* signifies the extension of salvation to all humankind, indeed, "the races of the whole world."⁴³¹ Hence Origen stresses the Psalmist's refrain that *Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God* and quotes Zephaniah that *From the ends of the rivers of Ethiopia shall they bring offerings*.⁴³² This is the inclusive message of the gospel, to which "the Aaron of the Jewish priesthood murmur[s]" and "the Mary of their synagogue murmur[s] too."⁴³³ As Origen dramatizes, God even punishes Aaron and Mary for their rebellion against the kingdom's greater plan of human diversity and inclusiveness, when Moses marries the 'Ethiopian.' Therefore, Origen constructs a two-dimensional paradigm that includes a literal/historical

⁴²⁷ Cf. Rowan Williams, "Origen: Between Orthodoxy and Heresy", in W. A. Bienert and U. Kuhneweg, eds., *Origeniana Septima*, 1999, 3-14.

⁴²⁸ Origen, *Song of Songs* 98.

⁴²⁹ Origen, 277.

⁴³⁰ Origen, 104.

⁴³¹ Origen, 98-99.

⁴³² Ps. 68:31; Zeph. 3:10.

⁴³³ Origen, *Song of Songs*, 277.

background of Ethiopian identity to the black bride and a blackness metaphor which transcends race in order to signify darkness as evil. From this template, Origen will not only comprise his notion of “Ethiopian beauty”, which is a blending of the literal/historical and figurative notions, but also prefigure subsequent generations, including Bernard of Clairvaux and early modern English religious writers.

Spiritually, as the second part of his paradigm, Origen de-emphasizes the significance of black skin color as a determiner of beauty relative to inner, natural worth created in the image of God. Thus Origen has the bride proclaim,

I am indeed, black, O daughters of Jerusalem, in that I cannot claim descent from famous men, neither have I received the enlightenment of Moses’ Law. But I have my own beauty, all the same. For in me too there is that primal thing, the Image of God wherein I was created.⁴³⁴

As in other ancient Christian commentaries, “the aspersion ‘black’ refers not to skin color” but to “inferior ancestry” and to lack of the “wisdom of the patriarchs.”⁴³⁵ In his hermeneutic, Origen incorporates a typically negative symbolism of blackness, which transcends physical color and is associated spiritually with sin. Thus figurative blackness is considered incompatible with those who have a noble lineage or moral truth. He writes of one “who has been darkened with exceeding great and many sins and, having been stained with the inky dye of wickedness, has been rendered black and dark.”⁴³⁶ Origen explicitly differentiates the ethnicity associated with the black or darkened skin of Ethiopians and “the blackness of the soul” which “is acquired not through birth” but through sin.⁴³⁷ Indeed, as Origen insists, the bride “is not speaking of bodily

⁴³⁴ Origen, 92.

⁴³⁵ Mark S.M. Scott, “Shades of Grace: Origen and Gregory of Nyssa’s Soteriological Exegesis of the ‘Black and Beautiful’ Bride in Song of Songs 1.5,” *Harvard Theological Review* 99:1 (2006): 68.

⁴³⁶ Scott, “Shades,” 103.

⁴³⁷ Scott, 107.

blackness.”⁴³⁸ In fact, the bride in the Songs “is black by reason of the sins,” but then miraculously “turns away from sin” only to gradually lose her blackness, indicating that she is not really physically black. This is evident in a textual study of 1:6 in comparison to the previous verse. Based on analysis, “she is...black, but fading. The first black of the LXX (Septuagint) is ‘melanina’...black or swart...the second is ‘memelanomene’—blackened. The first black of the Vulgate is ‘nigra;’ the second, ‘fusca’.”⁴³⁹ In other words, according to the text, the bride is getting lighter. Origen interprets this as meaning that eventually due to her continual repentance, prayers, and favor with God, “she will be made white and fair.”⁴⁴⁰ Thus, he argues that the bride will turn in color from black to white (in sanctification). Thus, Origen uses bodily color as a metaphor to indicate the spiritual state of the soul. There is a direct figurative correlation between the bride’s physical blackness and the state of sin in her soul as well as her gradual lightening and whitening in skin (as suggested in the text) and the growing righteousness and purity in her soul. Origen’s bride makes this abundantly clear, stating,

But when I shall stand upright before Him and shall be crooked in nothing...then my light and my splendor will be restored to me, and that blackness for which you now reproach me will be banished from me so completely, that I shall be accounted worthy to be called the light of the world.⁴⁴¹

Thus Origen’s understanding of blackness is figurative and does not actually reflect physical skin color. Any reference to physical blackness arises, as, “a matter of textual necessity rather than personal preference.”⁴⁴² The text of the *Song of the Songs* itself denigrates black complexions, an issue that must be addressed in exegesis. However,

⁴³⁸ Scott, 107.

⁴³⁹ Linda Van Norden, *The Black Feet of the Peacock: The Color concept “Black” from the Greeks Through the Renaissance* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), 47.

⁴⁴⁰ Van Norden, *Black Feet*, 107.

⁴⁴¹ Van Norden, 109.

⁴⁴² Scott, “Shades,” 65-83.

Origen immediately spiritualizes the problem. Although Origen maintains a negative conception of all notions of blackness, his soteriology is inclusive of all persons irrespective of color.

Origen's preoccupation with blackness as evil in his interpretation of the *Song of Songs* influenced medieval exegetes, including St. Bernard of Clairvaux, as we see in his Sermons 25 and 26 *On the Song of Songs*. Like Origen's work, Bernard's commentary responds to the textual issue of the bride's dark skin color by allegorizing her blackness. Of course, the scripture states she was darkened while caring for her brother's vineyards, and Bernard himself states that she was "discolored...by the sun's heat."⁴⁴³ But Bernard has the bride likening her color to "the tents of Kedar," which symbolize sin and evil, in contrast to the bright and beautiful "curtains of Solomon, which indicate purity."⁴⁴⁴ Thus dark or black skin is a spiritual "stigma" that must be endured while on the journey in pursuit of righteousness. Indeed, the issue is one of mystical "pilgrimage." Moreover, as a Cistercian monk, Bernard writes of the penitential labors and sufferings that the saints must endure, affecting their "outward appearance." Thus, those who work for the sake of the kingdom of Christ are externally "black" in affliction and suffering. This metaphorical blackness entails the experience of "hunger and thirst, cold and nakedness, the hardship of constant labor, countless beatings, often to the verge of death."⁴⁴⁵ Such was the plight of the Apostle Paul, who, despite his outward blackness, had a beautiful soul for "[t]he outward blemishes that we may discern in holy people...are not to be condemned because they play a part [in] the begetting of interior light, and so dispose the

⁴⁴³ Scott, 54.

⁴⁴⁴ Scott, 54.

⁴⁴⁵ Bernard de Clairvaux, *The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux Vol. III On the Song of Songs II*, trans. Kilian Walsh (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publ., 1976), 52.

soul for wisdom.”⁴⁴⁶ It is clear that Bernard is not referring to a black complexion or skin color, but to the abstract notion of blackness as affliction. And who was more afflicted than Christ? Bernard writes, “the bride...is not ashamed of this blackness, for her Bridegroom endured it before her, and what greater glory than to be made like to him?”⁴⁴⁷ As Isaiah graphically describes, Jesus Christ wore His blackness through oppression, beatings, and torture—“livid from blows, smeared with spittle, pale as death: surely then you must pronounce him black.”⁴⁴⁸ The saints are called to follow this example and through holy striving, to live “by frequent fastings and vigils” while in the dark “tent of Kedar,” the earthly body.⁴⁴⁹ Therefore, the Church of Christ appears black in “ignominies” and is yet beautiful, patterned after its founder, having “received from [Him] this blessed gift.”⁴⁵⁰ Therefore, blackness, as traditionally understood, is associated with sin and suffering. As Bernard indicates, the bride is black “because of the benighted life she formerly led under the power of the prince of this world.”⁴⁵¹ She is black—but Christ addresses her as beautiful. This apparent contradiction is resolved by the fact that “since she is invited to come, she has not yet arrived.” So “no one should think that the invitation was addressed to a blessed one who reigns without stain in heaven, it was addressed to the dark lady who was still toiling along the way.”⁴⁵² This suggests that she is esteemed righteous in Christ even while pursuing holiness. Bernard implies that she will gradually lose her dark skin, only to become completely white when she is glorified with Christ. Thus Bernard shares with Origen the traditional notion of blackness

⁴⁴⁶ Bernard, 54.

⁴⁴⁷ Bernard, 56.

⁴⁴⁸ Bernard, 56-57.

⁴⁴⁹ Bernard, 54, 56.

⁴⁵⁰ Bernard, 57.

⁴⁵¹ Bernard, 52.

⁴⁵² Bernard, 52.

symbolized as sin gradually becoming lighter with conversion. In fact, Bernard quotes 2 Cor. 3:18 to this effect: “with unveiled faces reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, they grow brighter and brighter as they are turned by the Spirit of the Lord into the image that they reflect.” Thus, ascending to the place of purity in Christ is also part and parcel of salvation. The process of becoming righteous takes place while still carrying sin, denoted figuratively by blackness. Bernard’s understanding of justification is slightly different from that of the reformers because of the lack of distinction he makes between justification and sanctification, since “Bernard...include[s] sanctification under the rubric of justification.”⁴⁵³ However, his emphasis, similar to Origen, on the transformation that takes place in a believer from blackness to whiteness is the outward manifestation of the move from sin to righteousness in the heart of the believer which takes place as a result of Christ’s healing power of salvation.

Origen and Ethiopian Beauty

Origen merges the literal/historical reading of ‘Ethiopian’ with the spiritual/figurative conception of blackness to create the concept of ‘Ethiopian beauty,’ thus prefiguring Luther’s conception of justification by faith alone, specifically *simul iustus et peccator*. It is in Origen’s metaphorical description of justification that the bride transcends figurative blackness and becomes ethnically black—specifically Ethiopian. As we have seen, Origen figuratively conceptualizes blackness as symbolizing sin and evil. Because blackness is indeed associated with evil, in his reflections on the text Origen goes on to wonder how Christ (through the voice of the bridegroom) could love the black bride in spite of her sins. Somehow, Christ is able to love her fairness even though she is

⁴⁵³ Tamburello, *Union*, 43.

black. Christ even calls her, in *Song of Songs* 1.8, “fairest among women.” But how can she become fair while at the same time she is black? Origen asks as much, wondering, “the question is, in what way is she black and how, if she lacks whiteness, is she fair?”⁴⁵⁴ By seeking to make sense of a God who could love the Church (symbolized by the bride) in spite of her black sins, Origen originates the concept of ‘Ethiopian beauty.’ He writes, “She...is dark indeed by reason of her former sins, but beautiful through faith and change of heart.”⁴⁵⁵ This faith and change of heart takes place through the salvific grace of Christ. Origen explains further,

We understand, then, why the Bride is black and beautiful at one and the same time...If you have repented, however, your soul will indeed be black because of your old sins, but your penitence will give it something of what I may call an Ethiopian beauty.⁴⁵⁶

Just as Luther argues in his concept *simul iustus et peccator* that through justification by faith alone the believer is simultaneously just while also sinner, so too Origen prefigures this concept. He demonstrates the state of a believer who is simultaneously sinful (symbolized by blackness) while accepted by Christ. Origen prefigures Luther’s understanding of justification by faith alone precisely because of the former’s understanding of black ethnicity. The black skin color symbolizes the sin that remains despite Christ’s acceptance. Jesus loves the bride even though she is black. Jesus sees the bride through the fairness of Christ’s own righteousness and forgiveness of her. Origen writes, “I am that Ethiopian. I am black indeed by reason of my lowly origin; but I am beautiful through penitence and faith...I have received the Word made flesh...and I have

⁴⁵⁴ Tamburello, 276.

⁴⁵⁵ Origen, *Song of Songs* 113.

⁴⁵⁶ Origen, 276-77.

been made fair.”⁴⁵⁷ The individual believer as well as “the Church that comes of the Gentiles” thus “calls herself black and yet beautiful.”⁴⁵⁸ Beauty is defined as that acceptance and love which comes from Christ. It is seemingly incompatible to be black and beautiful, because blackness, or sinfulness, is not commensurate with beauty. Yet, through the relationship with Christ, “the souls who become partakers of the Word of God and of His peace” although black, gradually become symbolically fair.⁴⁵⁹ Origen explains, “She is called black, however, because she has not yet been purged of every stain of sin, she has not yet been washed unto salvation; nevertheless she does not stay dark-hued, she is becoming white.”⁴⁶⁰ This clearly prefigures Luther who writes later about salvation, “if you take mercy away from the godly, they are sinners, and really have sin, but it is not imputed to them because they believe and live under the reign of mercy.”⁴⁶¹ Thus, the sin of believers actually remains after justification, but because of grace, God does not credit that sin to them. Therefore, according to Luther, the justified believer is “a sinner in fact, but a righteous man by the sure imputation and promise of God that He will continue to deliver him from sin until He has completely cured him. And thus he is entirely healthy in hope, but in fact he is still a sinner.”⁴⁶² This is how Origen’s black Ethiopian bride, already beautiful with the righteousness of Christ (because God deems her so), increasingly becomes more beautiful by symbolically turning white (through sanctification). The process of transformation occurs through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness on the believer, whose initial acceptance casts

⁴⁵⁷ Origen, 93.

⁴⁵⁸ Origen, 93.

⁴⁵⁹ Origen, 101.

⁴⁶⁰ Origen, 276.

⁴⁶¹ Luther, *LW*, 22: 208.

⁴⁶² Luther, 25: 260.

beauty on the darkened bride, and now continues to beautify her. Origen refers to believers at conversion “of whom it is said: As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”⁴⁶³ In this sense they are “chosen disciples” having “received” salvation and beauty. Now that they have been grasped by the love and righteousness of Christ, they are continually healed by God’s grace. Origen states, this is “her, who at the Canticle’s beginning was set down as black, it is sung at the end of the marriage-song: Who is this that cometh up, having been washed white?”⁴⁶⁴ In Origen’s universal conceptualization, all believers have Ethiopian, that is, black souls, which are being increasingly whitened by Christ’s healing grace. Again, the definition of Ethiopian is allegorized to apply to the Gentile church as well as the individual soul. Therefore, Christ’s church is figuratively Ethiopian, just as the individual believer in Christ is Ethiopian. Blackness is a spiritual condition that has nothing to do with physical skin color, but with sin. Therefore, all persons are Ethiopian sinners. Those who choose Christ are gradually transformed into being spiritually white. Because they are in transition from their sinful state to one of complete glorification or righteousness, Origen defines them as having ‘Ethiopian beauty.’ Still, Origen’s use of Ethiopian identity is problematic in designating this one group as symbolic of sin. As we shall see, some seventeenth-century English divines follow this precedent in using Ethiopian or Blackamoor identity in their identification of the bride to represent the sin that remains despite justification.

⁴⁶³ Luther, 100.

⁴⁶⁴ Luther, 276. The Septuagint translation of *Song of Songs* 8.5, “Who is she that cometh up having been made white?” The Vulgate translation of this verse does not include the word white; it reads: “Who is she who comes up from the desert, flowing with delights and leaning on her lover?” The Vulgate is closer to the Hebrew original. Apparently the translators of the Septuagint added the word white (signifying Septuagint) translation of the Hebrew Bible.

Blackness in English Commentaries on *Song of Songs*

Late-sixteenth-century English commentators on the *Song of Songs* generally respond to the bride's black or dark skin color in 1:5 by symbolizing blackness as sinful while distancing it from ethnicity. Theodore Beza states this clearly in his reading of the *Song of Songs*, explaining that the bride's complexion, which is "as black & as tanned, as...these Moores and Arabians" must be understood as "altogether allegorical...[since] ordinarily by the colour of black is vnderstoode euerie sad and vnpleasant thing."⁴⁶⁵ He therefore defines "natural foulness & blackness, which is indeed more then filthy & detestable" in the human soul, as an "uncleanness" that "was found at the beginning."⁴⁶⁶ Hence blackness is symbolic. Although in the text the bride describes her skin color as black, this is given figurative meaning to signify the sinfulness and evil of the soul and in the world. In England, use of figurative blackness as a symbol for sin in reflections on the *Song of Songs* features in the writings of a group of Elizabethan non-subscribing "godly" Puritans.⁴⁶⁷ Dudley Fenner was a leader of ardent Presbyterians in the town of Cranbrook in Kent. He refused to conform to the Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift's requirement of subscription to three articles encapsulating the position that nothing in the Book of Common Prayer was offensive to scripture.⁴⁶⁸ Fenner, in the person of the bride, uses symbolic blackness as an image of profanation affecting universal human nature. He

⁴⁶⁵ Theodore Beza, *Master Bezaes Sermons upon the Three First Chapters of the Canticles of Canticles*, trans. John Harmer (Oxford, 1587), 76. [Hereafter cited as Beza, *Master Bezaes Sermons*.]

⁴⁶⁶ Beza, 72.

⁴⁶⁷ See John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, "Introduction," *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1-15.

⁴⁶⁸ Patrick Collinson, 'Fenner, Dudley (c.1558–1587),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/9287, accessed 2 June 2013]

writes, “the renants of sinne...make me...blacke.”⁴⁶⁹ Fenner also alludes to the bride’s black skin color by figuratively interpreting it as reflective of her oppressions. He allows her to speak of “my afflictions, vvhich proceeding thence, scorch me and pearce me as the strong beams of God’s sunne, and burning heat of his chastisements.”⁴⁷⁰ Therefore, no reference to the bride’s ethnicity is indicated, but figuratively, her blackness is made to indicate sin and sufferings. Similarly, Thomas Wilcox, famous as a leading puritan nonconformist and author with John Field of the celebrated *Admonition to Parliament* calling for the removal of vestiges of popery in the reformed Elizabethan church, uses black symbolic language as well.⁴⁷¹ He writes that by blackness is understood “original sin...being kindled with wrath...sinne increasing and raging as it were.”⁴⁷² The evil operating in the soul is also part of the iniquity existing as Paul describes in Eph. 6:12 in “high places,” that is, the world. Wilcox notes that the malignancy symbolized by “blackenesse...came by some other meanes...thorow oppression and persecution.”⁴⁷³ Thus evil arises out of the soul but also comes externally to assault the soul with troubles as well. Metaphorically, it is black like the bride’s oppressions, but has nothing to do with her ethnicity. Another Puritan, George Gifford, who also suffered under the wrath of Archbishop Whitgift for not conforming in the 1580s, reproaches the bride in the Song. Incredulously, he states, “Thou art spotted and defiled with many sinnes and offences: thou are foule, thou art blacke, thou art deformed, how should the most holy and glorious

⁴⁶⁹ Dudley Fenner, *The Song of songs that is, the most excellent song which was Solomons* (Middleburgh, 1587), sig. B4r. [Hereafter cited as Fenner, *The Song of Songs*.]

⁴⁷⁰ Fenner, sig. B4r.

⁴⁷¹ Patrick Collinson, ‘Wilcox, Thomas (c.1549–1608),’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/29390>, accessed 2 June 2013]

⁴⁷² Thomas Wilcox, *An exposition vppon the Booke of the Canticles, otherwise called Schelomons Song* (1585), 15. [Hereafter cited as Wilcox, *An exposition vppon the Booke*.]

⁴⁷³ Wilcox, 15.

Lord Jesus delight in thee?”⁴⁷⁴ Thus Gifford questions, as did Origen before him, how the bridegroom could love a black bride. That is, how could Christ justify the sinful believer? Yet it is the depiction of figurative blackness, and not ethnicity, in commentaries on the Song, which symbolizes the agonies and persecutions of the individual believer as well as the suffering Church. Gifford adds that the bride is “blacke partly through sinnes, which doe remaine in them and partly through afflictions.”⁴⁷⁵ Although originating as skin color in the text, blackness therefore becomes abstract, mythical in biblical hermeneutics on the Song. Early modern English sixteenth-century commentators are consistent with ancient and medieval interpretative trends on the *Song of Songs*, which use the black skin color of the bride in the text to symbolize the effects of sin as well as the sufferings and afflictions of God’s elect.

Seventeenth-century English divines follow a similar pattern of earlier trends in their interpretation of the *Song* by reading the bride’s black skin color allegorically. In his textual study on the Songs, one time Brownist Henoeh Clapham describes the bride as “a blacke hued Virgine.”⁴⁷⁶ However, her blackness is interpreted as a universal condition that affects all of humanity since the fall. Clapham thus speaks on her behalf, proclaiming, “Namely, I know that in me, namely, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. And where no good thing dwelleth, there must needs dwell blackenesse, darkenesse, and horreur of nature.”⁴⁷⁷ Clapham thus identifies not only with the bride, but also with her

⁴⁷⁴ George Gifford, *Fifteene Sermons upon the Song of Solomon* (1598), 46. [Hereafter cited as Gifford, *Fifteen Sermons*.]

⁴⁷⁵ Gifford, 34.

⁴⁷⁶ Henoeh Clapham, *Three Partes of Solomon his Song of Songs, expounded* (1603), 31. [Hereafter cited as Clapham, *Three Partes*.] Clapham later recanted his separatist views and rejoined the Church of England. See Alexandra Walsham, ‘Clapham, Henoeh (fl. 1585-1614),’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008.

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/5431>, accessed 2 June 2013]

⁴⁷⁷ Clapham, 31.

blackness in regards to human evil. The millenarian prophet and Seeker John Brayne, who published religious tracts on the coming reign of Christ during the English Commonwealth, writes similarly in his analysis of the bride that “She was black in her self, that is, in her own corruptions.”⁴⁷⁸ Blackness, or sin, affects every aspect of humanity’s being, as Clapham goes on to state, “The heate of concupiscence spotteth our thoughts, words, and workes: and the light of our minde (termed Conscience) it bewraieth our blacknesse.”⁴⁷⁹ Therefore, every believer or “true member of the Church must and will...particularly confesse, I am blacke, herein I am wicked.”⁴⁸⁰ Those that are contrite and repent are like the bride who “confessed herselfe to be blacke and ignorant.”⁴⁸¹ The bride herself is the model for human nature, infected with original sin, and therefore black. The imagery of blackness originates with skin color in the text, but becomes figurative to symbolize all people.

Due partly to the closing of ecclesiastical ranks against would-be ‘zealous’ reformers of the Church of England by the late-sixteenth century, the movement collectively known as Puritanism (separatists and non-separatists) grew to stress devotion for personal salvation and piety. Thus, in evangelical teaching, it was helpful to dramatically convey the sin, evil, guilt, and affliction that plagued the sojourner seeking redemption. For this reason, by the seventeenth century, it is arguably puritan writers who overwhelmingly emphasize the imagery of blackness depicted in the *Song of Songs* in order to signify sin. For example, the Presbyterian Henry Finch describes the bride,

⁴⁷⁸ John Brayne, *An exposition upon the Canticles* (1651), 2. [Hereafter cited as Brayne, *An exposition*.] Bernard Capp, ‘Brayne, John (d. 1654)’, rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/37220>, accessed 2 June 2013]

⁴⁷⁹ Brayne, 39.

⁴⁸⁰ Brayne, 34.

⁴⁸¹ Brayne, 47.

representative of humanity, as “foule in her selfe and black, euen cole black...through sinne, both originall and actuall, that maketh her to com short of the glory of God, and to be subiect to death and condemnation.”⁴⁸² To be black in her “self,” as Finch indicates, arises with skin color, as demonstrated in the Song text. In fact, the famous Separatist Henry Ainsworth states as much in his commentary, writing, “blackness is in the colour of the skin.” However, Ainsworth transcends the metaphor, stating “her black hew was not her proper colour.”⁴⁸³ Thus to be black in “self” interprets blackness as a temporary condition for the elect, and reflects not only sins and evil but also suffering and persecutions. As Ainsworth notes, “blackness signifieth tribulation...sin...sorrow and mourning [and]...present miseries” for the “partaker of the afflictions of Christ.”⁴⁸⁴ For Ainsworth, the truly afflicted elect technically did not include members of the Church of England. Instead the godly, habituated separate, independent congregations operate through mutual support in the fight against evil. However, the Puritan Richard Sibbes, who stayed within the Church, yet openly refused to conform to ‘popish’ ceremonies, also uses the same kind of language about the bride (and therefore about the suffering of the elect).⁴⁸⁵ Sibbes states that she “confesseth herself to be black in regard of the afflictions and persecutions of others she meets in this world.”⁴⁸⁶ Thus, in Sibbes’ view, even the godly few who remained in the church, endure the sufferings that cause blackness. John Cotton, heavily impacted by the example of Sibbes’ plain preaching style, similarly notes that the suffering of the called is mirrored “in their blacknesse,

⁴⁸² Sir Henry Finch, *An Exposition of the Song of Solomon called Canticles*, ed. William Gouge (1615), 9. [Hereafter cited as Finch, *An Exposition of the Song*.]

⁴⁸³ Henry Ainsworth, *Solomon’s Song of songs In English metre* (Amsterdam, 1623), sigs. C1r; C2v.

⁴⁸⁴ Ainsworth, C1r.

⁴⁸⁵ Liturgical practices that many felt were not justified in scripture included making the sign of the cross in baptism, wearing the surplice, and kneeling to receive communion.

⁴⁸⁶ Richard Sibbes, *Bowels Opened: or a Discovery of the Neere and Deere Love, Union and Communion betwixt Christ and his Church* (1639), 289. [Hereafter cited as Sibbes, *Bowels Opened*.]

which resembled their adversity.”⁴⁸⁷ Cotton himself eventually could not continue to endure in England, eventually ministering in the Congregationalist congregation of the Massachusetts Bay colony. Some divines focus on the origin of the bride’s blackness. Parliamentary Army chaplain John Robotham writes, “she [is] found black parched with the sunne, and afflicted by her brethren.”⁴⁸⁸ This reading stresses the exterior image of the sun-burned bride, who symbolizes, as Particular Baptist Hanserd Knollys writes, “the Churches and Saints, though exercised with tribulations, afflictions, persecutions, corruptions, and defertions which make them to appear outwardly dark and black.”⁴⁸⁹ As a Particular Baptist, Knollys believed only a few are elected to suffer the persecutions of the righteous. The sun is likened therefore to oppression and thence “as the cause of her blacknesse.”⁴⁹⁰ Finally, Thomas Ager proclaims, “I am black by reason of my sin and affliction.”⁴⁹¹ Therefore, many divines overwhelmingly note that the bride’s blackness is not “natural,” and thus not related to race or ethnicity. Instead it is a sign not only of her sinful nature, but also of her called, elected status as a persecuted follower of Christ. Hence, many English writers incorporate the symbolic imagery of abstract blackness to indicate unconditional election.

Luther’s *Simul Iustus et Peccator* in English Commentaries on *Song of Songs*

As we have seen in the Geneva Bible’s 1540 gloss on *Song of Songs* 1:5, blackness as sin is used in order to present the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

⁴⁸⁷ John Cotton, *A brief exposition of the whole book of Canticles* (1642), 25. [Hereafter cited as Cotton, *A brief exposition*.]

⁴⁸⁸ John Robotham, *An Exposition of the Whole of Booke of Solomons Song* (1651), 11. [Hereafter cited as Robotham, *An Exposition of the Whole Booke*.]

⁴⁸⁹ Hanserd Knollys, *An Exposition of the first Chapter of the Song of Solomon* (1656), 22. [Hereafter cited as Knollys, *Chapter*.]

⁴⁹⁰ Brayne, *An Exposition*, 3.

⁴⁹¹ Thomas Ager, *A Paraphrase on the Canticles* (1680), 33. [Hereafter cited as Ager, *A Paraphrase*.]

Analogously, Christ redeems the black sins of believers. The writings of Reformers also reflect this interpretation of the passage. Theodore Beza writes,

In what sense this spouse saith, that shee is blacke...the Bridegroome had alreadie washed this spouse of his, with his most pure and cleane waters...namelie by his bloode, and his spirit which maketh that euer sithence, the Church, in as much as it is cleansed by faith, and considered such as it is in her Bridegroome her beloued, is without spot or blemish *Eph.* 1.4. and *Colos.* 1.22.⁴⁹²

Beza quotes Paul to demonstrate justification by faith alone. First, that “[God] chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love,” (Eph. 1:4), is how the Protestant reformers stress that God’s predestination of the elect indicates total Divine sovereignty. Second, that “[Christ] has now reconciled in His fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before Him,” (Col. 1:22), demonstrates that through His sacrifice on the cross, believers are redeemed, and not through any effort or merit on their part. Thus, as Beza notes, the bride is still black, but already redeemed by the bridegroom. She is justified despite her sins. Christ marries her even though she is black.

Dudley Fenner introduces his discussion on blackness in chapter one of the commentary on the Song by stating, “In these verses is conteined as an ansvere to such objection as might be made, the one follovving on the other: the first concerneth her justification, vers.5, the other her condition being justified.”⁴⁹³ Therefore, “I am black and beautiful” describes how the bride is at once mired in sin and yet predestined for justification through God’s grace. The uniting of blackness and beauty signifies that Christ has brought justification to sin. Next, “Do not gaze at me because I am dark,” is indicative of how justifying grace has begun to impact the bride, already lightening her

⁴⁹² Beza, *Master Bezaes Sermons*, 72; 76-77.

⁴⁹³ Beza, 76-77.

blackness. She is in the beginning stages of sanctification. Therefore Fenner has the spouse of Christ declare, “Being thus gloriouse in my justification by Christ I am not to be contemned” for the effects of sin.⁴⁹⁴ Indeed, with regard to the bride’s black color, George Gifford predicts that, “as for her blackness and deformities, they shall be wholly taken away. So [Christ] beholdeth her justified and sanctified in himself.”⁴⁹⁵ Thus, the divines hint at justification as the beginning of the transformation that takes place in the believer leading to sanctification. As Gifford indicates, “He doth cloath al his Elect with his own holinesse he doth slay sinne in them, and replenisheth them with the vertues and graces of his spirite.”⁴⁹⁶ The initial clothing in righteousness is the forensic justification that redeems the sinner in God’s sight. Then, there is gradual transformation in the heart of the believer. This is symbolized by the figurative removal of blackness, for “what shall her beauty bee, when all her blacknes shall bee taken away, and Christ shall wash her, and make her a glorious church, not hauing spotte or blemish, Eph. 5.”⁴⁹⁷ Henoah Clapham describes it “By confession of wants, the old *Adam* was put off; and by desire of graces supply, the new man is put on. The condemning and killing of the first, is the iustifying and quickning of the new.”⁴⁹⁸ Because of the stress that is made on figurative appearance, and specifically, blackness, the text highlights the contrast with the gradual change and transformation wrought in the bride, who represents the saints. John Robotham writes, “in respect of Justification, so they are absolutely faire and compleat in

⁴⁹⁴ Fenner, *The Song of songs*, sig. B4r.

⁴⁹⁵ Gifford, *Fifteene Sermons*, 46.

⁴⁹⁶ Gifford, 21.

⁴⁹⁷ Gifford, 33.

⁴⁹⁸ Henoah Clapham, *Three Partes*, 47.

him.”⁴⁹⁹ This entails the legal standing that the believer has before God in Christ and the eventual transformation that will occur inwardly in the believer.

As is evident, there is a simultaneous rendering of blackness and fairness, as the bride herself states, “notwithstanding blacknesse, yet I am lovely,” since she reflects “a kind of divine lustre and beauty.”⁵⁰⁰ Such an interpretation therefore affirms Luther’s *simul iustus et peccator*. She remains black in herself, although forensically justified, being “absolutely freed and discharged of sin,” but “being cloathed with Christ’s righteousness, [she] shine[s] most gloriously in the beauty thereof.”⁵⁰¹ And so the Church, which the bride symbolizes, “doth set forth her fairnesse, by opposing it against her blacknesse.”⁵⁰² Robotham explains,

Though the saints are blacke in themselves, they are faire in Christ. Else they are not fit to match with Jesus Christ; it is confessed that they are black in themselves, but when Christ comes to marry the soule unto himselfe, he putteth a kind of divine lustre and beauty upon it, whereby he makes it glorious like himselfe.⁵⁰³

On the one hand Robotham depicts the blackness in the saints that really exists because of their sin while the “fairness” of Christ comes to cover up that blackness in God’s eye. Thus the believer is forensically justified although really still black. Yet, on the other hand Robotham also figuratively describes the doctrine by juxtaposing the effects of the blackness of sin, which “doth more debase and deform men” and the fairness that begins to arise with God’s declaration of salvation.⁵⁰⁴ This happens through the uniting of the believer with God, for “it is confessed that [sinners] are black in themselves, but...Christ

⁴⁹⁹ Robotham, *An Exposition of the Whole of Booke*, 94.

⁵⁰⁰ Robotham, 94.

⁵⁰¹ Robotham, 95.

⁵⁰² Robotham, 96.

⁵⁰³ Robotham, 94.

⁵⁰⁴ Robotham, 91.

comes to marry the soule unto himselfe.”⁵⁰⁵ Justification is the beginning of a process that will eventually effect a gradual change in the believer. Similarly Clapham notes, “In ourselues wee lie sprawling in our owne wombs-blood: but by God his grace we are washed” and then “with all readinesse and faithfulness to confesse our sinnes before them: yea, our great vnworthinesse of so worthy a Messiah, saying, indeede I am blacke.”⁵⁰⁶ Therefore, although sinful, Christ proclaims us righteous: “No maruell then, though he pronounce his Church, the fairest of women: nor maruell (considering this fairenesse is from him).”⁵⁰⁷ The declaration of righteousness accompanies a promise of future inward change. Sibbes concludes, that, “she shines in the beames of her husbände...in justification.”⁵⁰⁸ For the moment, she is resplendent with Christ’s own beauty while she is black, as Robotham explains,

The Apostle useth a metaphor taken from the putting on of garments, to shew, that those graces which wee receive from Christ, are so many additions to our nature, having no form nor comeliness upon us, but those renewed graces, which are after the image of God; they are as beautifull ornamentes to our soules. Now in this respect the Church is comely, yea, and shee is much more comely than she is blacke, as shee is comely in Christ.⁵⁰⁹

The bride, representing the Church as well as the Elect, is clothed in the righteousness of Christ, so that “though the saints are blacke in themselves, they are faire in Christ.”⁵¹⁰ Sibbes writes, “Moses married a woman that was not beautifull, but could not alter the complection and condition of his Spouse.”⁵¹¹ Christ however “is such a husband as can

⁵⁰⁵ Robotham, 94.

⁵⁰⁶ Robotham, 33.

⁵⁰⁷ Clapham, *Three Partes*, 47.

⁵⁰⁸ Sibbes, *Bowels Opened*, 287.

⁵⁰⁹ Robotham, *An Exposition of the Whole of Booke*, 87.

⁵¹⁰ Robotham, 95.

⁵¹¹ Robotham, 288.

put his Church into his owne disposition, and transforme her into his own proportion.”⁵¹²

This comes from imputed righteousness, and as Sibbes summarizes,

We were all innobled with the image of Christ at the first, but after we had sinned, we were bereft of that Image, therefore now all our beauty must be cloathing, which is not naturall to man but artificiall fetched from other things, our beauty is now borrowed, it is not connaturall with us, the beauty of the Church now comes from the head of the Church Christ, she shines in the beames of her husbände, not onely in justification, but in sanctification also.⁵¹³

Initially, the imputed righteousness of Christ is put upon the blackness of human sin like clothing in justification. Similarly, Sibbes describes the action of God in his commentary on the *Songs*, which also reflects Luther’s *simul iustus et peccator*, by describing justification as when “Christ sees that which is blacke,” but choosing not to dwell on the blackness of sins, through “his Spirit...seeth...beauty too.”⁵¹⁴ Moreover, metaphorically, as we shall see stressed in the next chapter, Christ is imaged constantly as white. Just as purity and righteousness are typically linked with divinity, similarly Jesus Christ is described as a white Savior come to wash the captives clean. The imputed righteousness that is put upon black believers is, as Cotton describes, “white as a lilly by the purity of his righteousness” although it is still juxtaposed with the darkness of “the Church [which] is corrupt in it selfe.”⁵¹⁵ Similarly, John Brayne states that the bride “was black in her self, that is, in her own corruptions, but pure in Jesus Christ.”⁵¹⁶ This is because Christ “had now looked in mercy on her, and had passed by the blacknesse in her” in the same way “as with a Vail he hid the sins of the Elect from the sight of God” which takes

⁵¹² Sibbes, *Bowels Opened*, 288-89.

⁵¹³ Sibbes, 287.

⁵¹⁴ Sibbes, *Bowels Opened*, 290.

⁵¹⁵ Cotton, *A Brief Exposition*, 55.

⁵¹⁶ Brayne, *An Exposition*, 2.

place “in the Justification of sinners.”⁵¹⁷ Christ figuratively hides the blackness of the bride with a white veil. Joseph Hall depicts the covering of the blackness, which symbolizes sin, with white, in his description of justification, writing, “Is it no more but to deck a Blackmore with white? even with the long white robes which are the justifications of Saints?”⁵¹⁸ This depicts justification as a white covering of righteousness over the black sins of believers. Thomas Ager speaks for the bride, saying, “I am comely in the person of my beloved, who doth not for this cause reject me but joyneth himself unto me, and cloaths me with the garments of righteousness which teacheth us the right use of faith.”⁵¹⁹ Ultimately, despite the blackness of her sins the Church “was fair in Christ by Justification, and in her self Sanctified.”⁵²⁰ Indeed, sanctification consists of “pure Ordinances, Gospel priviledges, spiritual gifts and...graces” which “maketh the saints comely in the eyes of Christ” continuously.⁵²¹ Figuratively, regeneration is always understood symbolically as the lessening or removal of blackness. As James Durham states, regarding “the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, wherewith they are adorned, and which they have put on, which makes them very glorious and lovely, so that they are beautiful beyond all others, thorow his comeliness put upon them...[Christ] will have his people beautiful and spotlesse.”⁵²² Believers become beautiful in the act of justification, not of their own doing, and certainly not reflecting their own beauty, but the righteousness of Christ. In the meantime, she continues to be justified and yet sinful, as Henry Finch defines the condition as when “the remnants of sinne...still cleave vnto her,

⁵¹⁷ Brayne, 3.

⁵¹⁸ Joseph Hall, *The contemplations upon the history of the New Testament* (1661), 304-305. [Hereafter cited as Hall, *The contemplations*.]

⁵¹⁹ Thomas Ager, *A Paraphrase*, 33.

⁵²⁰ Ager, 5.

⁵²¹ Knollys, *Chapter*, 22.

⁵²² James Durham, *Clavis Cantici: or an Exposition of the Song of Solomon* (1668), 89.

and are so many foule spots in her faire face [thus] making her blackish, though not cole black” despite the fact that she has been “washed...iustified...sanctified through Christ.”⁵²³ She is justified and black, but God is beginning to heal her. Henry Ainsworth notes, “Shee being privy to her own infirmities called her selfe blacke, but Christ her calleth her faire and magnifieth her beauty...because he hath sanctified and cleansed her.”⁵²⁴ This stresses that justification is a work of Christ, because he deems her righteous, in fact, refusing to see her sins, that is, figuratively, her blackness. John Cotton notes that “When the Church is corrupt in it selfe, it is yet faire and sweet in Christ.”⁵²⁵ This is the paradox of *simul iustus et peccator*. As Thomas Ager teaches, “She confesseth that she is black ...yet ...she is comely in Christ’s sight which teacheth us the true Rule of Faith which is first to confess our blacknesse before God, before we apply unto our selves, that we are made comely through Christ.”⁵²⁶ This is a cause for the joy that Luther exclaimed regarding this new kind of righteousness, given as a gift of faith. Therefore, Joshua Sprigg advises, “So let your eye be upon the Church’s beauty as well as her blackness.”⁵²⁷ Until then, as Robotham adds, “we being justified and freed from sin and from the evil of affliction...should make...tribulation so welcome” in the earthly journey.⁵²⁸ Again, this forensic declaration anticipates sanctification, as William Guild states, “that perfection of glorious beauty to which she shall come, when it shall be said unto her; Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no spot nor wrinkle in thee.”⁵²⁹ Further, in eternity, Robotham asks, “what will her beauty be, when her blacknesse shall be taken

⁵²³ Finch, *An Exposition of the Song*, 10.

⁵²⁴ Henry Ainsworth, *Solomon’s Song of songs In English metre* (Amsterdam, 1623), sig. C4r.

⁵²⁵ Cotton, *A Brief Exposition*, 55.

⁵²⁶ Ager, *A Paraphrase*, 37.

⁵²⁷ Joshua Sprigg, *Solace for saints in the saddest times* (1648), 26.

⁵²⁸ Robotham, *An Exposition of the Whole of Booke*, 111.

⁵²⁹ William Guild, *Loves entercours between the Lamb & his bride* (1658), 45.

away and when she shall appear in her full and everlasting beauty being cleaned from all her spots and dimnesse yea when she will shine in glory in the sight of all her beholders?”⁵³⁰ Thus in heavenly glory, there will be no more blackness in the Church, that is, in the saints. Finch writes that God “will further bewtifie, and let her out with all rich graces and ornaments of the spirit, with a continuall growth of sanctification, as it were pure gold, bewtified with the siluer specks of a new encrease of holinesse, being made more and more glorious by the reflection of his glory.”⁵³¹ Therefore, most seventeenth-century divines are explicit in their interpretations of blackness as allegorically representing the sins and afflictions of the Church and human soul. This reading of blackness is consistent largely with Christian tradition—darkness associated with sin, evil, suffering, and oppression. The divines are consistent in their position that the bride symbolizes the Elect, the Church, human believers, and the individual soul.

Racial Ethnicity in English Commentaries on *Song of Songs*

Some early modern English divines’ biblical hermeneutic of the *Song of Songs* address the bride’s black skin by not simply treating blackness abstractly, but using it to signify race or ethnicity as a symbol for sin. Origen’s commentaries prefigure this approach, not only by using the metaphor of blackness as sin to highlight redemption (what I am designating as the traditional method) but also by using Ethiopian ethnicity to demonstrate justification and to represent the opening of the Church to the Gentiles. The treatment of the bride in Origen’s commentary and homily prefigures early modern English divines who use Blackamoor or Ethiopian ethnicity to foreshadow sin justified by

⁵³⁰ Robotham, *An Exposition of the Whole of Booke*, 98.

⁵³¹ Finch, *An Exposition of the Song*, 13.

God's grace alone just as we have seen in those divines who use symbolic blackness to teach justification modeled after Luther. Like Origen, these seventeenth-century English divines are ironically arguing for Christ's acceptance of believers irrespective of race or ethnicity in their use of Blackamoor and Ethiopian tropes to describe the black bride. The use of Ethiopian ethnicity to symbolize the identity of the bride, who in mystical union with the bridegroom, opens the way of faith to all races is reflected in the writings of some English divines and thus reflects an inclusive mindset in spite of the use of such racially charged language.

One of the earliest writers to incorporate Ethiopian ethnicity with the bride's identity is Thomas Becon, an English Reformer, who was chaplain to Thomas Cranmer, and initially in his career espoused a modified Lutheran theology.⁵³² Becon not only writes directly of the black bride that she is Ethiopian and but also uses this as a metaphor to symbolize her lack of beauty in contrast to the beauty of her soul:

She that is endued wyth these goodly and Godli vertues atoresayed is a verye fayre and beautifull woman, thoughe hyr face maye tyghte well be resembled to the colour of an Ethiope and she maye saye as it is wrytten in Solomons Balades. I am blacke, yet am I fayre. For thoughe she be blacke in colour of face, yet is she beautifull in mynde, And looke howe muche the mynde excelleth the bodye, euen so muche doeth the beautye of the mynde excede the fayrnes of the face.⁵³³

Becon's thought symbolizes the blackness of justification because even as her sins remain, she is called to enter into a cooperative stage of sanctification with God in which she earnestly seeks a virtuous life. The physical blackness, or "colour of an Ethiope" is a sign of the sinfulness that remains despite the quest towards holiness.

⁵³² Seymour Baker House, 'Becon, Thomas (1512/13–1567),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2009

[<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/1918>, accessed 25 June 2013]

⁵³³ Thomas Becon, *The iewel of ioye*, (London, 1550), 63.

The seventeenth-century divines who read the bride's black skin color as symbolic specifically of an African identity, specifically defined as Ethiopian or Blackmoor ethnicity, incorporate these tropes to represent all human believers. Thus, African identity fulfills the same role as allegorical blackness in other commentaries on the Song. Ethiopian or Blackmoor ethnicity, like symbolic blackness, is associated with sin and evil. Also, like abstract blackness, Ethiopian or Blackmoor ethnicity is to be delivered through God's justifying grace. Just as in the traditional readings when the bride is justified and her blackness gradually begins to fade, similarly in the racial ethnic interpretations, after justification, the bride slowly begins to lose her African ethnicity.

For example, the Anglican John Dove's *The Conversion of Salomon* (1613) is a series of meditations that comment on the *Song of Songs*. For Dove, King Solomon not only lived and wrote the *Songs*, but also in his own spiritual journey, had a rise, fall, and subsequent reformation. This fall involved apostasy and the submission to false gods. Dove uses the theme of rightful worship as an allegory with several meanings, including "the prayers of Salomon in his owne person, or the meditations of every particular member of Christ, or the longing desire and expectation of the Fathers, which groaned under the burden of ceremonies and carnall rites, or the allegorie of the Church in general, under both the Law and Gospel."⁵³⁴ But with regard to the bride, whose black color is first mentioned in 1:4, Dove writes,

Her blacknesse was naturall; she was an Aethiopian, as blacke as the tents of Kedar, the second sonne of Ismael, whose posteritie dwelt in tents, and not in any certaine mansion places; her blacknesse was also accidentall, being tanned with the scorching heat of the sunne, alwayes abroad keeping the vines, and therefore subject to the violence and iniquitie of the weather.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁴ John Dove. *The Conversion of Salomon*, (1613), 8.

⁵³⁵ Dove, 30.

The spouse is naturally defined as Ethiopian, which is explicitly credited as the reason for her blackness. And yet, her black skin is also a result of “being tanned with the scorching heat of the sun,” an accidental occurrence. Thus she receives her blackness from two sources. She is naturally black, being of Ethiopian ethnicity. Hence, she is born black. But she also acquires blackness through the effects of the sun. Moreover, the tanning is associated with punishment, since she was forced to work in the heat of the sun and therefore subjected to the elements. However, Dove suggests that her Ethiopian ancestry is the origin and cause of her condition since “shee is Blacke, and as it were, besmeared with original sin, derived from Adam, which is the first fruits, and the roote of all mankind.”⁵³⁶ But, in addition to the bride, all humans are “derived from Adam.” Therefore Dove’s metaphor of Ethiopian ancestry must include all persons. Every human sinner belongs to the black skinned Ethiopians, “all which were carnally descended from [Adam].”⁵³⁷ The bride has what Dove calls a “hereditarie infection or leprosie” which is passed down to all humankind and thus afflicts every body and soul. “She is infected with sinne,” Dove writes, the bride confessing, “I am blacke.”⁵³⁸ This means that human beings are not only born with original sin but also oppressed with some degree of sin throughout their lives. To this end, Dove, who wrote actively against English recusants, castigates the Catholic Church for reaffirming officially through the Council of Trent that baptism removes original sin or concupiscence. He also argues conversely against Anabaptists that “hold themselves to be without sinne that Infants have no need of Baptisme.”⁵³⁹ The state of original sin, or figurative Ethiopian ethnicity, cannot be

⁵³⁶ Dove, 32.

⁵³⁷ Dove, 36.

⁵³⁸ Dove, 30.

⁵³⁹ Dove, 33.

removed through a sacramental rite sanctioned by an institution. Nor can purity be obtained through some spiritual assent to holiness. Humans are healed by justifying grace and yet suffer in the condition of sinful affliction even as Christ slowly makes them better to varying degrees. Dove in fact explains justification by faith alone by stating of the bride that “she is not faire but blacke; therefore unworthie; for God is of such pure eyes that he cannot behold inquitie.”⁵⁴⁰ Her blackness makes her completely unworthy of justification. Yet due to the “imputation of the righteousness of her husband Christ,” she is regarded as fair, even though she remains a black Ethiopian.⁵⁴¹

If she be an Aethiopian, how can she be made faire? To wash a blackamoor with us is to labour in vain...A blackamoor saith Jeremie cannot wash away his blacknesse... Aethiopia surpasseth Judea by putting off the blacknesse of sinne, and putting on the beauty of faith...black through sinne which is inward and dwelleth in her, so shee is beautiful by outward righteousness, not of her owne, but of Jesus Christ which is imputed to her.⁵⁴²

As we shall see in the next chapter, Dove uses a contemporary popular proverb “to wash a blackamoor,” which is often used to highlight human futility in discussions on justification. Human beings cannot save themselves. *Sole fide, sole gratia*—these were the clarion calls of the Reformation. Only God can justify the sinful soul. The metaphor is of the Ethiopian becoming cleansed from blackness by God’s grace alone as a result of the divine gift of faith. Through the one who “made our sinnes to bee his that his righteousness might become ours,” this blackness is removed in justification, “although they have done no righteous works.”⁵⁴³ Christ merited the righteousness to gratuitously benefit sinners by “his obedience, which he performed in his human nature, and that is twofold, either the merit of his sufferings for us, or his fulfilling of the law in our

⁵⁴⁰ Dove, 31.

⁵⁴¹ Dove, 30.

⁵⁴² Dove, 36.

⁵⁴³ Dove, 36.

behalf.”⁵⁴⁴ This takes place through the gift of God, the means of which is “faith.”

Thus, John Dove conflates Ethiopian identity with blackness in order to emphasize the sinfulness of universal humanity in the allegorical figure of the spouse of Christ in the *Song of Songs* in his characterization of justification by faith alone.

Thomas Myriell, in *Christs suite to his church a sermon preached at Paules crosse on the third of October 1613*, also incorporates ethnic imagery in his depiction of the bride of the Songs. For Myriell, King Solomon, author of “the bookes of the Prouerbs, the Preacher, and of the Canticles” tells the story in the latter “vpon occasion of his marriage with the King of Egipts daughter, most diuinely describes the happy coniunction of Christ and his Church.”⁵⁴⁵ Thus, Myriell makes the bride the princess of Egypt. And, upon reflection of this allegorical mystery, Myriell ponders “what man being to marry, would chuse a deformed, blacke, and adulterous wife? Or hauing chosen such a one in marriage, would loue her so much as to dye for her?”⁵⁴⁶ Because the bride describes herself as black in the text, Myriell imagines that she is Egyptian. And Myriell goes on to use this blackness as a metaphor for the deformation in her sins as well as the unfaithfulness in her heart, which scorched from the flames of original sin, is uncommitted to God. Yet in spite of this, Christ not only chooses to marry her in this state, but also sacrifices His life for her. Surprisingly, Christ chooses a black Egyptian bride. The bride, of course, is a symbol of the Church as well as the human soul, unworthy, and incapable of meriting Christ’s attention. Myriell notes, for “this marriage with his Church...was like the marriage of Moyses with the Ethiopian blackmore.” For why would Moses marry an Ethiopian, and how could Solomon (Christ) marry an

⁵⁴⁴ Dove, 38.

⁵⁴⁵ Thomas Myriell. *Christs suite to his church*, (1613), 4. [Hereafter cited as *Christs suite*.]

⁵⁴⁶ Myriell, 40.

Egyptian? Moses, the lawgiver, was a forerunner of Christ. Christ came to fulfill the Law, which could not be precisely obeyed by humans because of their sinfulness. By contracting a union with an “Ethiopian blackmore” Moses, in this interpretation, presumably devalued himself, by marrying below himself in rank. Indeed, only as the lawgiver, Moses could not correct her sins which are symbolized by race and color. But, as Myriell indicates, unlike the marriage between Moses and the Ethiopian, which “was not able to change her skinne from blacke to white,” the union between Christ and His Spouse “hath made her a chast Virgin to himselfe, without spot or wrinkle.”⁵⁴⁷ Christ accomplishes what Moses could not do with the law. Metaphorically, Myriell suggests that Christ lightens His bride’s skin, forensically in justification—that is, Christ sees the black bride as white. And, he implies, that she will be gradually transformed in sanctification. Not only, as in text itself, is the bride made “fair,” but Myriell describes her as transformed to “white.” This emphasizes that Christ is willing and able to transform the Ethiopian bride’s race.

Joseph Hall, Bishop of Norwich, in *The Contemplations Upon the History of the New Testament* (1661), includes a section in this compilation of sermons entitled ‘Upon the sight of a Blackmore.’ In it, he describes the experience of an actual encounter with a black man in mid-seventeenth-century England. After his initial shock of confronting a “man whose hue shews him to be far from home” since “it is night in his face,” Hall begins to reflect on the meaning of human difference.⁵⁴⁸ He decides that finding fault with a black person for his color is absurd, arguing, “we should be look’d upon in this mans Country with no lesse wonder and strange coyresse then he is here; our Whitenesse

⁵⁴⁷ Myriell, 41.

⁵⁴⁸ Hall, *The contemplations*, 464.

would passe there for an unpleasing indigestion of form.”⁵⁴⁹ But instead of addressing the social concern of the growing number of blacks in England, due to the country’s increasing participation in transatlantic trade, slavery, and overseas expansion, Hall adroitly makes a shift. He distinguishes between the real Blackamoor who “cannot change his skin” by nature and the figurative one used conceptually as a literary trope.⁵⁵⁰ In making this distinction he turns to justifying faith, declaring, “The true Moses marries a Black-more, Christ his Church.”⁵⁵¹ Thus, Hall, in his musings, transforms the actual blackamoor of his encounter to the figurative blackamoor bride of Christ. As reflective of the familiar trope of blackness, since the bride is black, she is sinful. By juxtaposing the marriage of Moses to the “Blackamore” and Christ’s marriage to the Church, Hall likens all of God’s elect to spiritual blackamoors. The Church, as the bride of Christ, represents justified believers. Therefore, an alien righteousness, that is, the righteousness of Christ, surrounds or covers her. Bishop Hall’s central motif about the blackamoor, the black bride, turns into deeper questions around beauty and what it means to be justified. What is the nature of the black bride’s beauty? In ‘The Beauty and Unity of the Church,’ Hall wants to know what “makes [the Church] appear lovely in the eyes of God?”⁵⁵² After all, there is no ostensible beauty in her, who says, “I am black.” And if black, then it is defined by nothing but “Pustles of Corruption, the Morpheus of Deformity, the hereditary Leprosie of Sin, the Pestilential spots of Death.” And yet, amazingly, “Christ the Bride-groom praises the Bride his Church for her Beauty.” How can Christ praise the Church, the blackamoor bride, a symbol for the soul, when she is black, therefore ugly?

⁵⁴⁹ Hall, 464.

⁵⁵⁰ Hall, 464.

⁵⁵¹ Hall, 464.

⁵⁵² Hall, 304-305.

Moreover, this ugliness arises from the guilt of transgressing the law. And God is the very creator of the law, whose justice does not allow Him to “see any thing as it is not.” For Hall, the answer lies in God’s grace, whose “Mercy will not see some things as they are.” God does not see the bride’s blackness. Because of the infinite goodness of God, “Neither doth God look upon us with our eyes, but with his own; He sees not as man seeth.” Unlike human beings who tend to judge others (like real Blackamoors) according to what they see, resulting in societal prejudice based on the “skin-deep Beauty of earthly faces...that can see nothing but colour,” not so Almighty God, who locates beauty in the “eye of the beholder,” Himself. God determines the beauty of righteousness. For, all human believers have “Blackamore” natures, which make them equally guilty and deserving of punishment for their sins. But, God chooses not to dwell on the “foul and black,” or blackamoor natures of sinners. Instead, he gazes upon the covering of “Angelicall brightnesse” of salvation planted by the sacrificial and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. This covering is the imputed righteousness of Christ given to justified believers. Graciously, just as “the true Moses marries a Blackamore,” so too does “Christ [marry] his Church;” and in response the Church proclaims, rejoicing, “I am black, *but* comely.”⁵⁵³ Just as Luther’s *simul iustus et peccator*, she is black in her sins, but comely in the righteousness of Christ.

In *Christus in corde, or, The mystical union between Christ and believers* (1680), Christ is described as the “Conjugal One” by the layman Edward Polhill, who speaks of “intimate love between Christ and believers.”⁵⁵⁴ This intimacy is characterized by Christ

⁵⁵³ Hall, 304-305.

⁵⁵⁴ Edward Polhill, *Christus in corde, or, The mystical union between Christ and believers* (1680), 45. [Hereafter cited as Polhill, *Christus*.]

putting on the sins of believers so that they can take on Christ's own righteousness, a process described as putting on Christ "in his imputed righteousness as an artificial garment to us."⁵⁵⁵ In the course of this love, "there is a communication of good things from Christ to the Church" in what is described as redemption. As Polhill writes, "Christ hath carried the earnest of our flesh to Heaven, and from thence sent down the earnest of his Spirit to us." This is because humans cannot stand on the basis on their own "primitive beauty and integrity" for in reality they live "under a stain of sin and corruption."⁵⁵⁶ However, Jesus decides judiciously to choose the bride, since the decision is not made under normal circumstances. For, "[w]hen a man chuses a wife, the reason is in the object, she is fair, or virtuous, or rich in estate, one attractive or other draws out his consent." However, Christ's ways are nothing like human ways since his "consent is a pure gratuitous act." Indeed, there is nothing "attractive...in his Spouse since ...[b]elievers...are naturally void of holy Graces, and so extreamly poor, that they have not of their own to cover their nakedness, or pay their debts; there was nothing in them to draw out his love towards them; the only reason of his choice was in his infinite goodness, his Grace had no other mover but it self." Because of God's grace, the bride is chosen in spite of the blackness of her sins. But in the transaction of choice, which also entails the intimacy of love, change takes place. As Polhill states,

to call [the bride] fair is to make her so; her beauty was not a jewel of nature, but a love-token given from him...her beauty was but the reflection of his...he espoused her upon a design of grace, to change her Ethiopian skin, and put a Divine beauty upon her."

⁵⁵⁵ Polhill, sig., A3r

⁵⁵⁶ Polhill, 48.

Christ's declaration of righteousness upon the bride deems her forensically justified. This means that God will no longer look askance at her Ethiopian race, but will from now on see her as transfixed. In God's eyes, she is no longer Ethiopian.

In another reflection on the Song of Songs, *The intercourses of divine love betwixt Christ and his Church* (1683) the nonconformist John Collinges writes directly to the black bride, castigating her, and saying, "that art by nature an Ethiopian...black and ugly."⁵⁵⁷ Since she was born an Ethiopian, she was born into original sin. Then Collinges charitably goes on to identify himself with the bride, indicating that "[God] hath fixed his Love upon me who was by birth an Ethiopian."⁵⁵⁸ Despite the fall of Adam, which he inherited, a fall that originated from the failure to believe and trust God, the Almighty still has the grace and compassion to love the elect. But once more addressing the spouse, Collinges asks, "Did Aaron and Miriam, wonder at, & reproach, Moses, because he had married an Ethiopian Num. 12. 1? And should not Christ be the wonderment of the whole creation, if he should love one so black as thou art?"⁵⁵⁹ Collinges does not reflect on how Aaron and Miriam went against God's will for criticizing Moses' marriage to the Ethiopian and the fact that Miriam was punished with leprosy. Instead, he identifies with their position, wondering "what greater reason hath a Child of God to cry out, Lord; what is man, that thou shouldst remember him?" Collinges wants to evoke a sense of awe for the mighty work of Christ for those who are spiritually "black in [their] own eyes, in the worlds eyes, and sometimes so in the eyes of her weaker Brethren."⁵⁶⁰ With such a lack of esteem, it is nothing less than amazing that Christ should take her up as spouse. Again,

⁵⁵⁷ John Collinges, *The intercourses of divine love betwixt Christ and his Church* (1683), 454. [Hereafter cited as Collinges, *The intercourses*.]

⁵⁵⁸ Collinges, 487.

⁵⁵⁹ Collinges, 488.

⁵⁶⁰ Collinges, 480.

Collinges turns the shock upon himself and his own status, identifying with humanity, as he cries, “Lord! What was I, that thou shouldst remember me, and fix thy love, and put thy comeliness upon me? I was by nature an Ethiopian, and have contracted much more blackness, by my conversation in the world?” Refusing to make sense of God’s grace, he repeats, “Christ can never love such an Ethiopian.”⁵⁶¹ He thus alternates between shock and awe, resulting in utter amazement that God could love and forgive sinners, epitomized symbolically by Ethiopians—that is, the Ethiopian Spouse of Christ. But thanks be to God, “the Spouse of Christ is Black and *yet* comely...comely through an imputed righteousness.” What does this mean? Collinges writes, “Tho I am black, (saith she) yet the Sun of righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ hath looked on me and hath clothed me with his Righteousness, therefore you ought not to despise me.”⁵⁶² God is viewed as seeing the justified believer through the alien righteousness of Christ. The bride is declared righteousness while remaining black. As a result, the rest of the world should recognize her status in Christ. Again speaking in the voice of the bride, “It is as much as if she had said...I am fair, who am by Birth an Ethiopian, black with original corruption, and upon whom the Sun hath lookt?” Collinges then answers for the Lord, “And Christ answers, “Nay, My Beloved, thou art much more fair: Let the World be invited to behold thy Beauty; Behold thou art fair my Love.”⁵⁶³ Christ actually wants to show off the beauty of his bride, who symbolizes the Christian saints, to the world. In fact, the beauty of the bride is greater than if she had not sinned, (or were not originally black) because of the brightness of Christ’s supernatural divine righteousness, which

⁵⁶¹ Collinges, 487.

⁵⁶² Collinges, 459.

⁵⁶³ Collinges, 851.

shines upon her. In her redeemed yet simultaneously sinful state, the power of Christ shines even brighter.

Racial Ethnicity in Early Modern English Commentaries on Justification

In addition to writings on the *Songs of Songs*, English writers use racial ethnic tropes to signify sin in justification by faith alone in their analysis of other scripture. The puritan John Preston, known for his “hot” or rather plain style preaching, writes of human futility in salvation,

No more power have you to change your selves, than the Blackmore hath to change his skinne, or the Leopard his spots; the time will come, when you shall say...O how doe I desire faith, would God I had but one drop of it...⁵⁶⁴

Preston’s wish for faith is a call for God to irresistibly supply him with this gift. This implies a reaction to the rising tide of Arminian thought which in this case would have advocated God’s election for salvation conditioned by the rational acquiescing faith of the believer. The gift of God’s grace therefore would not be unconditional because the believer (or non-believer for that matter) would have the agency to receive or resist believing faith. Preston formally preached against the followers of James Arminius, who, to an even larger degree than their founder, made the absolute predestination of Calvin and the double predestination of Beza even more conditional. This was highly satisfactory to James I, who was happy with Preston’s defense of Calvinism as well as high liturgy and ecclesiastical order. Nevertheless, Preston, while remaining Anglican, was an enduring inspiration to puritans the world over.⁵⁶⁵ His use of Blackamoor tropes

⁵⁶⁴ John Preston, *Foure godly and learned treatises* (1633), 84.

⁵⁶⁵ Jonathan D. Moore. ‘Preston, John (1587–1628)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/22727>, accessed 6 June 2013].

to stress unconditional election exemplifies the fact that seventeenth-century Calvinist theologians as opposed to Arminians tend to use black ethnic metaphors. Although he sought more emphasis on human responsibility in the relationship between God and humanity, the symbolism of the resiliency of blackness was a potent image of the weakness of individual sin in contrast to the sovereign power of God. In a similar theological vein the Independent divine Elisha Coles writes,

That the Lord Himselfe tells them The Blackmoor might as soon change his skin, as they learn to do well...For One accustomed in evil, to learn to do well; and for a Blackmoor to change his skin, are things of a like possibility: It's a very Rare and Difficult thing of election."⁵⁶⁶

Coles' *A practical discourse of God's sovereignty*, (1673) stresses that human effort is impossible to elect oneself to salvation. This work, rated highly by critics for its scriptural attention to doctrine, uses the metaphor from Jer. 13:23 of a blackamoor changing his skin.⁵⁶⁷ Thus predestinarians frequently employ the blackamoor trope. God has elected certain people to salvation, and nothing can change it. Thomas Reeve also emphasizes the human inability to be justified alone or even in covenant with God when he writes,

Mans might and mind cannot effect every thing; no, Oh thou valiantest of Heroes, here thou laboust in vain! The eye of man can see but to the just distance, and so impossibility doth fly the sight. Doth not the whole cry of scripture witnesse an impotency in many things? Yes, Can a Rush grow without mire? Can a Blackmore change his skin?...Who can bring a clean thing out of filthinesse?...shall a man make Gods unto himselfe, and

they are no Gods?...shall any teach God knowledge, that judgeth the highest things? These are a part of his wayes, but who can understand his power?⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁶ Elisah Coles, *A practical discourse of God's sovereignty*, (1673), 6.

⁵⁶⁷ See D.D. Wallace, *Puritans and predestination: grace in English protestant theology, 1525-1695* (1982).

⁵⁶⁸ Thomas Reeve. *God's plea for Nineveh, or, London's precedent for mercy delivered in certain sermons within the city of London*, (1657), 264-65.

Thus the Blackamoor metaphor becomes a regular trope used in the expression of impossibilities related to human inability in relation to God's power and sovereignty. Humanity's infinitesimal abilities next to the might of God cannot compare. Ultimately, God is omnipotent and this is a source of comfort and humility to believers. Affirmed over and over in scripture and preached from early modern English pulpits, the issue becomes particularly acute as Arminian ideas, stressing human moral agency, begin to grow in the seventeenth century. The Scottish Archbishop Robert Leighton writes,

all our washings without this, are but washings of the Blackmore, it is labour in vain... 'Tis none of these that purifies in the sight of God and expiats wrath, they are all imperfect and stained themselves, cannot stand and answer for themselves, much less be of value to counterpoise their former guilt of sin, the very tears of the purest Repentance, unless they be sprinkled with this Blood, are impure, *Ier.* 2.22. *Iob.* 9.30-31.⁵⁶⁹

Humanity can act free morally, but it is impossible to atone righteously for sins. A sinner cannot save himself, that is, determine his own destiny, for God is not dependent on a sinner's will. Thus, limiting God's power to save by asserting agency challenges God's omnipotence and denies God's power and authority. God becomes impotent. Instead, as scripture indicates, it is God who influences the human mind. The Anglican William Fenner writes,

Because God may harden a mans heart, *Jerem.* 13.10. and deale with them as with Israel in the Rock, so shut up their hearts, that they shall never melt at any Sermon, never be wrought upon by any judgement, God having closed them up in a rocky heart, that he saith of them, Can the Blackmore change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then may they do good that are accustomed to do evill. The blacknesse of the Blackmore is only in the out-side of the skin, yet all the Art under the heavens cannot blot it out: So if once hardnesse *possesse* thy soule, all the preaching of the Ministers, and all the means of grace in the world can never bring it unto that frame and temper, as to make it melt under the hand of God; I tell thee, thou that usest to come unto Sermons day after day, and refuset to repent, living still in thy sinnes, there is no hammer nor beetle in the world more

⁵⁶⁹ Robert Leighton, *A practical commentary, upon the two first chapters of the first epistle general of St. Peter*, (1693), 13.

hard then thy heart: as those men and women that sit under the preaching of the Word, and hear the doctrine of life, like raine from above, beating and knocking on their consciences, and on their hearts, to awaken them out of their sinnes, and yet notwithstanding will not repent at last, they prove to be deafe Adders, that stop their eares against the Word, charme the Charmer never so wisely.⁵⁷⁰

The Potter has authority over the clay, even to mold one lump into a vessel of honor and another into dishonor. God is absolutely sovereign and has to answer to no person. All things work together for good according to God's will, even when acts of destruction or defeat appear to mar the goodness of life. God is completely in control. Human might and effort is nothing in comparison with God's power and God cannot be hindered. Even the evil deeds of humanity are allowed to take place only according to God's will. Thus, if God has predetermined a person shall not be saved, there is no preaching, no teaching, or means under the sun that will provoke the individual to receive the word of Christ. This is how the metaphor of blackness became extremely useful to early modern English divines seeking to stress impossibilities. The inability of remove blackness, the idea of which was desirable in a culture that detested black color, emphasized the futility of human effort to change destiny. God has designed the purpose and future of all existence from the foundation of the world. Thus even wickedness and recalcitrance in human actions are part of that plan. Conversely, if God has designed human salvation, there is nothing in the world, no evil from hell that can prevent it. It is impossible to resist God's will. Robert Read asserts:

Behold, the great love of God unto you, he will melt you, he will make you pliable, tractable, and vertible, that what you cannot do your selves, he will do for you. Can the Leopard change his spots, or the Blackmore his skin, no more can a

⁵⁷⁰ William Fenner, *A divine message to the elect soule* (1647), 78.

man change his nature of himself, or by any power within himself, but God onely is the changer of all.⁵⁷¹

Humans cannot change a blackamoor's skin, but God can. This is the important distinction. Only human beings are impotent in removing blackness. This becomes the perfect analogy for conveying the teaching that people have no strength in securing salvation. Thus most writers who use the language of blackness clearly imply the doctrine of the limited atonement, which affirms that God predestined the elect for salvation before the foundation of the world. Christ died on the cross only for the elect. Again, this is according to God's sovereign will, and God operates solely according to God's own volition. All accounting stops with God, and the metaphor of blackness becomes the perfect illustration to demonstrate it.

Summary

The metaphor of blackness as evil prevails in expositions of the justification of the black bride in commentaries on the *Song of Songs*. Blackness as evil to signify impossibilities is also a convenient analogy for other commentaries on scripture teaching justification in early modern English religious texts. In the imagery of the bride of the Song, God pardons her by refusing to look at her blackness, and then by covering it with the whiteness of Christ. Although she remains black, she is declared righteous through the imputation of Christ's righteousness, signified as white. As we have seen in Origen and Bernard, it is possible to consider the bride's black skin color in the text abstractly so that it refers not to ethnicity or race but to an outward, physical condition such as

⁵⁷¹ Robert Read, *The fiery change* (1656), 66-67.

suffering or affliction. Yet the significance of other English sermonic works lies in their use of Ethiopian or Blackamoor ethnicity to identify the bride herself. This is prefigured as well in the work of Origen, who specifically uses the term Ethiopian as part of his literal and historical exegesis of the background of the text. Origen combines this approach with his figurative reading of blackness to render an Ethiopian identity as symbolic of sin, evil, and a debased human nature. Moreover, the term, “Ethiopian” becomes used to represent Gentiles welcomed into the true nation of Israel.

Theologically, Origen develops the concept of ‘Ethiopian beauty’ to characterize the state of the sinner justified by Christ, who retains the black stains of sin and is therefore still Ethiopian, but is beautiful due Jesus’s acceptance of him or her.

References to Ethiopians and Blackamoors in seventeenth-century English religious texts are used similarly. Ethiopian and Blackamoor tropes symbolize depraved, sinful humanity justified by God’s grace. The writings of Becon, Dove, Hall, Collinges, Myriell, and Polhill compare Ethiopian and Blackmoor ethnicity as a symbol of ugliness in contrast to the justified bride’s beauty as it relates to the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. Through God’s sovereign will, God elects to choose the Church, symbolized by the black bride, for redemption. Moreover, just as commentaries on the Song use traditional depictions of the bride’s black skin color as abstract, they and other texts use Ethiopian or Blackamoor ethnicity to symbolize sin. Because God elects to choose the bride, despite her race, she is forgiven of her sins. For Hall, God overlooks the sins, or the race or ethnicity of the bride—including her blackness—refusing to see them, and instead, rests His eyes on the righteousness of Christ, giving new meaning to the term “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” God sees what He will see, and He views the

purity of Christ's obedience and sacrificial love and not the evil and corruption of the bride's sins. This entails forgiveness. The bride says, I am Ethiopian, I am black, *but* comely—that is, I am black, but look not on my blackness, but on the righteousness of Christ. Hall's imagery of the “eye of the beholder,” in which God's eye chooses, by grace, to rest on the beauty and righteousness of Christ and not on the blackness of the bride is similar, as we have seen, to Luther's concept of *simul iustus et peccator*, simultaneously just or righteous and sinful. Interestingly enough, this also bears similarity to Origen's concept of ‘Ethiopian beauty.’ The bride, carrying the blackness of her own sins reflects her Ethiopian ethnicity but is also graced with the righteousness of Christ. In justification, God, the giver of every good and perfect gift, looks down upon sin and righteousness side-by-side, and elects to see righteousness, thereby bestowing the gift of faith through grace. For example, Collinges speaks of the “imputed righteousness” of Jesus that makes the bride “comely.” Moreover, Collinges indicates that as a result of this imputed righteousness, in the text (Song of Songs 1:8) Christ calls the bride “more fair” and invites the world to see her beauty.⁵⁷² The bride is now an example of purity and righteousness because she belongs to Christ. Similarly, yet in more detail, Myriell writes that in the marriage between Christ and the black bride, He “hath made her a chaste Virgin to himselfe, without spot or wrinkle.”⁵⁷³ Dramatically, he changes her skin “from blacke to white” in an exchange in which the goodness of Christ is substituted for the evil of human sin. This we see also in Polhill, who speaks of a “union” in the marriage—indeed, Christ is the “Conjugal One”—and of the “intimate love” that exists between

⁵⁷² Collinges, *The intercourses*, 851.

⁵⁷³ Myriell, *Christs suite*, 40.

Christ and his beloved.⁵⁷⁴ Taking Polhill's imagery one step further, if the union between Christ and His beloved can be thought of as a 'consummation,' there is a transference of righteousness which transforms the bride. The question is, to what extent is she transformed? Even John Trapp, in *A commentary or exposition upon these following books of holy Scripture* (1660), notes that the Bridegroom himself is left "wondring at his own comeliness put upon her" for "such a change hee hath wrought in her, as never was known in any." Such a description bespeaks a marvelous change. This is unlike "Moses" who "married an Ethiopian woman, and could not change her hiew."⁵⁷⁵ Hence, implicit reference is made to blackness, and the idea of transformation to whiteness. Indeed, due to her change, Christ is "ravished with the beauty and sweetness of his Spouse."⁵⁷⁶ What is the nature of this "change", which affects, as Polhill writes, her "Ethiopian skin"?

When Jenison writes that the justified believer (the symbolic black bride) has "not a rag of sauing goodness to hang" but are "furnished with such Robes" he echoes Calvin, who defines the justified believer as "he who...grasps the righteousness of Christ through faith and, *clothed* in it, appears in God's sight not as a sinner but as a righteous man."⁵⁷⁷ The justified believer is clothed or dressed in the righteousness of Christ. This correlates with the black bride, who is clothed in rich linen and fine jewelry, and whose color becomes white or fair, her beauty shining for all the world to see. These accoutrements—clothing, jewelry, color—are all outward coverings imputed to her in order to hide the "shame" of blackness, and "the beggary" of original and actual sins. In his description of justification, Joseph Hall depicts the covering the blackness, which symbolizes sin, with

⁵⁷⁴ Polhill, *Christus*, 45.

⁵⁷⁵ John Trapp, *A commentary or exposition upon these following books of holy Scripture* (1660), 345.

⁵⁷⁶ Trapp, 345.

⁵⁷⁷ Calvin, *Inst.*, 3.11.2.

white, writing, “Is it no more but to deck a Blackmore with white? even with the long white robes which are the justifications of Saints?”⁵⁷⁸ The black bride is covered by the imputed righteousness of Christ, who adorns her in beauty and in turn “take[s] pleasure” in that beauty. The white skin or “fairness” of the justified bride does not reflect an imparted righteousness but is the imputed covering upon which God views her. These external coverings do not suggest sanctification or inner renewal. Rather they hint at the sanctifying grace that Christ will impart on the believer who will work cooperatively to develop a life of righteousness. The “whiteness” achieved by the bride and seen through the eye of Christ is a covering, which hides the blackness of sin, which remains. That is, conceptually, it is like plaster, which covers the black skin underneath. In an another analogy, Clapham remarks, “and by bracelets and beauty put vpon vs, we become the fairest amongst the Heathen.”⁵⁷⁹ Myriell indicates that in the beginning the bride is “naked and bare” in her sins, but when Christ “enter[s] into a covenant with her, [to] make her his owne,” she is dressed up in appearance. Now she is in “broyded worke of gold, siluer, and fine linnen.”⁵⁸⁰

Therefore the divines use blackamoor tropes to depict the spouse in the *Song of Songs* to demonstrate the sinfulness of believers grafted into the Savior who transforms them by grace, not yet in the process of sanctification, but in the act of justification by faith alone. Hence, the divines emphasize that sins are forgiven by grace. As Anthony Burgess states, “the people murmured because Moses married a Blackmore, so the Pharisees grudged, because Christ shewed mercy to sinners.”⁵⁸¹ And, of course, the

⁵⁷⁸ Hall, *The contemplations*, 304-305.

⁵⁷⁹ Clapham, *Three Partes*, 47.

⁵⁸⁰ Clapham, 47.

⁵⁸¹ Anthony Burgess, *The true doctrine of justification asserted and vindicated* (1651), 265.

emphasis is upon the gift of faith given through the imputation of righteousness. As Luther writes, “the righteousness of faith...God through Christ, without works, imputeth unto us.”⁵⁸² Duncan comments regarding Article IV of the Augsburg Confession that, “This faith God imputes to us is righteousness.”⁵⁸³ The experience of the black bride emphasizes the double meaning of justification—pardon of sins, which entails forgiveness of guilt, and the imputation of righteousness, in which Christ’s goodness is forensically ‘put on.’ This righteousness adorns the bride and is viewed directly by God. Owen declares, “[God] pardons our sins, and accepts our persons, *as if we were perfectly Righteous*.”⁵⁸⁴ It is one thing to be forgiven and another to be accepted as if the sins had never been committed. Calvin writes, “Now since men have not righteousness laid up in them, they obtain it by imputation.”⁵⁸⁵ Duncan writes with regard to Article XI, “Of the Justification of Man” of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Church of England, “We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith.”⁵⁸⁶ This explains why Christ could be so awestruck with the beauty of his Ethiopian bride. He is transferring the merit of his own righteousness to her. This righteousness is imputed, not imparted, as Owen makes clear. Duncan continues, “our being justified is here expressed by our being accounted righteous, and not by our being made righteous. For it is not by the inhesion of grace in us, but by the imputation of righteousness to us that we are justified.”⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸² Luther, *Commentary on Galatians*, trans. Theodore Graebner. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1966), 22.

⁵⁸³ H.B. Smith and P. Schaff, *The Creeds of the Evangelical Protestant Churches* (London, 1877), 40.

⁵⁸⁴ John Owen, *The doctrine of justification by faith through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, explained, confirmed, & vindicated* (1655), 265.

⁵⁸⁵ Calvin, *Comm. Gal. 3:6*.

⁵⁸⁶ James Duncan, *An Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England* (G. and W.B. Whitaker, 1823), 307.

⁵⁸⁷ Duncan, 307.

Therefore, the writings of Dove, Hall, Collinges, Myriell, and Polhill on the black Spouse of Christ highlight the dual dimensions of justification by faith alone. As Calvin writes, “we say that [justification] consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of righteousness.”⁵⁸⁸ The first aspect entails the forgiveness of sins. As demonstrated by Hall’s depiction of the black bride, the God who refuses to look at her blackness symbolizes the forgiveness extended to the elect. By not acknowledging her “Ethiopian” or “blackamoor” skin, he eschews recognition of her sins. This is the meaning of justification, for its foundation is that sinners are pardoned by God’s grace through Christ. And the imagery of the black bride conveys the notion of forgiveness *despite* blackness, or sins. Hence, in this sense of justification, she remains black. Unworthy, unloved, unwanted, the black bride cries, “Look not upon me because I am black” (*Song of Songs*, 1:6). One caveat is that her forgiveness indicates that she is the elect of God. Indeed, “the good pleasure of God’s will, is the only original cause and motive of election.”⁵⁸⁹ Broadly understood, God draws his beloved to himself, which confirms divine sovereignty. Luther writes, “The perfectly infallible preparation for grace...is the eternal election and predestination of God.”⁵⁹⁰ In the case of the black bride, her election demonstrates the status of the invisible Church, the city of God, which has been chosen despite its faults and corruptions, to reign in eternity with Christ. Forensically, the bride’s guilt no longer applies. Moreover, in the language of mystical union, or bonding, Christ takes on her sins, as Myriell’s language indicates. That is, through relationship with His chosen one, Jesus takes on her corruptions and faults and transmits or imputes the covering of his white righteousness to her. Thus as Calvin and Owen demonstrate, in the

⁵⁸⁸ Calvin, *Inst.*, 3.11.2.

⁵⁸⁹ Elisha Coles, *A practical discourse of God's sovereignty*, (1673), 66.

⁵⁹⁰ Cameron, 122; Luther, *M. Luther, Werke*, i. 225.

bond that occurs, the imputation of human sins upon Christ results. Arguably in this process, the forgiveness of the unrighteousness of believers takes place. That is, the imputation of human sins on Christ in the mystical union leads to the outcome that the bride's sins are pardoned. In the language of Collinges, Myriell, and Polhill, Christ covers the bride in expensive clothing and jewelry, and surrounds her and wraps her in beauty. Most dramatically, the bride becomes fair and white in color. Christ and the entire world are amazed at her appearance. She shines with the radiance of Christ's sacrificial righteousness, arising out of the merits of Jesus due to his obedience as Savior as applied to her. However, whiteness is imputed or ascribed, not imparted. She is only changed outwardly. What is seen of the bride is actually the reflection of Christ. This is because in the union that takes place between the bride and Christ the imputation of righteousness transfers Divine goodness, (As the bride proclaims, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!"), but only externally. The union signifies justification by faith alone, and not sanctification, or intrinsic righteousness. In fact, there is no sign from the scripture that the bride is inwardly changed, no suggestion that her conduct, or way of life has been transformed. She has been justified, which is God's declaration of her worth. Her sins are forgiven, and they are covered by the righteousness of Christ through God's grace and mercy. Through the use of the convenient allegory of the marriage of the bride to Christ in the *Song of Songs*, the relationship of God with his beloved children is dramatically and carefully expressed. This relationship signifies the essence of salvation—deliverance from the bondage of sin and damnation. It comes specifically in the form of the doctrine of justification, along with the slogans of *sola gratia*, which emphasizes God's sovereignty and *sola fide*, which is "the divinely energized human

response.”⁵⁹¹ Thus, in the *ordo salutis*, justification comes first. It is only after justification, (which includes the forgiveness of guilt and the covering, that is, the imputation of righteousness and its accompanying symbolic crowning) that sanctification (an impartation of righteousness and justification and expressed in a renewal of life) commences.

For divines who comment on other scripture with a focus on justification by faith, the emphasis tends to be on the sovereign power of God to the detriment of human agency. Thus they stress the limited atonement. The metaphor of the impossibility of changing blackness becomes a convenient trope in characterizing human inabilities. Thus, the classical proverb *Aethiopem lavare*, as well as Jer. 13: 23 “Can a Blackamoor change his skin?” are vehicles to symbolize justification by faith alone, by grace alone, by Christ alone in contrast to the impotency of human effort. Consequently, those divines that side with Calvinist thought with regard to predestination are more likely to use blackamoor tropes in the seventeenth century than preachers that favor more human responsibility in salvation.

Conclusion

It is ironic that through the Reformation emphasis on the primacy of scripture, or *sola Scriptura*, attention is paid to the bride of the *Songs*, which symbolically places a black woman center stage in the drama of human salvation. This also casts the black female image as the signature embodiment of humanity in teachings of justification. Thus through the focus on Ethiopian and Blackamoor ethnicity in religious texts that comment

⁵⁹¹ Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and Justification: English Evangelical theology, 1640-1790: An Evaluation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 177.

on justifying faith in the mystical marriage of the bride and the Bridegroom Christ in the *Song of Songs*, for many seventeenth-century English divines blackness becomes a symbol of redemption. By using African identity to represent all humanity in their commentaries on the Song of Songs, many seventeenth-century English divines advocate the inclusion of all races and ethnicities in teachings on the justification of believers by Christ. All human beings are identified with Ethiopian sinners, and specifically, the elect with the Ethiopian bride. This means that English men specifically cast themselves in the form and image of a black woman in characterizing the drama of salvation. Ultimately, the black female represents every person, the model for humanity as well as the justified elect. Particularly within the context of early modern English society, this stress on Ethiopian or Blackamoor female identity as evil and depraved yet elected and chosen for salvation takes on further irony. Blacks, and consequently black women, were among the most marginalized and reviled in early modern English society. Yet, the literary paradox is more striking. Christ died for the least of these. And the first shall be last, and the last shall be first. Therefore, the imagery of Blackamoors and Ethiopians redeemed in early modern English religious texts reflects God's willingness to sacrifice and elect the lowliest of the low for redemption.

CHAPTER IV

MASQUES AND MIRRORS: 'AETHIOPEM LAVARE' AND SANCTIFICATION IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

Images of blackness and black ethnicity in many early modern English religious texts symbolize sin, and these in turn are incorporated into teachings on justification by faith alone. The use of black tropes in some early modern English religious texts expresses the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer following justification. The classical proverb, *Aethiopem lavare*, or to wash the Ethiopian, was commonly referred to during the early modern period as “washing the blackamoor white,” and used as a metaphor to symbolize the pursuit of holiness. However, the rhetorical usage of the tropes symbolically depicts sanctification, usually understood as only partially attainable in this life, as the ultimate transformation of an Ethiopian or Blackamoor individual into a European at the eschaton. Black ethnicity, representing sin, or the forensic state of justification, is transformed into white European identity in the process of sanctification or “washing.” Many of these interpretations stem from the Jer. 13:23 reference, “Can a Blackamoor/Ethiopian change his skin?”

However, because the emphasis of early modern English divines in the use of black ethnic rhetoric is on Protestant doctrine, references are primarily to sin and justification in religious texts. That is, black ethnicity is used to symbolize sin and as the basis to characterize human impossibilities in the work of grace in justification. However, there are only a few references in which black ethnic rhetoric is used to symbolize

sanctification. This is due to the understanding of the Protestant doctrine itself. The case can be made that Luther's theology does not emphasize works or sanctification. And this is evident in English divines application of that theology in the use of black ethnic rhetoric. Further, because of the racial undertones of the use of the rhetoric—the belief that blackness was inherently evil and incapable of redemption—fewer divines arguably used the metaphor of transferring blackness to whiteness.

The first section of this chapter indicates that in the early seventeenth century, the theme of the transformation of black African ethnicity to whiteness was a significant theme in popular royal English masques during the reign of James I. Second, the chapter shows that the proverb *Aethiopem Lavare*, or to wash an Ethiopian white, resurrected from antiquity, had become quite popular in early modern English Renaissance culture. Moreover, the prevalent cultural imagery of whitening is juxtaposed with interpretations of washing as purification from sin, evident largely in English Reformed understandings of the doctrine of sanctification (rather than the Anglican teachings reflected in the Thirty-Nine Articles). Based on the analysis of references on images of blackness on sanctification in early modern English religious texts, some writers characterize the process of sanctification as the eventual metamorphosis of a black African into a white European. However, the majority of English divines who use blackamoor images in sanctification promote a Calvinist or Reformed theology. Thus, the stress on perfection is as the work of God limited by human sinfulness in this life. They conceive the realization of ultimate perfection (i.e. whiteness) as the goal for heavenly fulfillment.

Literary Themes of Blackness and Sanctification

When Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blackness* (the earliest record of blackface paint used on the English stage) was first performed at Whitehall Palace on January 6, 1605, the plot expressly arranged for a sequel, *The Masque of Beauty*.⁵⁹² This is because the first masque called for the Daughters of Niger, played by Queen Anne and her ladies in waiting painted as Africans, to be washed of their blackness.⁵⁹³ Since this feat was impossible to enact on stage, a second masque, with the Daughters presented as already magically whitened, was written.⁵⁹⁴ Masques, those stylized courtly pageants complete with music, dancing, and spoken verse, were quite popular during the Jacobean era and were used to introduce the Stuart royal dynasty. *Blackness*⁵⁹⁵ was the first masque

⁵⁹² The printed texts of *The Masque of Blackness* and *The Masque of Beauty* were published together in 1608, in quarto form by the bookseller Thomas Thorpe; they were reprinted in the first folio collection of the playwright Ben Jonson's works in 1616. The title-page of the quarto opens: 'The / Characters / of / Two royall Masques. / The one of Blacknesse, / The other of Beavtie.' (A1 blank; A2, the title-page with the verso blank; A3-C2, *The Masque of Blackness*; C2v-E2v, *The Masque of Beauty*). The queen and her ladies in waiting were spectacularly costumed in outfits designed by the famous theatrical architect and designer Inigo Jones.

⁵⁹³ In seventeenth-century England, as opposed to several other European countries, women were not permitted to appear on public stages. It was not until the Restoration (1660-62), that actresses were allowed in English public theatres. However, an exception was made in 1605 when Queen Anne and her noble ladies became the first women performers allowed to perform on the stage in the court masque. Many early seventeenth-century English theatre fans openly admired foreign actresses who travelled with acting troupes to the country. However, puritans openly attacked not only plays and entertainments but especially performing women who they likened unto prostitutes.

⁵⁹⁴ In lines 179-204 of *The Masque of Blackness*, Jonson writes that the court ladies will appear whitened one year later. However, it was actually three years later, in 1608, when the sequel production *The Masque of Beauty*, was performed in London.

⁵⁹⁵ Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness* in Stephen Orgel, ed., *Ben Jonson: Complete Masques* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 61-74. See also Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness, Personated at the Court at Whitehall, on the Twelfth-Night, 1605* in Henry Morley, ed., *Masques and Entertainments* (London, 1890). Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness and The Masque of Beauty*, in C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson: The Man and His Works*, vol. VII (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925) 169-180 and 181-194; Hardin Aasand, "'To Blanch an Ethiop and Revive a Corse': Queen Anne and *The Masque of Blackness*" *SEL* 1500-1900 32/2: (1992) 271-285; Anthony G. Barthelemy, *Black Face, Maligned Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987); Ruth Cowhig, "Blacks in English Renaissance Drama and the Role of Shakespeare's *Othello*," in David Dabydeen, ed., *The Black Presence in English Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 1-25; Kathryn Schwarz, "Amazon Reflections in the Jacobean Queen's

commissioned during the reign of James I, and in his introduction to the text, Jonson notes that the Queen expressly requested to dress herself and her ladies up as “Blackamoors.” Dutifully, Jonson composed a story about twelve black nymphs, daughters of the river god Niger, who believe they are the loveliest in the world until they hear from strange Northern poets (“Poore, brain-sicke men,” Niger calls them, l. 156), that whiteness is the epitome of beauty. In their distress, they beseech the Moon goddess Aethiopia in their prayers to help them. Aethiopia knows something of their situation. She herself was once black, but like the African water goddesses became aware of her blighted condition and sought whiteness in the same place to which she now directs them—England. Previously, operating on the rumor that the source of white beauty is to be found in an isle ending with ‘-itania,’ the daughters had frantically tried all the countries they knew — Mauritania (North Africa), Lusitania (Portugal), and Aquitania (France) — with no success.⁵⁹⁶ It is Aethiopia who reveals to them that Britannia is ruled by a benevolent king, whose light is greater than the sun and who possesses mystical powers strong enough to do the impossible, that is, “of force / To blanch an Aethiope, and revive a Cor’s [corpse]” (ll. 254-55). Aethiopia precribes the black daughters to stay in snowy “Albion” for one year. During that time, each month they must bathe in the ocean. Then, they will appear before the king (at *The Masque of Beauty*), his salvific light having made them white.⁵⁹⁷ Three years later, in 1608, *Beauty* was performed again in the (newly refurbished) banqueting room of Whitehall. In the sequel, the number of court

Masque," in *SEL 1500-1900* 35/2: (1995), 293-319; Leah S. Marcus, "Jonson and the Court," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson*, Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart, eds., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 30-42; Richard Dutton, *Ben Jonson, Authority, Criticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

⁵⁹⁶ These countries symbolize the most highly competitive group of European colonizing nations during the early seventeenth century. Britannia, the northernmost, is considered the whitest in ethnicity.

⁵⁹⁷ William Over, "Familiarizing the Colonized in Ben Jonson's *Masques*" in *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas*, Vol. 2, No. 2, June 2004, 27-50.

ladies was increased from twelve to sixteen, four additional daughters of Niger, “Of their blacke kind (whereof their Syre had store)” (l. 75), having also been seduced to the allure of whiteness.⁵⁹⁸ The European tradition of assigning monarchical powers for healing is emphasized in the character of King James, considered to be the Messiah-like monarch, who “alleviates” the African women of their condition of blackness, giving them a white English identity. *Blackness* and *Beauty* thus reinforces European ideologies of racial and cultural superiority, particularly a preference for whiteness, which began in the classical period and was reinforced in the world of the European Renaissance. In this tradition, all people, even Africans, desire whiteness.

Consequently a major theme of *Blackness* and *Beauty* is the nature of light, which underscores the binary between blackness and whiteness. In *Blackness*, the characters Aethiopia (the Moon goddess) and Niger (the River god) respectively represent the white and black aspects of this binary. Aethiopia, previously black, now milky and resplendent in her brilliantly silver costume, has been co-opted into whiteness and assimilated into Englishness. The River god Niger on the other hand, is defiantly and essentially black, and winds up banished from England (ll. 327-29).⁵⁹⁹ Niger’s speech (ll. 135-203) hailing the superior beauty of blackness over whiteness fails to convince his daughters to remain black, despite his “herculean labors” (l. 133). Although he protests that “in their black the perfect’st beauty grows” (l. 144), they have been seduced by the desire for whiteness. Niger is also unable to make the case that blackness is primeval, and

⁵⁹⁸ *The Masque of Beauty*, originally intended for the following holiday season, was displaced by *Hymenaei*, a masque written for the wedding of the Earl of Essex and Frances Howard in 1606.

⁵⁹⁹ Jonson's marginal notes in the earliest printed editions of *Blackness* use classical references including Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, and Pliny (ll. 173-77) to support many of Niger's positions in defense of African origins and identity. These ideas support the view that Africans were the earliest humans.

that his beautiful daughters are actually “the first formed dames of earth,” (l. 138).⁶⁰⁰ Human rationalizations in this instance have no power. No human effort or strength can either wash the Blackamoor white, or prevent that whitening. Supernatural power preemptively lulls the women away from their father’s reasoning. As Niger states, “To frustrate which strange error, oft, I sought...till they confirm’d at length / By miracle, what I, with so much strength / Of argument resisted” (ll. 177-81). Moreover, divine power is embodied in the sovereignty of King James.⁶⁰¹ James’ power is deterministic, eclipsing all human agency despite Niger’s plaintive cry, “Vertue, though chain’d to earth, will still live free;/ And hell it selfe must yeeld to industrie” (ll. 129-30). Niger cannot prevail against the divine sovereignty of the king’s power. In *Beauty*, the sequel to *Blackness*, the character Niger is replaced with the feminine figure of Night, who is also “mad to see an Aethiope washed white” (l. 81). Resolutely black in identity like Niger, she vainly tries to prevent the African daughters from going north to Britannia and transforming from black color to white. This failure results in “The glorious Isle [England]” to “take place / Of all the earth for Beautie” (ll. 126-27). Just like Niger, Night is too stubborn in her will, and thus remains black and is therefore cast out of England. Hence, the black characters Niger and Night are depicted as weak and ultimately conquered by James, thus portraying the hierarchical binary of blackness subdued by whiteness.

⁶⁰⁰ Ovid’s story of Phaethon is an etiology of blackness frequently told by Renaissance writers. In the poem, as a result of Phaethon’s “heedless flames,” all “Aethiopes” are “blacke, with black dispaire” (ll. 162-64). After being cursed with blackness, Africans revolt against this fallen state, desiring to be transformed back to an original state of white skin color. This aligns with climate theory, prioritized by Europeans, in which it was believed that all humans were once white before some were made black by the sun. This supposes the superiority of whiteness by positing the instability of blackness.

⁶⁰¹ Ben Jonson’s *Irish Masque at Court* (1613) makes the same point about James’ divine power, which transforms the Irish into English identities. During the change, the barbaric Celtic clothing and demeanor of the Irish are transformed into acceptable Jacobean court dress and comportment during the playing of English court music.

The masques reflect the question of black origins, which were considered as ancient as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In that classical story, Phaeton, an Ethiop, while welding the sun-chariot through the sky, loses his grip and is blackened—he and all the Ethiopians for posterity. Ovid's story was much in circulation in Renaissance England.⁶⁰² This explains Ben Jonson's reference in the *Masque of Blackness* to “one Phaethon, that fired the world/And that, before the heedless flames were hurled/About the globe, the Aethiopes were...fair...”⁶⁰³ Of ancient African origins the seventeenth-century poet William Basse also mused, “The Aethiopians then were white and fayre,/ Though by the worlds combustion since made black/ When wanton Phaeton overthrew the Sun.”⁶⁰⁴ Consequently, the early modern English readily adopted the myth that whiteness was primeval, originally designed by God, and blackness a sinful aberration. Even on English Renaissance stages, when it came to African characters, blackness was considered peculiar and contrary to goodness. (As the Moor Othello is described, “If virtue no delighted beauty lack, /Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.”⁶⁰⁵) Moreover, in the case of Shakespeare's plays, the inevitable white actors playing African characters used washable black face paint as a covering. Thus the proverbial phrase ‘Washing the Ethiop (or Blackamoor) white’ took on subtler meaning. Black skin, of course, was not only considered physically unappealing, but also signified the negative attributes of character defined in European discourse. For many it was believed possible, through labor, to remove these defects of character (and accompanying blackness). Indeed in *Blackness*,

⁶⁰² Linda Van Norden, *The Black Feet of the Peacock: The Color Concept ‘Black’ From the Greeks Through the Renaissance* (Boston, MA: Univ. Press of America, 1985), 68.

⁶⁰³ Ben Jonson, *The Masque of Blackness* in Stephen Orgel, ed., *Ben Jonson: Complete Masques* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), IX, 39-40.

⁶⁰⁴ R. Warwick Bond, ed., *The Poetical Works of William Basse (1602-1653)* (London, 1893), 279.

⁶⁰⁵ William Shakespeare, *Othello: The Moor of Venice*, Michael Neill, ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1.3.285-86.

the Queen and the noble women's perceptible European identities and costumes of azure, silver, pearl, and large feathers contrast strikingly with the black pigment of their makeup, confirming in reverse society's hierarchical dominance of white over black.⁶⁰⁶ Thus, the theatrical (burlesque) appropriation of African identity by British royalty in blackface, later removed in the *Masque of Beauty*, becomes a visual manifestation of the Renaissance phrase "washing the Blackamoor white."

Why were the English obsessed with blackness during the early modern period? In the seventeenth century, England's expanding mercantilism, intent on overtaking the more established trading cartels (which involved slave trafficking) of Portugal, Spain, France, and Holland, resulted in the growing presence of black Africans. This fueled increasing anxiety over black people in Britain. Ben Jonson's dramas remarkably presage European colonization while symbolizing the Jacobean nationalist imperial agenda threatened by cultural diversity. *Blackness* and *Beauty* conceptualize the British Empire and colonialism by creating and then destabilizing blackness, thus making English global domination less problematic.⁶⁰⁷ To maintain the position of European physiognomy and

⁶⁰⁶ The most famous reaction to *The Masque of Beauty* was extremely negative, written by Sir Dudley Carleton, who recounts in detail:

"At the further end was a great Shell in form of a Skallop, wherein were four seats; on the lowest sat the Queen with my lady Bedford; on the rest were placed the Ladies Suffolk, Darby, Rich, Effingham, Ann Herbert, Susan Herbert, Elizabeth Howard, Walsingham, and Bevil. Their Apparell was rich but too Curtizan-like for such great ones. Instead of Vizzards, their Faces and Arms up to the Elbows, were painted black, which was Disguise sufficient, for they were hard to be known; but it became nothing so well as their red and white, and you cannot imagine a more ugly Sight, then a troop of lean-cheek'd Moors."

(Marion Wynne-Davies, "The Queen's Masque: Renaissance Woman and the Seventeenth-Century Court Masque," in S. P. Cerasano & M. Wynne-Davies, eds., *Gloriana's Face: Women, Public and Private in the English Renaissance*, New York, NY: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992, 79-104; 89).

⁶⁰⁷ See Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and The Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 1984; Anthony J. Barker, *The African Link: British Attitudes to the Negro in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1550-1807* (London: Frank Cass), 1978; Emily C. Bartels, "Imperialist Beginnings: Richard Hakluyt and the Construction of Africa," *Criticism* 34: 529-560, 1992;

culture as superior, visual spaces and places are conceived that effectively proclaim the hegemony of whiteness while dislocating the presence of the “other.”⁶⁰⁸ Both dramas therefore symbolize the subjugation of West African cultures that accompanied British imperialism. *Blackness* and *Beauty* were also interpreted theologically. The removal of the black skin color of the daughters of Niger was interpreted as symbolizing salvation.⁶⁰⁹

The Renaissance themes of black skin color being washed white as emblematic of purification are given symbolic presentation through the story of the masques. King James, representative of England itself, is presented as Messiah, with the power to save people from the blackness of sin. Thus, in both *Blackness* and *Beauty*, the focal point of whitening is not only the king but also the land itself, (“This *Land*, that now lifts into the temperate ayre

Albion now yachiffe,⁶¹⁰ is Niger’s daughters will

“perfection have,” that is, they will be turned white after a period of trial in the ocean.

They are carefully instructed to “Keep, still, your reverence to [Albion]” and “shout for joy” after gaining his (King James) favor.⁶¹¹ Whitening actually takes place through a

process that begins with a sudden “miracle,” which guides the twelve African nymphs

“To comfort of a greater Light, / Who formes all beauty, with his sight” (ll. 194-95). The

“greater Light” is James, who not only turns blackness into whiteness, but “His light

scientiall is, and (past mere nature) / Can salve the rude defects of every creature” (ll.

256-57). In the performance, the eventual transformation from African to European takes

place through supernatural forces displayed on the stage through special effects designed

⁶⁰⁸ Elliot H. Tokson, *The popular image of the black man in English drama, 1550-1688* (Boston, MA: G.K. Hall, 1982), 129.

⁶⁰⁹ Anthony Gerard Bethemeny, *Black Face, Maligned Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 21, 26.

⁶¹⁰ Jonson. ll. 205-206.

⁶¹¹ Jonson. ll. 359-61.

to dazzle the audience. Thus the sets and scenes call for stage theatricality produced by technology that simulates the manifestation of divine power, subjecting to irony the popular English Renaissance saying, “You labor in vain to wash an Ethiop white.”⁶¹² The meaning is clear that Britannia, through the power of James, is ultimately triumphant over the subversive forces of darkness, and that order, displayed as whiteness, will be restored. During the plays’ productions, these political associations would have been made striking for the audience as well as the king, in his elevated royal seat away from the stage, yet also commanding the attention of the entire room. The dramas were not only a celebration of monarchy but symbolized also the great powers James’ reign portended for the growth (through imperialism and colonialism) of the realm. Although James himself did not actually play a role in the masques, his placement above the audience situated the king somehow as part of the spectacle, graciously overseeing the events. Thematically, it is ultimately his energy and power that overcomes the evils in nature and brings beauty out of chaos, white out of blackness. Therefore the theme of washing away blackness, prevalent in many facets of popular society, was co-opted dramatically by the monarchical agenda in order to promote a program of international aggression and dominance in the early seventeenth century. This coincides with the images, fables, and proverbs about washing Ethiopian or Blackamoor ethnicity in English Renaissance culture

⁶¹² The saying, “to wash an Ethiop is to labor in vain,” a version of which is later quoted in *Blackness* (ll. 254-55), was so commonly used during the Renaissance that it was often shortened, as in John Fletcher’s *The Knight of Malta*, where Oriana’s black maid Zanthiais is called “My little labor in vain” (*Comedies and tragedies written by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher*, 1647, 1.1.198).

The Classical Trope of Washing the Ethiopian White

The frequent use of the phrase “Washing the Blackamoor/Ethiopian” (and the related scripture verse Jer. 13:23 “Can a Blackamoor/Ethiopian change his skin?”) not only in Renaissance texts but also in contemporary religious texts expressed early Modern England’s popular theme of turning blackness into whiteness.⁶¹³ This phrase was also shared with the title of a fable, popularly known as “Washing a Blackamoor White.” The Blackamoor fable relates a classic exercise in human futility by dramatizing the useless and impossible attempt to wash the black skin off a dark-skinned African.

A Man gave Mony for a Black, upon an Opinion that his Swarthy Colour was rather flattery then Nature; and the Fault of his last Master, in a Great Measure, that he kept him no Cleaner: He took him Home with him, and try’d All manner of Washes to bring him to a Better Complexion: But there was no Good to be Done upon him; beside, that the very Tampering Cast him into a Disease.⁶¹⁴

The moral of the story is that some acts are simply impractical and useless. Fruitless actions result from working in vain. Thus, wisdom, in this scenario, informs one that making certain kinds of attempts will be completely unsuccessful. Thus, a key word for the fable is ‘impossibilities.’ Another English version of the Blackmore fable, which emphasizes the inability to change human nature, reads:

Strangely was a man mistaken, who having bought an Aethiopian, or Black-a-moor, imagined that that swarthy colour came by the fellows Slothfulness, in neglecting to keep himself clean; and with great Labour and Industry would fain have washed him white, but it was Impossible; For all the many changes of Water, and all the pains taken in rubbing and scrubbing him, could not make the Aethiopian change his hue. This shows the Impossibility of changing that

⁶¹³ Anu Korhonen, “Washing the Ethiopian White: Conceptualising black skin in Renaissance England” in T. F. Earle, K. J. P. Lowe, eds., *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (New York, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 94.

⁶¹⁴ Aesop, *Fables of Aesop and other eminent mythologists with morals and reflexions*, (1692), 143.

which Nature has fixed in Man; And exposes their Folly, who would attempt things which are impossible to be done.⁶¹⁵

The fable purportedly originated from a corpus of material based on the sayings of the ancient fabulist Aesop from the sixth century BCE. Legend surrounds the biography and identity of Aesop, and even English writers like Philip Ayres indicate that among the ancients, “some Arabians would make his Descent to have been from the Hebrews, the Persians deny it, and affirm him rather an Aethiopian, which the Etymology of his Name seems to confirm...”⁶¹⁶ English literary sources also associate Aesop with being an Ethiopian (or Blackamore) and having an abnormal appearance:

He sees a Gipsen standing at the doore,
All blab-lipt, beetle browd, and bottle nozed,
Most greasie, nastie, his apparell poore,
His other parts, as Painters are disposed,
To giue to Esop; such a Blackamore
Could not be seene elsewhere, as he supposed,
So vile avilage, and so bad a grace,
To make eu’n Paradise alothsome place.⁶¹⁷

There are some associations between the historical figure Aesop and Ethiopian identity in other early modern English literary references too.⁶¹⁸ For example, a verse by the satirist Richard Ames states “Let the Gallant be Blackamoor or Jew, / Ugly, and of an Aethiopian Hew; / Deform’d like Aesop, and as old as Parr.”⁶¹⁹ Similarly, the early modern English Reference book, *The wonders of the little world* reports of Aesop that “he was a Black, and thereupon had his name; for that Aesop, and Aethiope have the

⁶¹⁵ Philip Ayres, *Mythologia ethica, or, Three centuries of Æsopian fables in English prose* (1689), 252.

⁶¹⁶ Ayres, 252.

⁶¹⁷ Lodovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso in English heroical verse, by Sr Iohn Harington of Bathe Knight* (1607), 128.

⁶¹⁸ Other sources claim that Aesop had Phrygian ethnicity.

⁶¹⁹ Richard Ames, *The female fire-ships a satyr against whoring: in a letter to a friend, just come to town* (1691), 12.

same signification.⁶²⁰ Many writers have speculated that Aesop personally experienced the very scenario described in the Washing a Blackmore fable.⁶²¹

Erasmus, who revives the use of the Blackamoor/Ethiopian fable through his reintroduction of the proverb in the *Adagia* (1500), is the early modern source who (incorrectly) attributes its classical origins to Aesop. Erasmus' adage is a synopsis of the fable: "He that washes a Black a moore, or powers water in a siue, loses his labour: or, hee will neuer go the way that he spéeds in."⁶²² He explains its origins:

The adage, it seems, comes from a fable of Aesop. A man bought an Ethiopian, and thinking his color was not natural, but the result of a former master's negligence, he tried everything which is used to whiten clothes, and so tormented the poor creature which perpetual washing that he made the man ill—but he still stayed the color he had always been.⁶²³

Similarly, an adage included in a seventeenth-century collection of English proverbs is entitled: "To wash a Blackmore white" and described as "Aethiopem lavare: Labour in vain. Parallel whereto are many other Latine Proverbs, as laterem lavare, arenas arare."⁶²⁴ Regularly found also in early modern English dictionaries, compendiums, as well as early modern Latin/English collections of sayings and grammar, the "Aethiopem lavas" phrase influenced English divines.⁶²⁵ Thus, not only Richard Ames, elegist of Richard Baxter, as aforementioned, uses the phrase but also Thomas Barlow writes of "a ridiculous

⁶²⁰ Nathaniel Wanley, *The wonders of the little world, or, A general history of man in six books* (1673), 29.

⁶²¹ Francis Barlow, *Aesop's fables with his life in English, French & Latin* (1666), 12.

⁶²² Desiderius Erasmus, *Adagia in Latine and English containing five hundred proverbs: very profitable for the vse of those who aspire to further perfection in the Latine tongue* (1621), 9; "Aurum habet Tholosanum."

⁶²³ William Barker, ed., *The Adages of Erasmus* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2001), I. iv. 50; 79.

⁶²⁴ John Ray, *A collection of English proverbs* (Cambridge, 1678), 229.

⁶²⁵ See Iohanne Leycester, *Enchiridion, seu, Fasciculus adagiorum selectissimorum, or, A manuell of the choysest adagies* (1623); John Clarke, *Paroemiologia Anglo-Latina in usum scholarum concinnata. Or proverbs English, and Latine, methodically disposed according to the common-place heads, in Erasmus his adages*, (1639).

indeavour, Aethiopem Lavare, to wash a Blackamore, and do Impossibilities.”⁶²⁶ The proverb is often shortened as “Aethiopem lavas” and occurs in several early modern Latin/English collections of sayings and grammar. Variations in some English texts include: “To Lose Labour: Aethiopem dealbare. Laterem lavare.”⁶²⁷ Others are expressed in the form of a hypothetical question: “Meos carpere qui velit labores: / Nam quis Aethiopem velit lavare?”⁶²⁸ or “Aethiopem quid lavas?”⁶²⁹ Some accounts are dialogic, such as “Sed cur verba, tibi non proficientia perdo? / Cur, velut Aethiopem, te sine fruge lauo?”⁶³⁰ *Biblia Polyglotta* translator Brian Walton uses the term in reaction to his detractors, writing, “I shall but Aethiopem lavare.”⁶³¹ And, explications of the fable vary from resource to resource, so that the *Bibliotheca Eliotæ* (1542) describes the proverb and story as:

Aethiopem lauas, thou washest a Moren, or Moore, A prouerbe applied to hym that praiseth a thyng that is nought, or teacheth a naturall foole wysedom. This prouerbe grew of one that bought a Mooren, and thynkyng that the blackenesse of his saynne happened by the neglygence of his fyrste mayster, he ceased not to wasshe the Mooren contynu ally with suche thinges, as he thought wold make hym whyte, by the whiche labour and washynge he so vexed the poore slaue, that

⁶²⁶ Thomas Barlow, *Brutum fulmen, or, The bull of Pope Pius V concerning the damnation, excommunication, and deposition of Q. Elizabeth* (1681), 258.

⁶²⁷ Thomas Farnaby, *Phrases oratoriae elegantiores. Editio septima; cui accesserunt phrases aliquot poetica*. (1638), C3.

⁶²⁸ Giles Fletcher, *Licia, or Poemes of loue in honour of the admirable and singular vertues of his lady, to the imitation of the best Latin poets, and others* (Cambridge, 1593), “Ad Lectorem” (To the Reader): “Who wants to pick my labors?/ For who would wash the Ethiopian?” or “What can wash the Ethiopian?”

⁶²⁹ Thomas Farnaby, *He tes anthologias anthologia Florilegium epigrammatum graecorum, eorumque latino versu à varijs redditorum* (1650), 2.

⁶³⁰ Matthias Leius, *Aruillarij vbij Germani, liber De triumphata barbarie* (1621), C3; “Why the words, which profit nothing?/ You are an Ethiopian, you wash without fruit?”

⁶³¹ Brian Walton, *The considerator considered: or, A brief view of certain considerations upon the Biblia polyglotta, the prolegomena and appendix thereof* (1659), 15. See also *Aesop's fables in English and Latin: every one whereof is divided into its distinct periods, marked with figures* (1700), 156, “De Aethiope”; John Clarke, *Phraseologia puerilis, Anglo-Latina, in usum tirocinii scholastici. Or, selected Latine and English phrases wherein the purity and propriety of both languages is expressed* (1638).

he brought him into a great sycknes, his skynne remainynge styll as blacke as it was before.⁶³²

This version is also published in Thomas Cooper's, *Thesaurus linguae Romanae & Britannicae* (1578).⁶³³ Another adage graphically describes the effort taken in the process of making an Ethiopian white: "esset Aethiopem dealbare aut oleum & operam omnino perdere."⁶³⁴ Washing an Ethiopian white is also the subject of the phrase, "Tu deformem, ironi lavabis Aethiopem, & ille rursus te deformiter albieantem," which uses the washing metaphor to critique hypocritical behavior.⁶³⁵ Even early modern writers use the Aesopian phrase in the revivification of classical genres, as in the Cambridge Latin Comedy *Pedantius*, in which a character laments his public failures: "Aethiopem lavo, hic capere non potest influentiam consilij mei, & amore pungitur, tanquam ca."⁶³⁶ Thus, early modern English writers make much use of classical phrases that reference Ethiopians in contemporary neo-Latin poetry, and the 'Washing the Ethiopian' phrase is quite common.⁶³⁷

⁶³² Sir Thomas Elyot, *Bibliotheca Eliotae* (1542), B3.

⁶³³ Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus linguae Romanae & Britannicae* (1578), AE.

⁶³⁴ Michael Maier, *Arcana arcanissima hoc est Hieroglyphica Aegyptio-Græca vulgo necdum cognita* (1613), 245; "to whiten the Ethiopian with oil, and to lose attention or lavish praise."

⁶³⁵ John Northleigh, *Exercitationes philologicae tres prima* (Oxon, 1681), 34; "You wash the ugly Ethiopian again, and uselessly fail to whiten him."

⁶³⁶ Edward Forset, *Pedantius. Comædia, olim Cantabrig* (1631). 52; "I wash an Ethiopian, as he cannot receive the influence of my council and pricked love."

⁶³⁷ Another phrase used frequently by early modern English writers is Juvenal's phrase from *Satires* 2, line 23 "Loripedem rectus derideat, Aethiopem albus" which means literally, "Let the straight-limbed man deride the one with deformed foot, let the white man deride the black African," and is found in several references: [Juvenal, *The satires*, trans. Niall Rudd, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991]. Cf. Richard Crakanthorpe, *Vigilius dormitans. Romes seer overseene, Or A treatise of the Fift General Councell held at Constantinople, anno 553. under Iustinian the Emperour, in the time of Pope Vigilius* (1631), 440; "Aethiopem albus derideat, hee should first have washt away those foule blemishes out of his owne Annals, more blacke herewith than any Aethiopian." Patrick Forbes, Eubulus, or A dialogue, wherein a rugged Romish rhyme, (inscribed, Catholicke questions, to the Protestaut [sic]) is confuted, and the questions there-of answered (Aberdene, 1627), 96; "Necessarie to Salvation sayeth the one partie, then might hee, with the more credite, praesume, to taxe our Distractions: Loripedem rectus deridet Aethiopem albus." Thomas Gipps, *A sermon against corrupting the word of God preached at Christ Church in Manchester upon a publick occasion on the 11th day of July, 1696* (1697), 6; "Loripedem Rectus deridat,

One can trace back the expressions ‘Aethiopem lavare’, ‘Aethiopem lavas’, and ‘Aethiopem dealbas’ to an epigram by the second-century Greek rhetorician, satirist, and novelist Lucian of Samosata.⁶³⁸ Recorded in his *Greek Anthology* as “Why dost thou vainly wash thy Indian’s body? Chuck the trick. Thou canst not enheliate black night,” Lucian’s contribution indicates that in antiquity, (as would often be the case during the early modern period) ‘Indian’ was often used interchangeably for ‘Ethiopian’.⁶³⁹ Elsewhere Lucian writes of “wasting words, and as the proverb has it, trying to scrub an Ethiop white.”⁶⁴⁰ The fable is also attributed to the fourth-century rhetorician Aphthonius. During the Renaissance, after Erasmus’ revival of interest in classical adages, expanded editions ultimately had wide circulation in Europe throughout the sixteenth century.⁶⁴¹ Further, the attribution of the Ethiopian proverb to Aesop by Erasmus placed it thenceforth in early modern Aesopian fabulist collections.⁶⁴² (For example, the German poet Hieronymus Osius includes it in his *Fabulae Aesopi carmine*

Aethiopem Albus.” James Gordon, *The reformed bishop, or, XIX articles tendered by Philarchaies, well-wisher of the present government of the Church of Scotland, as it is settled by law, in order to the further establishment thereof*, (1679), 249; “*Loripedem rectus irrideat Aethiopem albus.*”

⁶³⁸ “[T]o wash the Ethiopian, you wash the Ethiopian, you whiten the Ethiopian.”

⁶³⁹ Lucian, *The Greek Anthology*, trans., Shane Leslie (London, 1929), Epigram 11, 428, 213. See also Barry Baldwin, “The Epigrams of Lucian,” *Phoenix* Vol. 29, No. 4 (Winter, 1975), 311-335.

⁶⁴⁰ Lucian, *Adversus indoctum et libros multos ementem*, in *Works*, trans. A. M. Harmon (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 28.

⁶⁴¹ Erasmus, William Barker, ed., I iv 50; 81. See also Erika Rummel, “The Reception of Erasmus’ Adages in Sixteenth-Century England,” *Renaissance and Reformation* Vol. 18, No. 2 (1994), 19-30. Erasmus had in fact retrieved the adage (during his research on the project which took place primarily in England) from the fifteenth-century Greek rhetorician Micheal Apostolius’ collection, *Paroemiae* [*Proverbs*]: Michael Apostolius, *Paroemiae* ed., Daniel Heinsius, Leiden, 1619.

⁶⁴² Jean Michel Massing, “From Greek Proverb to Soap Advert: Washing the Ethiopian,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 58, (1995), 185. In reality, the story does not appear in the most ancient editions of Aesopian fables. Instead, it is attributed to Aesop’s sixth-century BCE (circa) contemporary Ahiqar, “If water would stand still in heaven, and a black crow become white, and myrrh grow sweet as honey, then ignorant men and fools might understand and become wise” (Saying 59). A similar tale is found in the fabulist collections of the fourth-century CE rhetorician Aphthonius. In Aphthonius’ fable, titled ‘The Raven and the Swan,’ a raven, jealous of the white plumage of a swan, obsessively tries to bathe away its black color, and ends up dying of hunger. See Gert-Jan van Dijk, “The rhetorical fable collection of Aphthonius and the relation between theory and practice,” in eds., Richard Trachsler, Van den Abeele Baudouin and Paul Wackers, *Yearbook of the International Reynard Society*, Vol. 23 (2011) vi., 218; 186-204; Francisco Rodriguez, Adrados and Gert-Jan van Dijk, *History of the Graeco-Latin fable*, vol. 3 (Brill, NL: 2003), 467.

elegiaco redditae, 1564, a collection of nearly three hundred poems based on Aesop's Fables). Moreover, illustrations of a black man being washed became quite popular in emblem books throughout Renaissance Europe.⁶⁴³ Indeed, the first known emblem depicting this scene is found in Andrea Alciati's 1531 Italian *Emblematum liber* and is captioned with Lucian's epigram.⁶⁴⁴ The earliest extant English emblem book, *Tow Hundred Poosees* (1566) by Thomas Palmer, includes this image, referencing both the Alciati visual and Erasmus literary sources.⁶⁴⁵ It names the illustration "Impossible things," with the subtitle "Ethiopian being washed white."⁶⁴⁶ Twenty years later, the second known English emblem book, Geoffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblems* (1586), a favorite of William Shakespeare, depicts the same image.⁶⁴⁷ Dozens of editions of emblem books illustrating individuals washing a blackamoor in the futile attempt to make

⁶⁴³ Some English editions of published collections of Aesopian fables include: Aesop, *Here begynneth the book of the subtil histories and fables of Esope whiche were translated out of Frensshe in to Englysshe by Wylham Caxton at Westmynstre in the yere of oure Lorde M. CCCCX xxiii* (Westmynstre, 1484); Aesop, *Æsops fables, with the fables of Phaedrus moralized, translated verbatim, according to the Latine, for the use of grammar schooles, and for children* (1646); Aesop, *Æsop return'd from Tunbridge, or, Aesop out of his wits in a few select fables in verse* (1698); Philip Ayres, *Mythologia ethica, or, Three centuries of Æsopian fables in English prose done from Æsop, Phædrus, Camerarius, and all other eminent authors on this subject* (London, 1689).

⁶⁴⁴ A. Alciati, *Emblematum liber*, (Augsburg 1531), fol. E3, 185. The caption runs: *Abluis Aethiopem; quid frustra? Ah desine. Noctis illustrare nigrae nemo potest tenebras* [You wash an Ethiopian; why the vain labour? Desist. No one can lighten the darkness of black night]. Another English version alternates between Aethiopian and "Black-a-moor. M.P. Tilley's *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1950) lists two cross-referenced entries: (no. B105): "*The Bath of the Blackamoor has sworn not to whiten*" and (no. E186): "*To Wash an Ethiop (blackamoor, moor) white*."

⁶⁴⁵ Jean Michel Massing, "From Greek Proverb to Soap Advert: Washing the Ethiopian," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 58 (1995), 180-201. An English version of the fable, which comes from the collection *Aesop Improved*, substitutes Blackamoore for Ethiopian and is named "Of the Blackamoore."

⁶⁴⁶ John Manning, "Continental Emblem Books in Sixteenth-Century England: The Evidence of Sloane MS. 3794" *Emblematica* 1 (1986) 1-11. See also Michael Bath's *Speaking Pictures: English Emblem Books and Renaissance Culture* (New York: Longman, 1994), 57-69.

⁶⁴⁷ For example, Mary V. Silcox, "'Gleanings Out of Other Mens Harvestes:' Alciato in Whitney's *A Choice of Emblems*" in Michael Bath, John Manning, and Alan R. Young, eds., *The Art of the Emblem: Essays in Honour of Karl Josef Hoeltgen* (New York: AMS Press, 1993), 161-200, is a detailed analysis of the way Whitney shifts the emblems for an English audience. See also Mason Tung, "Whitney's *A Choice of Emblems* Revisited: A Comparative Study of the Manuscript and the Printed Versions," *Studies in Bibliography* 29 (1976), 32-101, especially 79-85. H.H.E. Craster, "The First Draft of Geoffrey Whitney's Emblems (MS. Rawlinson Poetry 56)" *Bodleian Library Record* 6 (1932) 173ff. Peter M. Daly, et al., *The English Emblem Tradition*, vol. 1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

him white are found in this period.⁶⁴⁸ The frequent association of washing black Ethiopian or Blackamoor ethnicity in the English Renaissance through multiple mediums reflects the symbolism of purification. As discussed above, the popular Jacobean masques, *The Masque of Blackness* and *The Masque of Beauty* were interpreted as symbolizing theological transformation, with James I representing a Messiah-like leader overseeing a divinely blessed land, England. English divines would go on to incorporate many of these themes in religious texts on the doctrine of sanctification. The following discussion explores the doctrine of sanctification before analyzing early modern English religious texts that use these blackamoor tropes in theological teachings.

Sanctification and Early Modern English Religious Writings on Black Ethnicity

The metaphor of the blackamoor is frequently used to depict the corruptness of human nature in early modern English texts. This continues to be the case in texts that teach about sanctification. Thus the “Washing an Ethiopian/Blackamoor” trope becomes a handy metaphor in symbolizing sanctification. In the midst of teaching the meaning and importance of justification by faith alone as inspired by *sola scriptura* with particular appeal to the Pauline epistles, the Protestant reformers also emphasized the necessity for sanctity in one’s Christian walk. Luther suggests that there is a continuing relationship between justification and sanctification when he writes, “For God has not yet justified us, that is, He has not made us perfectly righteous or declared our righteousness perfect, but

⁶⁴⁸ Ania Loomba. *Shakespeare, Race, and Colonialism*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 60.

He has made a beginning in order that He might make us perfect.”⁶⁴⁹ As Calvin states, “in our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness.”⁶⁵⁰ Although justification is understood as forensic righteousness declared by God upon the sinner, it also has deeper meaning leading to sanctification. For Calvin, justification is the literal engrafting into Christ.⁶⁵¹ Indeed, the power of justifying faith occurs through the mystical union, or the union with Christ. This is a spiritual union, compared to a spiritual marriage, bonded through the Holy Spirit. Thus the mystical union, which, as Calvin explains in the *Institutes*, is “that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts...so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with him in the gifts with which he has been endowed...we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body...because he deigns to make us one with him.”⁶⁵² Thus Calvin is describing Christ’s imputed righteousness, which is placed upon believers at justification. Calvin writes, “as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and no value,” but through the Holy Spirit, believers have a ‘bond,’ which ‘unites’ them.”⁶⁵³ Thus, the “engrafting in Christ” in justification, which is central to the notion of mystical union, creates the bond between Christ and the believer.⁶⁵⁴

In reflecting on the possibilities of justification and sanctification for the human sinner, some early modern English divines use the imagery in Jer. 13:23 to envision the physical transformation of the removal of spots on a leopard’s skins or the skin color of a

⁶⁴⁹ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, ed., Jaroslav Pelikan (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986), 245.

⁶⁵⁰ Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: 1960). III.16.1.

⁶⁵¹ Calvin, III.3.20

⁶⁵² Calvin, III.10.1.

⁶⁵³ Calvin, III.11.1.

⁶⁵⁴ Dennis E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 86.

black African. For example, William Hampton is astonished to ponder, “but imagine the Leopard should change his spots, and the black More his skinne; imagine they should become new men.⁶⁵⁵” Although human nature cannot save the soul from perdition, God can perform the impossible. Inspired by the Jeremiah text, changing an African’s ethnicity therefore increasingly becomes a figurative illustration of God’s redeeming power. As Arthur Hildersam declares,

Certainly it is as possible for a blackmore to change his skinne, or a leopard his spots, as the Prophet speaketh, Ieremy 13.23. for a Camell to goe through the eye of a needle, as our Saviour saith, Luke 18.25. as for us to have a change wrought in our hearts. But blessed bee God that the thing which is impossible with men, hath beene possible with God, as our Saviour there speaketh, Luke 18.27.⁶⁵⁶

Writers become even more explicit in their characterization of the racial transformation that symbolizes the work of God in the Christian life. This particularly applies to sanctification, for the movement from blackness to whiteness becomes a constant motif of the progression to holiness. For example, Thomas Hall claims that Divine power can perform the inconceivable, writing, “though custom be a second nature, yet the God of nature can change nature; *he can make a black more white*, and take spots from a Leopard, he can turn a Lion into a Lamb, and water into wine.”⁶⁵⁷ The metamorphosis of a black man into a white is thus among the symbols characterizing God’s power in redeeming and sanctifying the elect. Therefore one can observe the progressive emphasis of the analogy of an African losing his blackness to a sinner gradually becoming righteous through God’s power in early modern English religious writings. The post-Restoration bishop John Hacket writes,

⁶⁵⁵ William Hampton, *A proclamation of vvarre from the Lord of Hosts* (1627), 22.

⁶⁵⁶ Arthur Hildersam *CLII lectures vpon Psalme LI preached at Ashby-Delazouch in Leicester-shire* London (1635), 342.

⁶⁵⁷ Thomas Hall, *A practical and polemical commentary* (1658), 98.

but if the supernatural hand be stretched out upon us, then the Blackmore *shall* change his skin, and the Leopard his spots. As the bloud of the Mother after the birth of her Child keeps not the colour of bloud, but becomes milk in her breasts, so after we are begotten again by the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits thereof, our bloody sins shall become milk, and though they be read as Scarlet, they shall be white as snow, Isa. i. 18. Yea, the Prophet says of Jerusalem while it served the Lord, her Nazarites were whiter than snow, purer than milk, Lam. iv. 7. Doth not David promise as much unto himself, if the Lord would renew a right spirit within him? Lavabis me, & dealbabor super nivem; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than the snow. As if by the Sacred Unction from heaven his soul should have a new beauty, which it never had before; a plain Transfiguration, such as our Saviours was in the Mount, so that no Fuller upon earth could make a thing so white. Solomon in all his Royalty was not cloathed like a Lilly of the field: But take Solomon in his repentance, (whereof I perswade my self) and his soul was much whiter than any Lilly in the field. This is a superlative vertue, wherewith the water in my Text is endowed, to cleanse that which was foul from every spot, and to make it surpass the whiteness which it had by nature.⁶⁵⁸

Hacket employs the trope of washing to stress the figurative whiteness of sanctification.

Fruits come forth after the sinner's spirit is begotten anew, and the imagery is of Christ at the Mount of Transfiguration. The symbolism is of Jesus' outer self being transformed while his true being remains the same. This is juxtaposed analogously with the declared status of the justified human soul as righteous contrasted with the work of sanctification left in the believer's life. Thus, this image expresses figuratively what happens to the justified believer, who is declared righteous via Christ's imputed righteousness while actually remaining a sinner, and then gradually becomes righteous through sanctification. Symbolically in justification, the human sinner is black, and the imputed righteousness of Christ covering the sinner is white. When Christ's imputed righteousness is placed on the black sinner, the sinner is declared justified. However, when the sanctification process begins, the blackness underneath, or the black human sinner himself, gradually becomes

⁶⁵⁸ John Hacket. *A century of sermons upon several remarkable subjects*. (1675), 904.

lighter. Robert Jenison makes reference to the same figurative reasoning in an off-handed manner while responding to critics, when he writes: “as if we seuered the imputed righteousness of Christ from the inward work of sanctification, and made a iustified man, like the deuill, appearing as an Angel of light; and like a Blackamore couered with a white linnen garment.”⁶⁵⁹ Jenison’s critics are questioning his group’s holiness. He responds by sarcastically questioning whether they are justified devils “appearing as an Angel of light” or “a Blackamore couered with a white linnen garment.” Both metaphors are very similar within this context. First of all, as demonstrated in Chapter two, the color of devils is often associated with darkness or blackness. So a true devil is considered automatically black and would be falsely disguised if dressed up as an “Angel of light.” The same is obviously true for a black person dressed in white. Their blackness can be seen clearly underneath the whiteness. This is an analogy for the justified state before the sanctification process begins. The blackness of the human sinner is covered by the whiteness (imputed righteousness) of Christ, thus justified believers are *simul iustus et peccator*. Although justified, they are still actually sinners. They have not become sanctified. Like the bride of the *Song of Songs*, they are black (sinful) and beautiful (justified). Hacket also uses the metaphor of Solomon as justified, and yet, in that royal state, to demonstrate that only in acts of repentance does the king become as white as the lily. Thus the conversion from blackness to whiteness is consistently displayed as the symbol of gradual sanctification.

The Presbyterian Anthony Burgess, a parliamentary chaplain during the Civil War and nonconformist after the Restoration, dramatically expresses the radical alteration

⁶⁵⁹ Robert Jenison, *The Christians apparelling by Christ* (1625), 24.

from sinner to believer using Blackamoor tropes.⁶⁶⁰ He writes, “What aileth this Jordan to turn backward, and this Iron to swim? How cometh this Blackamore to a white skin?” he asks. God is able to perform the impossible. Burgess then goes on to detail examples of changes in the sanctified believer’s life—“we may go out to see it as a great wonder in a parish, Behold! once a Swearer, once a Blasphemer, but now he doth so no more!”⁶⁶¹ Thus the metaphorical Blackamoor with white skin is a symbol of a justified believer living righteously through God’s grace. Of the ability of the justified believer to repent in order to remove sins, Anthony Burgess speaks to the act of confession through sanctifying grace in the pursuit of holiness. This human reaction is stimulated by God’s initial action delivering him from perdition. Burgess writes, “Who may, if repenting, though a Blackmoor sinner, doubt of Gods love in pardoning, when he hath done the greater?”⁶⁶² Elsewhere, Burgess explains,

Thus not onely grace justifying and evangelical was admirable to Paul, when he had been the chiefest of many sinners, but grace sanctifying also. That God should make such a blackmore white, such a noysome weed a pleasant flower, How great was that regenerating grace which made such a change?⁶⁶³

Burgess indicates that justifying grace is the source of liberation from the status of sinner for the believer. But it is sanctification that “washes the Blackamoor white”, or, that which actually goes on to change the life and actions of the believer. Burgess was quite emphatic, as is evident in his disputes with Richard Baxter, that justification is the

⁶⁶⁰ E. C. Vernon. ‘Burgess, Anthony (d. 1664),’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/3973>, accessed 23 June 2013].

⁶⁶¹ Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual refining: or A treatise of grace and assurance* (1652), 190. [Hereafter cited as Burgess, *Spiritual refining*.]

⁶⁶² Anthony Burgess, *The Scripture directory for church-officers and people* (1659), 300.

⁶⁶³ Burgess, *Spiritual refining*. 325.

sovereign work of God, and that human cooperation in salvation is impossible.⁶⁶⁴

Therefore, to stress human incompetence in accomplishing redemption, and going on to live a righteous life without the help of Christ, Burgess imagines himself as the figurative blackamoor: “Now, O Lord, my heart is too strong for me, I do but wash a Blackamore, that makes him blacker; by all my endeavour and natural strength.”⁶⁶⁵ Human attempts to wash a Blackamoor are efforts to achieve salvation by following the Law. But Burgess argues that after justification by faith alone, which takes place through God’s power, sanctifying grace goes on to enable the sinner to live according to God’s precepts. Thus he writes, “Although to change this custom of sin, and to make the Blackamore white, be impossible to flesh and blood, yet with God all things are possible.”⁶⁶⁶ God has transformed the black African into the white European and turned the sinner into the righteous man. Therefore Burgess states emphatically, God hath made iron to swimme, he hath made the Blackmoor white: Oh blesse God for the least desires and affections, which thou hast at any time for that which is good, for this cometh not from thee; it is put into thee by the grace of God.⁶⁶⁷ God performs the work of righteousness in the believer just as God imputed righteousness at justification. The whitened Blackamoor, a symbol of the sanctified believer living in righteousness, is the ultimate manifestation of God’s glory.

⁶⁶⁴ Baxter dedicated his first publication, *Aphorismes of Justification* (1649), to Burgess and Richard Vines. Burgess attacked Baxter for leaning towards Arminianism by appearing to argue for human cooperation with God’s grace in justification. For Burgess, this sounded like Roman Catholic justification *The True Doctrine of Justification* (1654). See also James Innell Packer, *The redemption & restoration of man in the thought of Richard Baxter: a study in Puritan theology* (Vancouver, B.C: Regent College Pub. 2003); Paul Chang-Ha Lim, *In pursuit of purity, unity, and liberty: Richard Baxter's Puritan ecclesiology in its seventeenth-century context* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2004); Hans Boersma, *A hot pepper corn: Richard Baxter's doctrine of justification in its seventeenth century context of controversy* (Vancouver, B.C.: Regent College Pub., 2004)].

⁶⁶⁵ Burgess, *Spiritual refining*, 214.

⁶⁶⁶ Burgess, 430.

⁶⁶⁷ Burgess, *A treatise of original sin* (1658). 148.

William Bates describes the gradual transformation from glory to glory of the saint into Christ's image using blackamoor imagery. The justified believer living on towards righteousness is "an Excellent Beauty" albeit "one who has not the brightest Colours of white and red in the Complexion" yet is still lovely when compared to "the presence of a Blackmoor." Similarly, "the Beauty of Holiness in a Saint, though mixt with blemishes, appears complete when compar'd with the foul deformity of Sinners."⁶⁶⁸ Thus, the blackness of a justified believer is gradually becoming whiter and whiter—though not nearly as bright as the imputed righteousness of Christ, but much lighter compared to its previous state. Thomas De Laune uses similar imagery, writing:

The Holy Spirit hath an excellent beautifying Quality, there is no scar, spot nor deformity in the Soul, but the Spirit can purge and cleanse it, they that are anointed with this Oil, shine in the Eyes of God and good Men; *'twill make a Blackmore white and beautifful*, fetches out those Wrinkles and foul-Staines and Spots, that naturally are in the Souls of Men and Women; it takes of Christ's Beauty, and puts it upon the Soul, and so places a shining Lustre upon the Inward Man. Thy Beauty, for it was perfect through my Comliness, which I had put upon thee, &c. How glorious and beautiful to be hereby? And all that sat in the Councel, looking stedfastly on him, saw his Face as did Stephen appear if it had been the Face of an Angel. Acts 6.15.⁶⁶⁹

Again, the characterization is that of a blackamoor transformed white through the power of God in order to symbolize the inner change that takes place in the hearts of sinners in sanctification.

As demonstrated in Chapter two, divines typically liken original sin, or inherited fallen human nature, to black ethnicity in religious texts. This imagery is also extended to "washing the blackamoor." The Elizabethan puritan Gervase Babington describes "this damnable sinne, that there they may receiue as deepe a die in this hellish colour, as the

⁶⁶⁸ William Bates, *Spiritual perfection, unfolded and enforced from 2 Cor. VII*, (1699), 125-6.

⁶⁶⁹ Thomas De Laune, *Tropologia, or, A key to open Scripture metaphors* (1681), 304.

blackamore hath of his naturall hue, whom all the water in the Sea cannot wash white.”⁶⁷⁰

Similarly, the radical Presbyterian Arthur Jackson writes “Ethiopian or blackmore...and that, say they, to note his black, malicious and hellish disposition, or that there was no more hope of changing his nature and qualities, then of washing a blackmore white.”⁶⁷¹

However, the acquired habits that form as a result of the fallen nature are also symbolized using racial descriptors. Thus, Thomas Hall’s use of the phrase “second nature” reflects the habitual choices that continue to sully one’s nature. That is, the frequent or constant committing of sins, which hardens the nature, is referred to as a “second nature” that arises out of the constant performance of evil deeds. This second nature is also compared to the skin color of a blackamoor or an Ethiopian. Hence James Ussher uses the traditional proverb of washing in the English translation to emphasize impossibility, when he writes: “It will be to as much purpose to wash an Aethiopian, as to go to put off that ill custome, and shake off that second nature.”⁶⁷² The frequent reference to ‘washing,’ used to impress upon listeners the hopelessness of removing blackness symbolized as original sin, is sometimes expressed as the classical proverb ‘Aethiopem lavare’, to wash the Ethiopian, and is also known as ‘Aethiopem lavas’, you wash the Ethiopian, or ‘Aethiopem dealbas’, you whiten the Ethiopian.⁶⁷³ Hence Christopher Ness explains, “by which phrase the Wisdom of the Ancients used to express any labour in vain, like those other Phrases, [Aethiopem lavare] to wash a Blackmore white, which Phrase is used in

⁶⁷⁰ Gervase Babington. *Certaine plaine, briefe, and comfortable notes vpon euerie chapter of Genesis* (1592) 166.

⁶⁷¹ Arthur Jackson, *Annotations upon the five books immediately following the historicall part of the Old Testament* (1658), 324-25.

⁶⁷² James Ussher, *Eighteen sermons preached in Oxford 1640 of conversion, unto God* (1660), 28.

⁶⁷³ Erasmus, *The Adages of Erasmus*, ed., William Barker, (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2001), I, iv, 50, 79.

Scripture, Jer. 13.23.”⁶⁷⁴ Thomas Ford uses the Aethiopem ‘lavare’ (washing) proverb, which is often juxtaposed with the passage in Jeremiah, to attempt to wander into the terrain of cultural relativity while addressing these familiar theological issues.

As to what is alledged from *Ier.* 13.23...The Aethiopian, though he be never so willing, cannot change his skin. Hence we say of a man that labours in vain, that he is washing a Blackmore. And the Leopards spots are of the same nature. But the wickedness of the wicked is not so. I am apt to think, many a Blackmore would be made white, if he could: But no wicked man is willing to be made clean. I have heard indeed (how true it is I know not) that the blackest Aethiopians with them, are the beauties, even as the fairest are with us. Now if a Blackmore might change his skin, and would not, I should think him to be a just and fit resemblance of ungodly sinners. For these Aethiopians (as I may call them) are not willing to change their skins: *Such black Souls will not be made white.* Nay, the blacker they are, the better they seem in their own eyes; and the deeper they are dipt in that dye, the more they are pleas’d with their black hue.⁶⁷⁵

First, Ford confronts the scriptural text regarding the impossibility of the Ethiopian changing his skin (Jer. 13:23). In this instance, he references the classic Aethiopem lavare proverb, expressed in its early modern English colloquial form, ‘washing a Blackamore,’ indicating the futility of attempting to remove the black color from an Ethiopian. Second, Ford reflects on actual Blackmores and their skin color. Within his cultural context, it seems to Ford that people with black skin would want to remove their blackness if at all possible. Yet this is clearly a figurative concept, for he uses this as an analogy to consider the sinner’s desire to be set free from corruption. Since the typically evil person mired in sin is unwilling to be loosed, Ford concludes that the perfect metaphor for this scenario is a black person refusing the opportunity to be made white. Ford is obviously alluding to the known fact in early modern English circles that aesthetically, Ethiopians (or black Africans)

⁶⁷⁴ Christopher Ness, *A divine legacy* (1700), 283.

⁶⁷⁵ Thomas Ford, *Aytokatakritos or, the sinner condemned of himself being a plea for God* (1668), 71-72.

preferred blackness to whiteness.⁶⁷⁶ His decision to use that predilection as a symbol for the average sinner's weakness for vice capitalizes on the mainstream English incomprehensibility of perceiving blackness as beautiful in any context. Thus, attraction to blackness becomes a perfect metaphor to describe the sinner's lust for wrongdoing.

Henry Smith also notes that the sanctifying grace of God is sufficient to cleanse the evil hearts of believers, and refers to the blackamoor image and the trope of washing to reinforce this:

Therefore, if wee loue our selues, let vs loue our neighbours; for nothing doth more please God than loue: so that if the blacke Moore could be cleane, here is water inough to wash him. But like a wonder which lasteth not aboue nine dayes: so is the repentance of them which sinne by custome, for when sinne is rooted it sticketh fast, and will hardly be weeded out, though GOD should send vs dreames, though he should shewe vs visions, though he should raise vp Prophets, Daniel himselfe cannot make this blacke Moore white, which alwaies hath been black before. And this we may see in our selues, for why haue we neede to heare so often of repentance, more then of anything else, but that it is such a thing as we cannot frame our selues vnto?⁶⁷⁷

Loving our neighbors as ourselves sums up the Christian walk. However, Smith complains about the walk being hindered by those constantly sinning after justification, requiring ongoing repentance. Although forgiveness is granted, continual sin mars the walk of righteousness and the blackamoor cannot be washed white. No matter how anointed a prophet, if they continue to live in unrighteousness they are failing to fulfill their calling. The actual process involved in sanctification includes repentance. Sorrow for one's sins vis-à-vis the mercy and grace of Christ's atoning righteousness is part of

⁶⁷⁶ For example, William Jenkyn writes, "The Blackmoor (they say) thinks the blackest face beautifullest, and wicked men voice wickedness to be the greatest comeliness" (William Jenkyn, *An exposition of the epistle of Jude* (1654), 264).

⁶⁷⁷ Henry Smith, *The sermons of Maister Henrie Smith gathered into one volume* (1593), 357.

the mortification of the believer in holiness, elicited by God's grace. Thus the metaphor of blackness becoming white is also used here as a symbol of gradual sanctifying grace.

As we have seen, those divines that theologically stress limited atonement and unconditional election, that is, God's uncompromising sovereignty in salvation, tend to use Blackamoor or Ethiopian metaphors. This is because the Black ethnic trope symbolizes the impossibility of human effort contrasted with the power and majesty of God to secure salvation in Protestant theology. Further, for many English divines on sanctification, blackamoor ethnicity becomes a symbol of the sin washed clean by Christ through purification. However, in *The contrition of a Protestant preacher*, the former Anglican clergyman and Roman Catholic convert James Wadsworth employs dramatic blackamoor symbolism as well as washing imagery within the context of a Catholic understanding of justification and sanctification as well.

Thou doost rather cleanse vs wash vs and make vs white aboue snowe. As the Sayntes washed their stoles, and whited them in the bloud of the lambe: not their persons only but all so their garments. And as in Dyars arte out of one & the same Dyefatte they will make diuerse colors, according to the disposition or aptenes of the color put into it, as white will become blew; yelow will become greene, & blew will become red: only blacke, will take no color, but come out rather more blacke. So a fowle, blacke, deadly sinner not repenting truly, though he beleue our Sauiors passion, or neuer so often frequent the sacramentes, so long as he continues still in his fowle sinne, his blacke soule will take no other color: rather for his abuse, he comes away worser; and of such the prophet asked; can a blackmore change his skinne?⁶⁷⁸

Wadsworth uses the representation of color dyes and washing to illustrate that blackness is the most difficult color to remove from fabric. The chromaticity of blackness in fibers is correlated with human black skin color. The blackamoor's skin is obdurate and contumacious like stained material, a fitting metaphor for the black soul of a sinner. For Wadsworth, a Catholic believer, faithful adherence to the

⁶⁷⁸ James Wadsworth, *The contrition of a Protestant preacher* (St. Omers, 1615), 52-53.

sacramental system of the church is meaningless if one persists in sinful behavior. In Catholic thought, the sinful nature of the soul can truly be cleansed through justification and participation in the church's penitential system (confession and absolution from a priest). Yet, as Wadsworth fervently insists, heartfelt contrition must accompany the absolution of sins. Despite adherence to the ritual of the church, through which the sacraments induce infused righteousness, which gradually purify the believer, if there is no honest repentance, the soul remains black. Further, carrying out acts of penance prescribed by the priest after absolution in such a hypocritical state, rather than purifying the soul and making it white, only makes the soul blacker.⁶⁷⁹ Wadsworth therefore stresses the cooperation between the justified believer and God in the process of sanctification. Good works and holiness do not result without the effort and initiative of the faithful interacting in tandem with God's grace. This in contrast to English Reformed writers who stress God's unilateral sanctifying power.

When God declares sinners righteous in justification, they are still sinners, but this is the beginning of a gradual change. "He gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Tit. 2:14). This view of justification and sanctification sounds continuous, and therefore supposedly different from the Lutheran and the Reformed Traditions' understanding of the order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) in which justification is conceptualized as a complete event and sanctification follows as a

⁶⁷⁹ Alan C. Clifford, *Atonement and justification: English Evangelical theology, 1640-1790: an evaluation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 176.

process.⁶⁸⁰ However, Luther's actual view of justification, while definitely distinct from sanctification, (and thus maintaining the forensic, declaratory nature of justification) is also understood as a continual process. Luther stresses that the justified believer is to live a life of holiness, renewed in a process of ongoing righteousness by doing good works as the fruits of salvation. 1 Cor. 6:11 states "you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." This occurs through faith granted by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus sanctification is God's work, following justification. Calvin calls this a "double grace" and writes,

Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life.⁶⁸¹

Hence, they are two distinct but related processes—justification, which declares salvation, and sanctification, the progress towards holiness. Through sanctification, an inner transformation takes place within believers. This is understood as occurring through the power of the Holy Spirit which empowers believers to live in holiness, and which renews and refreshes them daily in righteousness. The Apostle Paul states, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10). God sovereignly works mightily to manifest sanctification, although the results are not complete in this life. Further, good works do not justify the believer, but good works are evidence that a person is justified. As Calvin indicates, "we cannot be justified freely by faith alone, if we do not at the same time live

⁶⁸⁰ Clifford, 172.

⁶⁸¹ Calvin. *Inst.* III.11.1.

in holiness.”⁶⁸² Yet, even those good works are executed by the power of God. For Luther, sanctification is the outgrowth of love in a believer’s life, which is the result of justification.⁶⁸³ Through a supernatural operation of grace, love is also infused by the means of the community of believers—the church, where the Word and sacraments are offered. This is the love that cleanses the soul of the believer, which frees him or her to do the good works of Christian service for God’s people.

The quest for perfection is exemplified by Christ’s statements, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt. 5:48), and “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and, with all your mind” (Mt. 22:37). Although these states cannot be achieved definitely, the believer strives towards them through the power of the Holy Spirit. While believers are assured of continual progress in this struggle against sin, Calvin maintains that ultimate sinless perfection is not possible for humans. He writes, “Thus then are the children of God freed through regeneration from bondage to sin. Yet they do not obtain full possession of freedom so as to feel no annoyance from their flesh, but there still remains in them a continuing occasion for struggle.”⁶⁸⁴ As the Apostle Paul states, “forgetting what lies behind and straining to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14). Thus, sanctification’s gradual transformation is never finished, but progressively remakes the believer more and more into Christ’s likeness during this lifetime. Hence Paul states, “all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as

⁶⁸² John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 142.

⁶⁸³ Elmer L. Towns, "Martin Luther on Sanctification," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 14 (April, 1969): 115-122.

⁶⁸⁴ Calvin. *Inst.* III.3.11.

though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

How does this actually take place? Like justification, sanctification is God’s work and takes place to glorify God. It is the exercise of the Holy Spirit upon the believer. As Calvin makes clear, in the beginning of sanctification, God gradually “wipes out in his elect the corruptions of the flesh, cleanses them of guilt, consecrates them to himself as temples renewing all their minds to true purity.”⁶⁸⁵ Moreover, justified believers participate with God in their sanctification, but this ability comes directly through the power of God. Paul reminds the followers at Philippi “to work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). In fact, scripture is rich with the assurance that the saved are to be active workers in pursuing holiness. Paul tells Timothy to minister to his congregation by “[c]ommand[ing] them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share” (1 Tim. 6:18). Although God initiates sanctification, the believer participates. But the word also admonishes the people of faith “Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means” (2 Cor. 8:11). In fact, an attitude of zeal and motivation is encouraged, believers advised to “be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure: For if you do these things, you will never fall” (2 Pet. 1:10). In this way the believer is called to action. Calvin writes,

Here indeed is the chief hinge on which faith turns: that we do not regard the promises of mercy that God offers as true only outside of ourselves, but not at all in

⁶⁸⁵ Calvin, III.3.9.

us; rather we make them ours by inwardly embracing them.⁶⁸⁶

Paul indicates, “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Eph. 4:1). Faith is granted as a gift of God’s grace, but faith also involves action on the part of the believer who is empowered through the Holy Spirit.

Specifically, active participation includes turning to God in repentance, which encompasses an awareness of sin and determination to serve and obey God. However, this can only take place through cooperation with God by the frequent removal of those sinful places within that are hostile to God and righteousness. These evil places are referred to in the Pauline epistles as “the old man” or “flesh”. Calvin explains,

Repentance can thus well be defined: it is the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit.⁶⁸⁷

In stating that human nature is infected with sin, Calvin does not argue that all of man’s natural impulses are evil, “but only those bold and unbridled impulses which contend against God’s control.” Actually, Calvin holds these to be pernicious not because they are natural but because they have become “inordinate” due to the fall. He writes “ ‘We have died in Adam’: by sinning, Adam not only took upon himself misfortune and ruin, but also plunged our nature into like destruction.”⁶⁸⁸ This “nature” Calvin also refers to as the “inborn disposition,” “common nature,” and “the corruption of original nature.”⁶⁸⁹ In early modern English religious texts, it is this very nature that is often figuratively

⁶⁸⁶ Calvin, II 3.2.15.

⁶⁸⁷ Calvin, III.3.5.

⁶⁸⁸ Calvin. II 2.2.1.

⁶⁸⁹ Calvin. II 2.2.1.

referred to as a “Blackamoor” or “Ethiopian.” These terms are indicative of humanity’s inclination to sin, rebellion, and unrighteousness. In Calvinist teachings, mortification is thus the continual practice of putting to death this inordinate self and its innate hostility to God. In commenting on Rom. 6:11, Calvin stresses that this has to take place daily:

for although the mortifying of the flesh is only begun in us, yet the life of sin is destroyed, so that afterwards spiritual newness, which is divine continues perpetually...yea you must daily proceed with that work of mortifying, which is begun in you till sin be wholly destroyed.⁶⁹⁰

Our union with Christ, that is, our union with Christ’s death, is a dying to our own sinful nature, and is essential in mortification. Calvin writes: “This old man, he says, is fastened to the cross, for by its power he is slain (Rom. 6:6).”⁶⁹¹ Any attempt at mortification of the old self apart from entering into Christ’s death on the cross is impossible. As Gal. 2:18-21 states,

But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, and it is not longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

The old person has died and the new person lives in Christ by God’s power. For, there is rebirth with Christ in the resurrection. Thus the gospel, initiated through the union with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit engrafted onto the elect in justification, has led the way to sanctification. But the work is a daily struggle because while sin’s capacity to rule over the believer has been destroyed by Jesus’ sacrifice at the cross, the corrupted, fallen self does not go away peacefully. Although the reign of sin’s dominion is broken, its influence is still present through the flesh that must be continually slain. Calvin writes:

⁶⁹⁰ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, trans. by John Owen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 196.

⁶⁹¹ Calvin, 192.

“For the Spirit dispenses a power whereby they may gain the upper hand and become victors in the struggle. But again sin ceases only to reign: it does not cease to dwell in them.” This is what it means to be incapable of reaching perfection morally in this life. Humans continue to be burdened by the impact of sin, which they must continually keep at bay through the power of the Holy Spirit granted as a result of justification. So the first duty of the believer in sanctification is the continual putting to death of the old nature, the flesh. Regeneration is not something that occurs once and completely at the beginning of the Christian walk, so that the believer can enjoy a struggle free, sinless life; rather, it is a daily, continual battle against the influence of sin, the enemy within. As long as humans dwell within the body, they must continue to fight against the vices of the corrupted nature of the flesh, or the natural disposition. Calvin writes about the necessary radical breaking down of human evil:

We infer that we are not conformed to the fear of God and do not learn the rudiments of piety, unless we are violently slain by the sword of the Spirit and brought to naught. As if God had declared that for us to be reckoned among his children our common nature must die!”⁶⁹²

Repentance is thus the washing of evil and takes place through the active participation of the believer with God in mortification and vivification. Mortification brings death to the evil in the soul through the guilt of the conscience and by putting to death the remainder of sin. Thus, in order to reach this place of mortification, repentance must involve the hatred and renunciation of sin. It is a denial of the old nature, or the old self. Again, this is an ongoing process, for the fight against sin is constant.

Human ability to move towards sanctification comes through the blood of Jesus, granted by justification by grace alone, through God’s salvific authority (as opposed to

⁶⁹² Calvin. *Inst.* III.3.8.

simple obedience to the Law). Indeed, it is only because the old self is already slain through justification effected by Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, that the believer is able to put the corrupted self to death in sanctification. That is, the only reason that the believer can actively put to death the old self and strive to live for righteousness in Christ is because he or she has already been justified. Since the old self has been formally slain through the crucifixion of Christ, power arises from justifying faith and this power is able to break the stronghold of sin and the devil's power. Again, in order for the transformation to righteousness to become complete, the corrupted nature must be destroyed after the initiation of Christ's justifying power and followed with the believers' mortification of the flesh, possible only through sanctifying grace. The life of a Christian is constant exercise and diligence in mortifying the flesh until it is slain, and the Spirit of God becomes progressively dominant.⁶⁹³

Therefore the second part of repentance, vivification, brings life through the preaching of the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. The believer gradually learns to do good, consistently inclining towards righteousness. Ultimately, it is through the Spirit (vivification), which is the bond of our union with Christ, that not only the reign of sin is

⁶⁹³ In contrast, Catholic theology holds that good works contribute to justification. In addition to God's grace through Christ's sacrifice on the cross and resurrection, human beings earn their salvation through merit. Justification is not only remission of sins but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man through the voluntary reception of God's grace and gifts. Jesus Christ died for all, (not just the elect), that is, for all who accept the merit of His passion. The redeemed are those who are helped through grace to convert themselves to their own justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with that grace. Thus, humanity cooperates with God in the movement of the heart to acceptance of grace. Sinners are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and not only are they reputed but they are truly called and are just, receiving justice within, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost distributes to everyone as He wills, and according to each one's disposition and cooperation. Thus, Canon 24 of The Council of Trent, affirms:

If anyone says that the justice received is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification obtained, but not the cause of its increase, let him be anathema.

broken, but also a new life and a spirit comes to rest in the once broken void. Paul writes, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship” (Rom. 12:1). The new life thrives through faith given through Christ. Now, ironically, believers are able to begin fulfilling the requirements of Law (Rom. 3:31), not through human effort or ability and not in a legalistic sense of duty but as the fruit of grace. Indeed, based on Paul’s writings in the Book of Romans, there are three “uses of the Law.” According to Paul, the first use of the law reveals to sinners the truth about themselves—that they are evil in nature and guilty of sinful deeds. Because of this incapacitated state, sinners cannot save themselves. It is at this moment that early modern English divines typically use the trope “to wash the Blackamoor white” in order to figuratively express human futility in justification. Romans 3:20 states, “through the law comes the knowledge of sin.” Awareness of the failure to adhere to the law awakens one to the reality of inner corruptibility. Paul asserts, “if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet,’” (Rom. 8:7). Second, the law presumably precludes sinners committing malevolent acts, although it has already been established that without supernatural grace this is impossible. Holiness must take place as a transformation in the heart and cannot be effectively imposed from without. Thus Paul writes, “a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical” (Rom. 2:28). And “the third use of the law,” ultimately becomes prescriptive in guiding life, particularly once the justified believer is filled with the Spirit of life in Jesus Christ to live a holy life. Scripture identifies those actions, which are designated by God as righteous. Now, God

grants justified believers the ability and power to live according to divine teachings.

Despite all the focus on good works as the fruits of salvation in sanctification for Protestant leaders, due to the revolutionary emphasis on *sole fide*, many Reformers, including Luther, had to defend their teachings against charges of antinomianism. Thus, there was an apparent de-emphasis on righteousness as opposed to other traditions. Although the Reformers followed the teachings of Paul, who writes, “For in my inner being I delight in God’s law” (Rom. 7:22), they were accused of placing so much emphasis on salvation “by faith alone” as to seem to suggest that good works are unnecessary and actually hinder salvation. In many cases, this misunderstanding was rampant. In England, the controversy reached a peak during the seventeenth century. In fact, after some puritans realized the impossibility of reform in the Church of England, many dissenters developed into rigid moralists and legalists in extreme reaction. Antinomians countered (causing a backlash) by arguing that justified Christians are no longer “under Law” but because of their election to salvation, “under Grace” and therefore under no requirement to observe the commandments.⁶⁹⁴ Ironically, this is one reason why many English divines do not employ the black ethnic rhetorical trope often to signify sanctification in the Protestant order of salvation. The de-emphasis is on perfection in Protestant theology, therefore black rhetoric is used primarily to symbolize sin and justification.

But as we have seen, a few English puritan and other Reformed writers do incorporate the ‘wash a Blackamoor white’ trope to signify the ultimate purification of the sinful believer by God. The “whitening” is symbolic of the move of God in

⁶⁹⁴ See T.D. Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

sanctification, just as God has initiated justification for the elect. This reflects the emphasis of some English reformed writers to stress purification after salvation in reaction to antinomianism. As Paul writes of this relationship,

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. (Eph. 2:8-10)

The Laudian poet (and later Roman Catholic convert) Richard Crashaw reflects on the hope of redemption and the biblical story of the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40 in his poem “On the Baptized Aethiopian:”

Let it no longer be a forlorn hope
To wash an Ethiope:
Hes washt, his gloomy skin a peaceful shade
For his white soul is made.⁶⁹⁵

The Ethiopian is washed in justification, but in the process of sanctification his soul is gradually whitened as well. Therefore, he is imparted the righteousness of Christ.

Moreover, the figurative imagery of whiteness extends to depicting a change in the Blackamoor’s color, for his skin, once “gloomy” is now “peaceful.” Although he may not be completely whitened or sanctified, there is a noticeable change in his appearance.

Elsewhere Crashaw’s poetry is modeled after the style of the epigram, and one version is dedicated to the same biblical theme:

How fair this Ethiop comes from th’ holy fount?
To wash a Black we may not vain account.
How bright a Soul is in a cloudy skin!
The Dove now loves a black house to dwell in.⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁵ Richard Crashaw, *Steps to the temple* (1670), 8.

⁶⁹⁶ Richard Cranshaw, *Epigrammata sacra selecta, cum Anglica versione* (1682), 4.

The “cloudy skin” is retained, but the soul has turned into a “Dove.” Thus it is no longer “vain” to wash an Ethiop, for this one, although outwardly a “black house,” has become inwardly “fair,” and thus transformed. Hence, in comparison to some seventeenth-century English Reformed writers, who stress the “to wash a Blackamoor white” euphemism in order to over-emphasize morality and the purity of sanctification in a context of controversy (and symbolize the transformation of a black man turning white) other divines fail to point to the symbolism of complete external whitening in sanctification. This is to mitigate the extent of the process of sanctification that takes place in this life according to doctrinal beliefs.

Conclusion

In both the early Jacobean *Masque of Blackness* and *Masque of Beauty* by Ben Jonson, Renaissance themes are prevalent of black skin color being washed white as emblematic of spiritual purification. Indeed, the dramatic appropriation of African identity by British performers in removable blackface paint becomes a visual manifestation of the Renaissance phrase ‘washing the Blackamoor white.’ Therefore the theme of washing away blackness, prevalent in many aspects of mainstream society, was co-opted theologically by the monarchical program in the promotion of imperialism and colonialism in the early seventeenth century. This coincides with English Renaissance images, fables, and proverbs about washing Ethiopian or Blackamoor ethnicity in culture, resurrected from antiquity, or ‘*Aethiopem lavare*.’

English divines would go on to incorporate many of these themes in religious texts on the Protestant doctrine of sanctification. Early modern English texts frequently use the metaphor of the blackamoor to depict the corruptness of human nature declared

righteous through justification. The “Washing an Ethiopian/Blackamoor white” trope becomes a symbol of sanctification, depicted in many cases as the gradual transformation from African ethnicity to whiteness. The Reformed theology of sanctification views the progress of holiness limited in this life due to the constant mortification of the flesh that continues in the midst of the vivification of the spirit to new life. However, English Reformed divines like Anthony Burgess dramatically employ the washing the blackamoor white trope to signify the ultimate glorification of the human believer as the transformation of an African to a European. This is in contrast to English divines who use the imagery to symbolize the gradual progress to sanctification in this life. There is also a difference in emphasis between the work of God on the believer and the cooperation of the believer in the effort of holiness. Significantly, the racial trope becomes the metaphor for the state of holiness, much as the Daughters of Niger’s color symbolize the state of their acceptability in the English realm of the masques.

CHAPTER V

“ABSENT PRESENCE:”

THE RELIGIOUS LIVES OF EARLY MODERN ENGLISH AFRICANS

The last three chapters have focused on the writings of early modern English divines in religious texts and their incorporation of figurative blackamoor tropes which signify Protestant teachings of sin, justification, and sanctification. A basic argument of this dissertation is that in the symbolism of these theological teachings, racial tropes represent all of humanity as well as the elect. However, the question remains, what effect if any, did these texts and/or rhetoric have on the religious lives of actual Africans living in early modern England? The tendency of many early modern English ministers to engage in word play using imagery from Jer. 13:23 and the classical euphemism *Aethiopem lavare*, to wash an Ethiopian white, raises questions about the cultural implications of this rhetoric on black Africans in early modern England. Through groundbreaking research, which is shedding new light on the presence of blacks in early modern England, it is now possible to review previously inaccessible archival records, particularly parish registers, in the search for clues about the religious activities of this once “invisible” population.

The following chapter presents a revisionist history of blacks in early modern England as newly revealed through a study of recent scholarship that includes “obscure, truncated, and largely inaccessible documentary records, which are only now becoming

available.”⁶⁹⁷ As the dissertation proves, English divines were using blackamoor rhetoric in preaching and religious texts. At the same time, as this chapter reveals, records indicate that ministers of the Church of England were providing pastoral services to Africans in English parishes. Although many blacks were being accepted into the community of faith in many English parishes, additional sources suggest that other blacks were viewed as marginalized spiritually or religiously because of their color or ethnicity. These sources are analyzed in the last section of the chapter: anecdotal accounts of black conversion stories and religious testimonies of two seventeenth-century African women living in England, known as Francis, a “blackymore maide” and “Dinah the Black,” also known as “Dinah the More.” Therefore, a complex religious picture of black ethnicity in early modern England emerges.

Recently brought to light in early modern English historical scholarship is the story of Sir Peter Negro, England’s true “Othello.”⁶⁹⁸ Negro was a Spanish military man in professional English service from 1545 to 1550, and illustrates the growing presence of blacks in sixteenth-century England.⁶⁹⁹ His existence was not unusual. In the later medieval and early modern period there were a number of assimilated Africans in military service throughout Europe.⁷⁰⁰ Noted regularly in official Tudor archives, Peter’s surname “Negro” is an indication that he had African ancestry. Further, certain records also name him Peter “Mogo,” a traditionally generalized early modern European African

⁶⁹⁷ Imtiaz H. Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives 1500-1677* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing), 1. [Hereafter cited as Habib, *Black Lives*.]

⁶⁹⁸ Imtiaz H. Habib, “Othello, Sir Peter Negro, and the blacks of early modern England: Colonial inscription and postcolonial excavation,” *Literature Interpretation Theory* (Volume 9, Issue 1, 1998), 15-30.

⁶⁹⁹ Habib, 15.

⁷⁰⁰ Kate Lowe, “The Stereotyping of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe,” eds., T.F. Earle and K.J.P. Lowe, *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 33.

ethnic descriptor.⁷⁰¹ Peter was clearly prized for his military prowess, particularly since England's government during the closing years of Henry VIII's reign as well as the beginning of Edward VI's rule was dependent on specialist services in the maintenance of an effective standing army.⁷⁰² Peter rose in rank to become the head officer of three infantry units in a campaign against Scotland. In fact, as a result of heroic leadership at the taking of Leith on Sept. 23, 1547, the Duke of Somerset awarded him a knighthood.⁷⁰³ This "event marks the highest level achieved by a black person in early modern England."⁷⁰⁴ Peter was so popular with the common people that the event of his death in 1551⁷⁰⁵ occasioned a London "grass-roots civic commemoration."⁷⁰⁶ To pay their respects, the "mony morners" lined the streets with "flut playng," the "flag," and the "Harold of armes," as did similar funerals the London undertaker, Henry Machyn, describes.⁷⁰⁷ Sir Peter Negro's high status in early modern English society is to be contrasted with the menial state the majority of blacks in England would find themselves in a very short time. In fact, part of the reason why few early modern English historians discuss Peter Negro in scholarship is because of the erasing of black lives that took place in the next chapter of English history. Blacks would be legally effaced from public existence in the late Tudor political and economic climate, continuing into the early Stuart era. Thus, by the early seventeenth century, the English black subject had been

⁷⁰¹ Imtiaz H. Habib, *Black Lives*, 41.

⁷⁰² See Gilbert John Millar, *Tudor Mercenaries and Auxiliaries 1485-1547* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia), 1980.

⁷⁰³ Henry Machyn, *The diary of Henry Machyn, citizen and merchant-taylor of London, from A.D. 1550 to A.D. 1563*, ed. John Gough Nichols (London: Camden Society, 1848), 320.

⁷⁰⁴ Habib, *Black Lives*, 43.

⁷⁰⁵ Based on his sources, Habib states that Negro's death occurs on 14 July 1552 (*Black Lives*, 44); the notes of Machyn's diary indicate it was on that date in 1551 (320).

⁷⁰⁶ Machyn, *Preface*, v; cited in Habib, *Black Lives*, 44.

⁷⁰⁷ Habib writes, "The description of Peter Negro's funeral by a London undertaker, Henry Machyn, on 14 July 1552 is identical in its details of ritual solemnity to those of other street pageants involving Tudor royals" (44).

effectively removed from official documentation. Although physically present, the black is not often recorded in the traditionally mainstream narratives of the century: the Civil War, the Puritan government, the Protectorate, and the Restoration. In fact it is not until the formal establishment of the institution of slavery, which became firmly entrenched during the Restoration's reign of Charles II, that the black presence in England becomes clearly visible.⁷⁰⁸ Prior to that time blacks in England have an "absent presence."⁷⁰⁹

The "conventional contemporary mistruth" has been perpetuated that "there were no people of color in early modern England."⁷¹⁰ However, the assumption that references to Africans in contemporary media are "metaphoric and the period is race-innocent," is now being challenged by archival records which demonstrate, to the contrary, not only the considerable presence of blacks in England, but also the group's substantial participation in the ministerial activities of the Church of England.⁷¹¹ Until recently, Elizabethan and Jacobean scholars have regarded literary references to blacks as anecdotal, and at best, accidental and solitary, insisting that the English were not actually acquainted with them.⁷¹² Older studies that directly tackle racial formations in the early

⁷⁰⁸ Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 197.

⁷⁰⁹ Habib, *Black Lives*, 59.

⁷¹⁰ Kim F. Hall, *Things of Darkness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1995), 11-14. Hall states, "I am more interested in discerning the ways in which the Africanist presence is embedded in language than with proving the nature of the black presence in England...I too have found that the significance of blackness as a troping of race far exceeds the actual presence of African-descended people in England" (14). Similarly, Elizabeth Clarke in *Politics, religion and the Song of songs in seventeenth-century England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 76) assumes that contemporary commentary about the black bride of the *Song of Songs* have nothing to do with the African presence in England, which is presumably very small or relatively non-existent.

⁷¹¹ Habib, *Black Lives*, 9.

⁷¹² Some studies on black literary references in early modern English texts: Eldred Jones, *Othello's Countrymen: The African in English Renaissance Drama* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); David Dabydeen, ed., *The Black Presence in English Literature* (London: Manchester University Press, 1985); Elliott Tokson, *The Popular Image of the Black Man in English Drama* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982); Anthony Gerard Barthelemy, ed., *Critical Essays on Shakespeare's Othello* (New York: G.K. Hall, 1994); Jack D'Amico, *The Moor in English Renaissance Drama* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991); Roslyn Knutson, "A Caliban in St. Mildred Poultry," *Shakespeare and Cultural Traditions*, eds., Tetsuo Kishi, Roger Pringle, and Stanley Wells (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 110-26; Duncan

modern period were conducted on the basis of questionable data on the numbers of blacks in the area.⁷¹³ Yet, previously inaccessible documentary records, which demonstrate the real black presence in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, signify “the empirical intimacy of the English construction of the racial other” as well as “the national-imperial drive that is its most immediate occasion, both parallel to and independent of such formations in the travel literature of the period.”⁷¹⁴ Parish records reveal that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Anglican churches and at least one seventeenth-century English Baptist community actively ministered to black African

Salkeld, “Black Lucy and the ‘Curtizans’ of Shakespeare’s London,” *Signatures* Vol. 2 (2000), 1-10. See also G. K. Hunter, *Dramatic Identities and Cultural Traditions: Studies in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978), 32. Emily Bartels, “Othello and Africa: Postcolonialism Reconsidered,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* Third Series, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Jan., 1997), 53, 57-59; P.E.H. Hair, in “Attitudes to Africans in English Primary Sources up to 1650: Sources on Guinea up to 1650,” *History in Africa*, Vol. 26 (1999), 46, denies early modern English involvement in and knowledge of black people in England by relying on published Elizabethan travel accounts such as Richard Eden, Richard Hakluyt, and Samuel Purchas. Two sources that assume uncertainty of the size of early modern English black populations are Peter Erickson “The Moment of Race in Renaissance Studies,” *Shakespeare Studies* 26 (1998): 27-36 and Kim F. Hall in *Things of Darkness*, (11-14) see quote above.

⁷¹³ Sources of the black population in early modern England including texts that focus on the more relatively visible periods after the emergence of the slave trade in the latter half of the seventeenth century: Eldred Jones, *The Elizabethan Image of Africa* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1971); Thomas Forbes, *Chronicle from Aldgate: Life and Death in Shakespeare’s London* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1971); Paul Edwards, “The Early African Presence in the British Isles,” in *Essays on the History of Blacks in Britain: From Roman Times to the Mid-Twentieth Century*, eds., Jagdish S. Gundara and Ian Duffield, (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 1992); James Walvin, *Black and White: The Negro and English Society 1553-1945* (London: Allen Lane, 1973); idem. *The Black Presence: A Documentary History of the Negro in England, 1555-1860* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971); Peter Fryer, *Staying power: Black people in Britain since 1504* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1984); St. Clair Drake, *Black Folk Here and There* 2 vols. (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1990); Gretchen Gerzina, *Black London: Life Before Emancipation* (London: J. Murray, 1995); Anthony J. Barker, *The African Link: British Attitudes to the Negro in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1550-1807* (Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1978); Ron Ramdin, *Reimagining Britain: Five Hundred Years of Black and Asian History* (Pluto Press, 1999); Edward Scobie, *Black Britannia: A History of Blacks in Britain* (Johnson Publishing Company Inc., 1972); Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, “Before Othello: Elizabethan Representations of Sub-Saharan Africans,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 54/1 (1997): 19-44; idem. *Roots on American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); idem. “Tales from the Vault: In Search of Slavery’s English Roots,” *Common-Place* 1/4 (2001). Electronic journal at www.common-place.org; idem. *Othello: A Contextual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Margo Hendricks, “Surveying Race,” in *Shakespeare and Race*, eds., Catherine M.S. Alexander and Stanley Wells, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); idem., and Patricia Parker, eds. *Women, Race and Writing in the Early Modern Period* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Marika Sherwood, “Black People in Tudor England” *History Today* 53/10 (2003): 40-42.

⁷¹⁴ Habib, *Black Lives*, 10.

members. This indicates that there was a real presence associated with the literary explosion of African characters in English Renaissance writings and the metaphorical presence of blacks in religious texts. Hence “the topoi of the racial other” in contemporary literature exists not solely in its “constructionist abstraction...[to] remain an ideology only.” Instead it is “an ideology that includes also, and is mandated by the impress of the literal.”⁷¹⁵ Archival evidence shows that the literary traces of blacks are accompanied by a significant, albeit “denied” or “invisible” African population in early modern England.⁷¹⁶

The History of Blacks in Early Modern England

Blacks were introduced into Tudor England through the retinue of Princess Catherine of Aragon in 1501. Other blacks, skilled servants, came from Spain as a result of work relocations and through trade merchants with Spanish and Portuguese connections.⁷¹⁷ By the mid-sixteenth century, English ships had begun taking trade expedition trips to Africa and had captured and returned with black people. These voyages may have been partly inspired by the Act of Supremacy of 1534, which cut off ties between England and Rome, thereby worsening Anglo-Iberian relations. Blacks were sought after as translators in England’s burgeoning trade with West Africa. In 1555, a group of black Africans from the coast of Ghana was brought to England for the purposes of intercultural exchange.⁷¹⁸ These Africans were described as “taule and stronge

⁷¹⁵ Habib, 9.

⁷¹⁶ Habib, 14.

⁷¹⁷ Habib, 197-98. Spain’s black population had originated largely from enslaved Muslim black Moors defeated in the Reconquista. Portugal’s population arose from West Africans stolen in Christian raids against coastal states. Both of these events took place in the later Middle Ages.

⁷¹⁸ Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 5.

men...[who] could well agree with ovr meates and drynkes [although] the could and moyst ayer dooth sumwhat offende them.”⁷¹⁹ The outcome of the use of this particular expedition is not clear historically, but spotty records indicate that English voyages to Africa only increased as the century wore on. Indeed, motivated by the weakening of the wool and cloth export trade, Henry VIII commissioned the sea captain William Hawkins of Plymouth and his sons to travel to West Africa for trade between 1531 and 1567.⁷²⁰

The accession to the throne of Elizabeth Tudor accelerated the growth in numbers of black people in England. Merchants and mariners including William Hawkins’s son John, (who would eventually become known in the annals of posterity as “Queen Elizabeth’s Slave Trader),” along with men like Francis Drake and Walter Raleigh, were licensed and financed to embark on African slave profit-making schemes.⁷²¹ Elizabeth’s assistance helped to make English trading initiatives gradually competitive with Spanish and Portuguese markets.⁷²² In fact, in 1558, the first year of her reign, Elizabeth awarded a patent to a private company for trading to Guinea. This set the precedent for the regularization of the purchase of Africans through authorized letters patent issued for subsequent voyages for other private companies.⁷²³ By 1562-63, the Elizabethan government had privately legalized the purchase of Africans. This was followed up in 1585 by the authorization of letter patents of commercial excursions to Barbary, three

⁷¹⁹ Richard Eden, ed., *The Decades of the newe worlde or west India* (London, 1555), fol. 359v; Cf. Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation* (Glasgow, James MacLehose & Sons, 1903-5), 176; John W. Blake, ed., *Europeans in West Africa 1450-1560* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1942), 346. Three of them were known as Binne, Anthonie, and George.

⁷²⁰ So the same Henry VIII who keeps the black John Blank on the payroll and sends him a wedding gift also supports the slave trading adventures of William Hawkins to West Africa.

⁷²¹ Cf. Harry Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins: Queen Elizabeth’s Slave Trader* (Yale University Press, 2003). David B. Quinn, “Turks, Moors, Blacks and Others in Drake’s West Indian Voyage,” *Terrae Incognitae* 14 (1982), 93-100; Harry Kelsey, *Sir Francis Drake: The Queen’s Pirate* (Yale University Press, 2000). The *Jesus of Lubeck* was a flagship that was a gift of Queen Elizabeth to William Hawkins, Jr.

⁷²² Habib, *Black Lives*, 65.

⁷²³ Habib, 67.

years later, to Guinea, and shortly after that, to Sierra Leone.⁷²⁴ Yet, English trafficking in Africans between 1550 and 1650 was an activity in denial and documentary suppression.⁷²⁵ The great majority of Africans acquired during this period was not recorded because English slave trading and privateering were illicit activities. As items of contraband, thousands of blacks became gifts of business or political transactions among the highest levels of society.⁷²⁶ A secret black population served “in the households of monarchs, aristocrats, foreign nobility, aldermen, foreign and English merchants, and private citizens alike.”⁷²⁷ Further, importantly, unlike the Henrician and Edwardian regimes, no record in the Elizabethan period shows an African in an independent professional occupation. There were no “Othellos” or “Peter Negros” in late Tudor England and beyond.⁷²⁸ Citations of black people in clearly independent professional roles (e.g. John Blanc) appear only in the early Tudor period. After the Elizabethan period, instances of visibly independent professional black people cease to exist in the archival records. Although, as we shall see, in many references there are significant numbers of black people who are unattached to white owners, particularly during the Jacobean reign, Africans had been overwhelmingly degraded socially, economically, and politically by the early seventeenth century.

Elizabeth had many reasons for keeping her regime’s slave trading activities quiet. For one thing, the break with Rome had led Anglo-Spanish relations into shaky territory during the sixteenth century.⁷²⁹ Blacks in England were often associated with the

⁷²⁴ Habib, 83.

⁷²⁵ Habib, 69.

⁷²⁶ Habib, 75.

⁷²⁷ Habib, 101.

⁷²⁸ Habib, 267.

⁷²⁹ Habib, 60.

Spanish and Portuguese and were considered foreign to the nation. Elizabeth could not afford the appearance of ignoring the popular hostility towards foreigners, particularly towards the latter years of her reign, when the nation faced agricultural hardship. As the language of the 1601 Edict for the Expulsion of Negroes attests, the presence of Africans, as foreigners, was perceived as a liability to the economy. Also, the Iberian monopoly over African slave trading had been sanctioned by Papal bulls. Although some Papal edicts sent mixed messages on the subject, (for example, the *Sicut Dudum* of Pope Eugene IV in 1453 condemns the enslavement of peoples in the newly colonized Canary Islands; Pope Pius II's letter in 1462 warns against the enslaving of baptized Africans; and *Sublimis Deus* of Pope Paul III of 1537 describes the enslavers of the West and South "Indies" as allies of the devil and declares attempts to justify such slavery and "null and void"), there were other papal rulings about slavery that expressly justify the practice for particular nations. *Dum Diversas*, issued on 18 June 1452, authorizes King Afonso V of Portugal to place non-Christians in slavery. This bull was reaffirmed in 1455 by Pope Nicholas V's *Romanus Pontifex*, which also expressly sanctions the "perpetual slavery" of non-Christians.⁷³⁰ The next year Pope Calixtus III also reiterated that bull with *Etsi cuncti*, renewed in turn by Pope Sixtus IV in 1481 and Pope Leo X in 1514 with *Precelse denotionis*, all extending the same sentiment—giving righteous justification for the enslavement of non-Christians. By 1493, the idea was extended that particular geographical spheres could be consigned to exclusive influence by certain nations in the

⁷³⁰ Nelson H. Minnich, "The Catholic Church and the Pastoral Care of Black Africans in Renaissance Italy," in eds., T.F. Earle and K.J.P. Lowe, *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 281-82, briefly summarizes the contradictory papal rulings regarding slavery.

papal bull *Inter caetera* by Pope Alexander VI.⁷³¹ England, as a Protestant nation, did not want to appear to be openly interfering in Catholic affairs (human trafficking).

Further, slavery did not fit the publicly professed character of the newly, reformed English Protestant nation.⁷³² England openly critiqued Catholic Europe for its involvement in slavery and officially denied any participation in the slave trade. In fact, with irony, Queen Elizabeth openly chastised the slave trader John Hawkins (whom she was secretly funding) that stealing Africans was “detestable, and would call down the Vengeance of Heaven upon the Undertakers.”⁷³³ However, records show that the Queen herself personally owned a little Blackamoor.⁷³⁴ Moreover, it is interesting that Elizabeth follows the same reasoning of the first papal bulls to justify slavery in her 1601 Edict for the Expulsion of Negroes from England. *Dum Diversas* (1452), one of the first papal rulings sanctioning slavery, reasons that the practice is justifiable because the slaves are “non-Christian.” Similarly, Elizabeth also argues that blacks have no right to remain in England “for that the most of them are infidels having no understanding of Christ or his Gospels.” Thus, the queen’s duplicity is evident not only in that particular instance of the powerless edict itself which had no intention of removing blacks from England, but also in her public disavowal of slave trading activities. Simultaneously she reveals the same prejudiced views of Africans based on the interrelation between religion and race that characterized the view of other European nations.

⁷³¹ See Frances Gardiner Davenport, ed. *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and its Dependencies to 1648*, 13-20 and 20-26, respectively.

⁷³² Then there was the growing whites-only practice of indentured servitude.

⁷³³ Captain George Berkley, *The Naval History of Britain* ed. John Hill (1756), 292.

⁷³⁴ In 1578, Queen Elizabeth I issued a license to Humphrey Gilbert to found a colony in America, specifically in areas “not actually possessed of any Christian prince or people.” Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas 1585-1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 19. See also A.L. Rowse, *The Expansion of Elizabethan England* (London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1995), 13.

Elizabethan Africans, illicit slaves in England, were an illegal population, individuals lacking in any civic protections, living at the mercy of their captors. Black people even missed the minimum humanizing visibility of legal definition, ironically not given public recognition until Elizabeth's Edict of Expulsion of Negroes at the turn of the century.⁷³⁵ Hence, the historical movement towards nation building in late Tudor England is marked by the growth of a black population whose numbers are not considered a part of the kingdom's record. The history of black people in the early modern period is unconnected to affairs of state and therefore usually is not included, for the most part, in contemporary accounts of England.⁷³⁶

In 1603, the Jacobean regime took over Elizabeth's stigmatization policy towards the black subject as subservient yet invisible.⁷³⁷ This allowed new economic practices, including burgeoning global maritime oceanic expansion policies that facilitated black erasure to continue to flourish. In 1618, the king granted a new charter to 'the Company of Adventurers to Guinea and Benin,' which gave certain traders the exclusive right to trade in Africa.⁷³⁸ Yet, due to fragmentary records, there is little evidence of English commodity and slave trading in West Africa over the first half of the seventeenth century,⁷³⁹ and the history of English trade relations with Africa to 1650 has been understudied.⁷⁴⁰

Charles I expanded his father's imperial policies of foreign initiatives in oceanic trade. These grew into colonial settlements abroad. Thus, in 1626 the Privy Council

⁷³⁵ Habib, *Black Lives*, 5.

⁷³⁶ Habib, 4.

⁷³⁷ Habib, 128.

⁷³⁸ R. Porter, "The Crispe Family and the African Trade in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of African History* I, IX (1968), 57-58.

⁷³⁹ Habib, *Black Lives*, 125.

⁷⁴⁰ Habib, 124.

supported private merchant ships to take “niggers, and to carry them to foreign parts.”⁷⁴¹ Two years later, in 1628, an English ship named the *Fortune* is described as carrying “many negroes” to Virginia.⁷⁴² In 1630, the increasing need for physical labor in overseas developments led Charles I to grant an exclusive license to a group of traders for over thirty years.⁷⁴³ Part of this patent renewed his father’s initial order sanctioning slavery in 1618.⁷⁴⁴ By 1651, the Guinea Company was formed with the stated objective “to buy as many good lusty negers as shee can well carry.”⁷⁴⁵ Even though the ultimate goal was to obtain slaves to work on plantations in the New World, investors also wanted Africans mainly as domestics for England. Thus, the owners request, “We pray you buy 15 or 20 lusty Negers of about 15 yeares of age, bring them home with you for London.”⁷⁴⁶ The Civil War caused African importation to England to undergo a slight decline. This is congruent with the smaller number of Africans recorded in London during this period due in part to the increasing numbers of Puritan migrations to New World colonies. Yet, the establishment of a Commonwealth government by Oliver Cromwell led to the capture of Jamaica from Spain in 1655 and re-launched England into full-fledged participation in the slave trade.⁷⁴⁷ By the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy, Charles II went on to make African slave trading a mass commodity industry headed by the royal family itself.⁷⁴⁸

Slavery, and the presence of black Africans, was becoming public. The Royal

⁷⁴¹ James A. Rawley, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1981), 152.

⁷⁴² Thomas, *Slave Trade*, 175

⁷⁴³ Habib, *Black Lives*, 172.

⁷⁴⁴ Habib, 170.

⁷⁴⁵ “The Guinea Company to James Pope, the 9th of December, 1651,” in Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of History of the Slave Trade, Volume I: 1441-1700* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930), 131.

⁷⁴⁶ “The Guinea Company to James Pope, the 17th of September, 1651,” and “The Guinea Company to Bartholomew Howard, 9 of December, 1651” in ed., Donnan, 1: 128, 129.

⁷⁴⁷ Folarin Olawale Shyllon, *Black Slaves in Britain* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1974), 2.

⁷⁴⁸ Habib. *Black Lives*, 171. See also Christopher Hill, *A Nation of Novelty and Change: Radical Politics, Religion and Literature in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). 7.

Adventurers Company was established in 1660 and contributed assets including ships chartered for “the buying and selling, bartering and exchanging of for or with any negroes, slave goods...”⁷⁴⁹ Private investors and traders included the monarch, as well as members of the Privy Council, and parliament.⁷⁵⁰ (Often lucrative investments were insider secrets for MPs).⁷⁵¹ Moreover, puritans, like royalists, were active participants in the trade.⁷⁵² In 1668, the Royal Adventurers birthed another company, the Gambia Adventurers. In 1672, another successor of the Royal Adventurers was the Royal African Company.⁷⁵³ Famous investors included the political philosopher John Locke and the social diarist Samuel Pepys.⁷⁵⁴ Black labor was increasingly utilized not only in emergent slave economies abroad, but the presence of Africans continued to be a fixture of the English court and a symbol of upward social mobility. In fact, a 1679 record shows that Charles II himself had a personal African slave.⁷⁵⁵

Interestingly, the same reasoning first used to justify slavery in the papal bulls in the fifteenth century, and adopted by Elizabeth to remove blacks from England in 1601, is expressed in the formal ruling making blacks slaves in 1677. The case’s historical moment coincides with the growing practice of separating enslaved black people from poor white indentured servants in English slaving ships and in the American colonies.⁷⁵⁶

Appeal is made to the religious status of blacks. They are considered infidels, hence

⁷⁴⁹ Habib, 125.

⁷⁵⁰ Habib, 125.

⁷⁵¹ Habib, 124.

⁷⁵² Habib, 124.

⁷⁵³ Habib, 130.

⁷⁵⁴ Habib, 130.

⁷⁵⁵ Habib, 130.

⁷⁵⁶ See parliamentary documents of 1675 and 1670 in *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade*, ed. Donnan, 1: 201, 174; Walvin cites an order of the Privy Council for the Plantations that servants should be classed “under two heads, blacks and whites. The blacks bought by way of trade [are]...perpetual servants” (*Black and White*, 38).

justifiably enslaved. Indeed, when black slavery is formally inscribed, both in England and in the colonies, a common misperception lingers that Christian baptism is the ticket to manumission. The belief among many was that curing one's heathenish status solved the problem of slavery. Legal precedent perpetuated this myth. In 1608, Sir Edward Coke had justified slavery, writing, "all infidels are in law perpetual enemies."⁷⁵⁷ Later, John Locke would use a familiar refrain to support slavery in 1679, arguing that it was the justifiable product of war: the condition between "a lawful conqueror and a captive."⁷⁵⁸ Again, both views derived from papal interpretation: Pope Nicholas V's *Romanus Pontifex* Bull of 1455 sanctioning the war against and enslavement of non-Christian people whose primitive living practices are in violation of natural law.⁷⁵⁹ This indicates how pervasive was the early notion of the association between religious status and slavery. Eventually, this view had to be corrected by hard legislation. The first disenfranchisements of black baptisms appears in the 1667 Virginia legislature. However this declaration, which denied the suit of an African servant brought to Virginia from England claiming freedom on the grounds of his prior English baptism, was in response to the success of another such suit a decade earlier.⁷⁶⁰ Thus, the perception that Christianity led to freedom was not initially without merit. This position rapidly changed as blackness (not religion) evolved into the fundamental criterion for slavery.

Despite the ongoing dispute regarding religion and race concerning slavery, the ultimate factor would involve regarding Africans as commodities, or non-persons. In

⁷⁵⁷ "Calvin's Case," *Cobbett's complete collection of state trials and proceedings for high treason and other crimes and misdemeanors from the earliest period to the present time*, eds., Thomas Bayley Howell and Thomas Jones Howell (London, 1809), 2:559.

⁷⁵⁸ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government* ed., J. W. Gough. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1946), 2:4, 24.

⁷⁵⁹ Frances Gardiner Davenport, ed., *European Treaties Bearing on the History of the United States and Its Dependencies* (Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1917), 23.

⁷⁶⁰ Warren M. Billings, "The Cases of Fernando and Elizabeth Key: A Note On The Status Of Blacks In Seventeenth-Century Virginia." *William & Mary Quarterly* 30.3 (1973): 467-474.

1677, the process of extracting blacks from a previously hidden status in England took place through the first London court ruling officially declaring Africans to be slaves.⁷⁶¹ In

Butts v. Penny, the slavery legalization case, the London Court ruled:

Trover for 100 Negroes, and upon Non Culp it was found by special verdict, that the Negroes were infidels, and the subjects of an infidel prince, and are usually bought and sold in America as Merchandise, by the custom of merchants, and that the plaintiff bought these, and was in possession of them until the defendant took them. And Thompson argued, there could be no property in the person of a man sufficient to maintain Trover. And Co. Lit 116. That no property could be in villains hut by compact or conquest. But the court held, that negroes being usually bought and sold among merchants, and so merchandise, and also being infidels, there might be a property in them sufficient to maintain Trover, and gave judgment for the plaintiff nisi Causa, this term.⁷⁶²

The dispute centers on the plaintiff claiming wrongful appropriation of goods, namely, one hundred black people seized unlawfully by the defendant.⁷⁶³ In response, the defendant invokes the medieval peasant bondage law of villeinage claiming that black people, like serfs, are not property.⁷⁶⁴ (In serfdom, the property resided in the land; thus serfs were tied to the land). However, the King's Bench ruled judgment in favor of the plaintiff, allowing for the existence of property in black people.⁷⁶⁵ Therefore, what unofficially had been the informal "liveried servanthship, bonded labor, and chattel enslavement of black people in England and in its American colonies" became the formal legalization of the English possession of Africans.⁷⁶⁶ *Butts v. Penny* set the precedent for

⁷⁶¹ Habib, *Black Lives*, 123.

⁷⁶² "Butts v. Penny," in eds., Helen Tunnicliff Catterall and James J. Hayden, *Judicial cases concerning American slavery and the negro*, vol. 1 (Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1929), 9.

⁷⁶³ Habib, *Black Lives*, 184.

⁷⁶⁴ The ambiguity of English slavery is also exacerbated by its uncertain distinction from the medieval serfdom or villeinage derived from Roman civil law and English common law deriving from the Magna Carta that is in an advanced state of decay by the sixteenth century in England. That confusion is also reflected in the Netheway vs. Gorge case (1534), which fails to distinguish between serf and slave.

⁷⁶⁵ Habib, *Black Lives*, 185.

⁷⁶⁶ Habib, 186.

a subsequent number of court cases all upholding black people as commodities.⁷⁶⁷ In addition to acting as legal precedent, the *Butts v. Penny* case resulted in a dramatic English rise in African ownership. Importantly, this case also marks the moment of unveiling (so to speak, from previous hiddenness), in which blacks in England receive official documentation and historical recognition by being legalized as slaves.⁷⁶⁸

Early Modern English Parish Archives of Blacks

Parish archival recordings of black people in early modern England were overwhelmingly accidental in light of the regime's official policy towards slavery. As discussed above, from the beginnings of their transportation to the country, transactions of black slaves were illicit. African appearances in the parish records were therefore the chance result of pastoral ministry.⁷⁶⁹ The attention to detail applied to parish records was ordered at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign through the Privy Council based on an earlier directive of King Henry the VIII in 1538.⁷⁷⁰ Part of the order required each church to keep two copies of the parish registers, one being kept by the Church Warden. Thus, "Elizabethan parish records...possess...a greater regularity and meticulousness than comparable record-keeping."⁷⁷¹ This becomes beneficial in revealing the presence of a subaltern population of blacks who benefited from Anglican and other pastoral care throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In addition to church registers, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century private inventories of wealthy aristocrats as well as

⁷⁶⁷ *Noel v. Robinson* (1687), *Chambers v. Warkhouse* (1693), *Gelly v. Cleve* (1694) all uphold the legality of property in black people, the second classifying black people with imported animals. (Peter Fryer, *Staying Power*, 113).

⁷⁶⁸ Habib, *Black Lives*, 189.

⁷⁶⁹ Habib, 261.

⁷⁷⁰ Habib, 83.

⁷⁷¹ Habib, 118.

parochial records attached to landed estates include notations with the terms “Negroes,” “blackamores,” and “blackamoors.”⁷⁷² Most importantly, in the archival records of parish churches throughout the Tudor and Stuart reigns are the inscriptions of “nigro,” “neger,” “neygar,” “moor,” “barbaree,” “barbaryen,” “Ethiopian,” and “Indian.”⁷⁷³ These terms clearly indicate persons of dark skin or African descent.

Archival sources show that blacks were present in almost every area of London some time between 1500 and the formal institutionalization of the slave trade in England in 1677.⁷⁷⁴ This is the very period traditionally assumed to be lacking in the presence of black people. Early Tudor records cite thirteen black men and three women, while the Elizabethan records, going from 1558 to 1603, reflect eighty-nine black notations. In the seventeenth century, citations of black people number 121 records between 1603 and 1677.⁷⁷⁵ Thus, comparatively there are more black citations from the sixteenth than there are from the seventeenth century. (This is a bit misleading since black importations increase generally up until the legalization of slavery). In all, eighty-one deaths, fifty-nine baptisms, and twenty-eight marriages of blacks are recorded in parish archival records.⁷⁷⁶ In terms of ministry, baptisms of course are the most compelling because they signify conversion to the Christian faith. There are, however, fewer black baptisms in the records of the Elizabethan period than in the Stuart era. Thus, baptisms for blacks increase even as notations of blacks in parish records decrease overall from the sixteenth to the

⁷⁷² Habib, 2.

⁷⁷³ Habib, 2.

⁷⁷⁴ Habib, 1. Habib states that even when scholars argue there were large numbers of Africans in sixteenth and seventeenth century England “they do so by blind faith rather than on the strength of documented evidence, as for instance Eldred Jones did a long time ago in his *The Elizabethan Image of Africa*,” (17). See also Peter Erickson, “The Moment of Race in Renaissance Studies,” *Shakespeare Studies* 26 (1998): 35.

⁷⁷⁵ Habib, 1.

⁷⁷⁶ Habib, 155.

seventeenth century. This suggests increased active participation among ministers and religious communities with Africans as the century progresses, although relatively speaking less parish recording of ministry with blacks was taking place. A lesser percentage of Anglican black parish records in the seventeenth century may also indicate that some Africans were joining independent churches by the early seventeenth century.

The earliest recorded parish ministry to Africans in England is the careful burial of black bodies. For example, one of the first archival references to a black burial is of a slave belonging to William Hawkins, Jr., a member of the notorious Hawkins slave trading family. On December 10, 1583 in the parish register at St. Andrews Church in Plymouth it is written that “Bastien, a Blackmoore of Mr. Willm. Hawkins, Plymouth” is laid to rest.⁷⁷⁷ On June 29, 1588 at St. Olave, Hart Street, London there is an archival reference to the burial of “man blackamoor laye in the street.”⁷⁷⁸ Seized Africans brought to England during this period were as easily disposed of as they had been acquired. By the 1580s, the plague and bad harvests disproportionately affected slaves. Yet many ministers of the church were willing to commend them to God with decent burial.

Many burial notations indicate that the deceased was not Christian. For example, on October 13, 1593, the parish register of St. Botolph without Aldgate in London records “Easfanyo a negar servant of Mr. Thomas Barber a marchaunt” was buried in “common ground.”⁷⁷⁹ Here, a black servant with a Spanish-Portuguese name, apparently having been acquired by an English merchant, is noted as having receiving the non-Anglican funeral rite for the unbaptized or one who did not profess the Christian faith.

⁷⁷⁷ *Register of Baptism, Marriage, and Burial of the Parish of St. Andrew's, Plymouth*, 292; cited in Habib, 311.

⁷⁷⁸ *Registers of St. Olave, Hart Street*, 121; cited in Habib, 315.

⁷⁷⁹ *Register of St. Botolph without Aldgate*, GL 9234/4; cited in Habib, 318.

Thus it is also indicated that he was buried in the common ground, and not in the parish Churchyard. Although part of the requirements for notations in registers, it is remarkable that the death and burial of a non-Christian black servant would be so carefully recorded, particularly since it gives an indication of the attention to pastoral care. In another unique case revealing the meticulous care of church ministry, on November 29, 1593, also at St. Botolph without Aldsgate in London,

Robarte a negar servant to William Matthew a gentleman dwelling in a garden behynd Mr. Quarles hys house and neare unto hogg lane in the libertie of East Smithfield was buried in the owter church yard being with out the cross wall before...this xxix day of November Anno 1593. He had the second cloth and fower bearers.⁷⁸⁰

This cryptic note suggests that William Matthew, a so-called “gentleman,” (probably some kind of merchant or trader) reduced his servant “Robarte” to living in squalid conditions. Indeed, that overall area, including what is behind that of the neighbors, has been described in contemporary accounts as “filthy,” “unsavory and unseemly.”⁷⁸¹ Thus a black servant is forced to live in animal-like conditions during life, and yet ironically is given the honor of a church burial with “fower bearers,” although it is clear that he is placed in the “owter church yard” as an unbaptized Christian. It is remarkable that even one who is treated so carelessly by his master would again be given so much care and attention in death, even as a non-Christian. Again, another careful notation regarding an unbaptized slave concerns the death of one who expired sometime between 20 April and 24, 1597 at St. Mary Woolchurch Haw, London, and described as “a blakmore belonging to Mr. John Davies, died in White Chapel parishe, was laied in the ground in this church yarde without any company of people and without ceremony, because we did not know

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid; cited in Habib, 319.

⁷⁸¹ John Stow *A Survey of London*, (1599), 2:72.

whether he was a Christian or not.”⁷⁸² Again, what is striking is the attention to detail in the pastoral care given to the dead and the careful rendering of the event even for a presumably non-Christian black servant.

Baptisms (or christenings) are noteworthy because they signal inclusion into the community of faith. Among England’s early black baptisms there is a compelling note signifying gracious ministry to God’s people. On May 6, 1565 at St. Mary the Virgin Church, in Aldermanbury, London, “Jhon the Blackamoor,” an abandoned African, had been left to die on the streets.⁷⁸³ Apparently someone brought him into the church and had him baptized.⁷⁸⁴ This is noted because “Jhon” died a couple of weeks later, for on May 23 of the same year he was also buried at the church.⁷⁸⁵ What were the circumstances in which an abandoned, sickly African was pulled from the streets of London to be baptized, apparently taken care of until death, and then buried? We may never know these details, but the pastoral care involved in responding to the needs of such a marginalized, abject, poor, and suffering individual reflects the teachings of Jesus the Christ. Also, in sixteenth-century parish registers, there are often records of black infant baptisms. Many of these infants are interracial. For example, there is the case of an infant baptism as described on September 25, 1586 at St. Botolph Bishopsgate, London where it is written, “Elizabeth, a negro child, born white, the mother a negro.”⁷⁸⁶ The notation emphasizes the fact that the child is negro, but also states that, without indicating the paternity, the child is born white. The mother is not named nor is reference given to her religious status. Towards the end of Elizabeth’s reign, at St. Andrew’s Church at

⁷⁸² *Registers of St. Mary Woolchurch*, Haw, GL 7644; cited in Habib, 324.

⁷⁸³ Habib, 94.

⁷⁸⁴ *Registers of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury*, 26; cited in Habib, 315.

⁷⁸⁵ Habib, 27.

⁷⁸⁶ *Registers of St. Botolph Bishopsgate*, GL 4515/1; cited in Habib, 316.

Plymouth on November 17, 1594, there is a notation regarding “Cristien, daughter of Mary, a negro of John Whites and the supposed daughter of John Kinge, a Dutchman...(illeg).”⁷⁸⁷ Although the child Cristien’s father is not named, the negro mother Mary is described as the illegitimate daughter of a Dutchman. The very next month, also at St. Andrew’s at Plymouth, on December 24, 1594, there is another case of an interracial baptism with an unnamed black female slave and foreign European father: “Fortunatus, son of a negro of Thomas Kegwins the supposed father being a Portugall.”⁷⁸⁸ Here, the black mother is not named, but only given identity through her English master. Even the European father is not named. But the baptized son is carefully named, presumably because of the ritual itself and his entry into the community of Christ. This provides a clue into some of the social settings in which many Africans found themselves, for instance, the “unmistakable traces of the sexual oppression of held black women,” even as they joined English religious communities.⁷⁸⁹

Accounts of black adult conversion to the faith are even more striking. The parish register of Chislehurst parish, Bromley, Kent of April 22, 1595 notes that one “Cristofer Adam a blackamore” was “christened” as “a man growne.”⁷⁹⁰ Although the circumstances of this initiation are left up to speculation, the christening of an adult man into the Anglican faith suggests heartfelt agency to join the church. In another particularly dramatic case, there is a more detailed account of conversion. In this event, one “Mary Phyllis of Morisco,” clearly described as a “blackamore” is depicted.

⁷⁸⁷ *Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials of the Parish of St. Andrew’s Plymouth*, 57; cited in Habib, 319.

⁷⁸⁸ Habib, 58

⁷⁸⁹ Habib, 201.

⁷⁹⁰ *Local Studies and Archives*, Bromley Public Libraries, Bromley, Kent, *Chislehurst parish Composite register*: ref. P92/1- date: 1558-1681, 1; cited in Habib, 320.

She was of late servant with one Mr. Barber of Marke Lane a widower she said her father's name was Phyllis of Morisco a blackamore being both a basket maker and shovel maker. This Marye Phyllis being about the age of xx yeares, and having been in England for the part of xii and xiii yeares and as yet was not christened now being bound (?) servant with one Millicent Porter a sempster dwelling in the liberties of east Smithfield and now taking part...of faith in Jesus Christ was desyrous to become a Christian wherefore she made suit...to have sonme conversation with the curat of this the parish of st. buttolph without aldgate London...the curat named Christopher Threlkeld demanding of her certen questions concerning her fayth whereunto she answering him quite Christian like; and afterwards she being by the said Mr. Christopher Threlkeld...to say the lord's prayer and also to repeat the articles of her belief which she did both say and repeat both decently and well. Concerning her faith then the said curat demanded of her if she weare desyrous to be baptized in the said fayth (whereat?) shee said yes. Then the said curat did go with her unto the fonte and desiring the congregation with him to call upon god the father through our Lord Jesus Christ that of his Bownteous mercie he wold graunt to her that thing...by nature she could not have that she may be baptized..."⁷⁹¹

In 1597, the parish clerk of St. Botolph provides a joyful account of conversion to the Anglican faith. That the woman happens to be a black servant in late Tudor England makes the account even more remarkable. At the age of around twenty, Mary initiates the events of her own conversion. After being in England for several years, she was free enough to speak with the minister of the parish. Presumably during this time and earlier she was able to learn and was instructed with regard to religious doctrine (probably through attendance of services) so that by the time she was questioned, could say the Lord's prayer, and the Articles of Faith "both decently and well." According to the account, in the actual ritual act she is regarded truly as a child of God in the name of salvation as the pastor calls down the grace of God through the prayers of the congregation to heal the sins inherited through her human nature and make her redeemed.⁷⁹² This story of voluntary conversion is powerful, and although the account is not in Mary's own words, whatever underlying motives may have been present for all

⁷⁹¹ *Registers of St. Botolph, Aldgate*, GL. I. 9220; cited in Habib, 325.

⁷⁹² Habib, 92.

involved, surely at some level the episode reflects a genuine commitment to friendship with Christ.

In the early Stuart years, there is an increasing notation of black poverty in relation to ministerial services.⁷⁹³ On March 18, 1601/02: “Fortunatus a blackmoor seruant to Sr Robert Cicill” was buried at St. Dunstan and All Saints, Stepney Tower Hamlets, London.⁷⁹⁴ Robert Cecil was the First Earl of Salisbury, made Secretary of State following the death of Sir Francis Walsingham in 1590, and went on to become Secretary of State under King James I. This is a classic example of the commonality of slaveholding at the highest levels of society. In fact the keeping of domesticated Africans was a mark of upward social mobility for members of the court and the gentry. However, it is interesting that Fortunatus would be buried in such a poor parish after having working for such a high-ranking official.

Also during these years, as previously noted, black baptisms increase proportionally in relation to the previous era. On 18 March 1601/02, in the parish register of St. Dunstan and All Saints Church, in Stepney Tower Hamlets, London (a very poor neighborhood) records a child named “Christian Ethiopia borne of a Blackmore baptized” on the twenty-seventh day.⁷⁹⁵ The first name indicates the child is Christian and the surname attaches racial identity. Interestingly, neither the child nor her mother (presumably the “Blackmore”) is listed as attached to an English household, and thus probably live in an area associated with the destitute. Also at the St. Dunstan and All Saints Church in London, on July 29, 1603, “Charity Lucanea, a blackamore,

⁷⁹³ Habib, 155.

⁷⁹⁴ *Registers of St. Clement Danes*, West. Arch; cited in Habib, 333.

⁷⁹⁵ *Registers of St. Dunstan and All Saints, Stepney Tower Hamlets*, LMA P93/DUN/255; cited in Habib, 333.

baptized...from Ratclif.”⁷⁹⁶ Charity also appears to be on her own, and not directly in service or employment to an English household.⁷⁹⁷ No specifics on age are given. Presumably, she is not a child, and therefore an adult standing on her own. We can only speculate from where she originated, since she probably had some previous attachment or ownership. This indicates that although blacks were brought to England, they were not infrequently cast aside or put out by their owners or employers. Ironically due to the economy it was better to be kept in service than otherwise. Regardless of their status in society the church appears willing to initiate them into Christ’s love. Also, infant baptisms continue with frequency, many again reflecting interracial backgrounds. In 1603, the exact date uncertain, at St. Andrew’s, Plymouth, there is the baptism apparently of a younger person, since the parents are mentioned: “Ric, son of Marye a Neger, base, ye reputed father Rog[er] Hoggett.”⁷⁹⁸ Since the mentioned father is “reputed” it is probably an interracial case. On March 19, 1619/20 St. Margaret’s, Westminster (London) there is the sobering record of the baptism of “Nicholas a Negro of unknown parents...at the age of 3 yeares or thereabouts.”⁷⁹⁹ The child, an orphan, may have been a servant to a local aristocrat or court official, although this person is not named. The swindling of the baby from his parents originally in Africa or elsewhere is indicative of the cruel and inhumane aspects of the slave trade. Although his sponsors are not named, someone took enough interest or concern in the child’s soul to ensure he was baptized.

Moreover, during this period interracial marriage unions blessed by the church were not uncommon. On October 16, 1616 at All Saints Church, Staplehurst Parish, in

⁷⁹⁶ Habib, 333.

⁷⁹⁷ Habib, 134.

⁷⁹⁸ *Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials of the Parish of St. Andrew’s Plymouth*, 110; cited in Habib, 333.

⁷⁹⁹ *Memorials of St. Margaret’s Church*, 103; cited in Habib, 340.

Staplehurst, Kent “George a blackmore [and] Marie Smith” were married.⁸⁰⁰ It is possible that Marie could have been black as well, although this is not expressly recorded.

Likewise on Christmas Eve of 1617 at the Holy Trinity the Less Church “James Curres, beinge a Moore Christian and Margaret Person, a maid.”⁸⁰¹ This is in all probability an interracial union considering the designation that “James” is a “Moore Christian” with the emphasis on his race as well as religious affiliation and that of Margaret as being only a “maid.” Indeed, this reference is considered to be “the first record of an explicitly identified African male in an interracial marriage in the early modern English archives.”⁸⁰²

Ministry to blacks, and thus to the poor and indigent, continues to be notated in seventeenth-century parish records. On November 4, 1623 at St. Botolph Church, Aldgate, London “a blackamoore woman that died in the street, named Marie,” was buried.⁸⁰³ Here an African woman, cast aside, is given a church burial. There is also a case of a slave with a revelatory name, “John Come Quicke,” who was also buried at St. Botolph, Aldgate a few days later on November 26, 1623. He is designated as “a blacke-moore so named, servant to Thomas Love, A Captaine,”⁸⁰⁴ The name “John Come Quicke” not only encapsulates the menial responsibilities of the individual, but also how that service came to embody that person’s identity. The African’s affiliation to Captain Love is noteworthy because the latter is later rewarded for service in 1648 “for his provisioning of Puritan armies in the civil war, a service that is partly explained by his experience in procuring black labor like John at this time.”⁸⁰⁵ This suggests that “John

⁸⁰⁰ *Registers of All Saints Parish, Centre of Kentish Studies*, ms P347, ref. #560; cited in Habib, 340.

⁸⁰¹ *Registers of Holy Trinity the Less*, GL 9155; cited in Habib, 344.

⁸⁰² Habib, 140.

⁸⁰³ *Registers of St. Botolph, Aldgate*, GL 9222/1; cited in Habib, 343.

⁸⁰⁴ Habib, *Black Lives*, 140.

⁸⁰⁵ Habib, 138.

Come Quicke” was only one of many blacks in service to the captain around this time. One can imagine that “John Come Quicke’s” work duties may have resulted in a shortened life span. In contrast, “Anthony a poore ould Negro aged 105 yeares was buried” on May 18, 1630 at St. Augustine (St. John), at Hackney, London.⁸⁰⁶ The age description indicates that he was very advanced in years, and reflects “a social ambience of racial benignity in which an elderly black individual can live out the remainder of his life without the strictures of a specific encumbrance or bondage.”⁸⁰⁷

Among the most dramatic accounts in the parish records are those of the public English baptisms of Africans. On January 1, 1610 at St. Mildred Poultry Church, in London, records show that,

Dederj Iaquoah about ye age of 20 yeares, the sonne of Caddi-biah king of the river of Cetras or Cestus in the Countrey of Ginny, who was sent out of his cuntrey by his father in an English ship called the Abigail of London, belonging to Mr John Davies of this parishe, to be baptized. At the request of the said Mr. Davies, and at the desire of the said Dedery, and by allowance of authority, was by ye parson of this church the first of Ianuarie, baptized and named John. His suerties were Iohn Davies haberdasher Isaac Kilburne Mercer, Robert Singleton Churchwarden, Edmund Towers Paul Gurgeny and Rebecca Hutchens. He shewed his opinion concerning Iesus Christ and his faith in him; he repeated the Lords prayer in English at the fonte, and sow as baptized and signed with the signe of the Crosse.⁸⁰⁸

Dederj Iaquoah is a Guinean African king’s son sent by his father to England with the merchant trader John Davis to become Christianized and Anglicized in order to learn the cultural ways of the English and have better trade relations with them. These trade relations would include, of course, slave trafficking. In London, Dederj’s baptism was apparently regarded auspiciously as indicated by the entry’s notation of the assemblage of important community citizens as witnesses of the event and the stressing of Dederj’s

⁸⁰⁶ *Registers of St. John*, Hackney, LMA P79/JN1/021; cited in Habib, 344.

⁸⁰⁷ Habib, *Black Lives*, 154.

⁸⁰⁸ *St. Mildred Poultry, London Register*, GL 4429/1; cited in Habib, 337.

name.⁸⁰⁹ Public baptisms were not uncommon for this period and often occurred at the center of the city. This particular event's location is in St. Mildred Poultry, which is off London's most central thoroughfare and mercantile concourse, Cheapside. But like so many of these cross-cultural exchanges, we do not know the outcome of this particular project. Apparently "John" Dederj disappears from the records when pirates attack the ship on a return trip to Guinea, West Africa and it is speculated that the supposedly acculturated African abandons the English arrangement (and Christian religion) by returning home.⁸¹⁰ In a similar case, on February 3, 1610/11 at All Hallows, Tottenham, Haringay, London, "Walter Anberey the sonne of Nosser Anberey borne in the kingdom of Dungala in Africa, was baptized upon the thirde day of February being Shrove Sundaie, in the Eight yeare of Kinge James, anno, 1610".⁸¹¹ The notation is very specific in describing the African's background and comes across as celebratory in hailing an iconic neighborhood event on a significant religious day. This Jacobean conversion to the Anglican faith symbolizes England's Protestant goal in the transformation of 'heathen'.⁸¹² Indeed, belief in the Christian mission to convert unbelievers is expressed even in the midst of slave trading of black human beings as reflected in a 1621 London Petition to Sir Thomas Smith, Knight of the East India Company.

Item, more, for thirteen Negroes or Indian people, six wommen, seaven men, and boyes, the price of them not to be vallewed, for why...Well, the Estimacion of these poore Soules, they are not be vallewed at anie price. The cause why, I will shewe you, because the Lord Jesus have suffered Death as well for them as for all of you, for in time the Lord may call them to be true Christians...And now for the Thirteen Heathens...So far now my most Woshipful Masters, I most humblie

⁸⁰⁹ Habib, *Black Lives*, 143.

⁸¹⁰ Habib, 23.

⁸¹¹ LMA, DRO/015/A/01/001; cited in Habib, 145.

⁸¹² Habib, *Black Lives*, 23.

beseech for my heavenlie God, I may not receive Rewards either of Gold or Silver for such as are created after the Image, Similitude, and Likenesse of God....⁸¹³

The trader William Bragge, who ironically boasts of transporting to England the said “Negroes or Indian people” and for which he also requests a large number of pounds from the East India Company, also describes them as “heathen” souls made in the image of God and in need of salvation. This is striking because the view that blacks had souls worthy of redemption was a questionable hypothesis for many at this time. Sadly, Bragge’s language reads like religious hyperbole, that is, as a crafty sales pitch designed to emphasize the worth and quality of the product in order to drive up the price. Did this result in the poor African souls mentioned eventually hearing the gospel? Perhaps Bragge truly had no ultimate interest in soul saving, since he was so willing to sell bodies for profit, but the language of heathenism associated with blackness recurs in other notations as well. Eight years later, at St. Mary’s Church, in Woolnoth, London, the parish register records that “Timothy, a heathen Blackamoore” was baptized on May 14, 1629.⁸¹⁴ This is the only other time that the word “heathen” occurs in the entirety of the English archives. Yet, black conversions have been described in parish registers without use of this word, which now reflects an increased “negativity” and “hostility toward black people” as the century wears on.⁸¹⁵

Meanwhile, the effects of Christian conversion on the lives of some Africans in early modern England remain evident in some church records.

March 20, 1626/27 St. Mary, Putney, London Churchwardens’ accounts; “Henry White and Dunstone Duck Churchwardens. Their accoumpts of monies received and paid out for the Church this yeare 1626: More received: of Mr. Robart Angell the 2 of Maie 1626 by order of the Vestrie the sonne of 21.10 shillings being so

⁸¹³ Cited in Shyllon, *Black People*, 6-7, 2.

⁸¹⁴ *Registers of St. Mary Woolnoth and St. Mary Woolwich*, 38; cited in Habib, 345.

⁸¹⁵ Habib, *Black Lives*, 153.

much put into Mr Angells hand to paie use for being the guift of the Lady Bromblie and a negro maid servant of hers to the poore of this parish. And ordered by vestrie the daie above to the paid in to the church warden Henrie Whit to put out to use for the poor. 21.10 shillings.”⁸¹⁶

A negro maid servant along with her mistress, makes a monetary gift to the parish on behalf of the poor. This mistress is Anne Bromley, the fourth wife of Sir Henry Bromley, who was involved in the Essex rebellion against Queen Elizabeth and later restored by King James. The black woman is unnamed, and yet she is of sufficient means to make such a donation and to be commended in the register for the act of charity. The occasion is noted as “the first documentation of the capital accumulation of early Modern English black people, as well as the collective effort to portray her in the role of social patron.”⁸¹⁷ However, the suggestion that it is necessarily “impurely motivated” may not be entirely true. Considering that the black woman is making a contribution to the church, in all probability she was a baptized Christian and along with any compulsion she may have felt by her mistress to assist, the fact that she had such funds at her disposal indicates her agency to offer them. And, the fact that these two women would make such a “substantial sum” to serve the poor suggests at least a modicum of religious charity, even if other undiscoverable motives were also involved. Yet, the negro maid’s physical attachment to her mistress is symptomatic of the growing practice of black slave possession in England, that is, the increasing de facto “ownership” of Africans as the century progresses and nears the legalization of this practice. Thus, the parish recordings of seventeenth-century adult baptisms, more so than previous notations, tend to reflect the ties that Africans bear to their masters. For example, on February 4, 1630/31 at St. Augustine’s Church, Bristol

⁸¹⁶ *St. Mary Putney, Churchwardens’ Accounts 1623-1693*. LMA P95/MRY1/413, 35; cited in Habib, 346.

⁸¹⁷ Habib, 346.

“Solomon, a blakman of Mr. William Haymans” was baptized.⁸¹⁸ “Robert the blake more servant of Sir. Goerge Blundell was baptized the 14 day of July of 1661 Cardington, Bedfordshire, London.”⁸¹⁹ On September 24, 1661 at St. Dunstan, Stepney, London “Daniel Thomas a Negro servant to Mr. Hutchinson of stepnie baptized being 18 years old.”⁸²⁰ A Chepsted, Chevening county, Kent parish register dated February 12, 1664/65 describes a baptism in relation to the mistress, presumably as a sponsor: “John an Ethiopian a blackamoor Servant was baptized to the Lady Katharine Strode of Chepsted being 18 years of age of thereabouts as is supposed.”⁸²¹ Similarly, in another case, “James sonne of Grace—blackmore servant of Mr Bromfield of Limhouse begotten as she affirmeth by James Diego a Negro late servant to Mr Bromfield born in the house of William Ward of Limehouse mariner at 4 days old was baptized on February 9, 1630/31, at St. Dunstan, Stepney, London.”⁸²² Grace and James Diego (deceased?) are a black couple presenting their son James for baptism under the sponsorship of a Mr. Bromfield and Mr. Ward, two Englishmen. The active involvement of socially prominent men in black people’s lives, indeed in the fabric of the black family, is an example of the evolution of white ownership of all facets of slave existence beyond mere employment.⁸²³ Finally, this applies for burials as well. On November 30, 1662, “Emanuell Feinande, Mr Adams’ friend’s slave, a blackmore” was buried at St. Benet Fink, London as recorded at the Registers St. Benet Fink, London.⁸²⁴ This is the first recorded instance of the word “slave” in parish records. It reflects “a hardening of black

⁸¹⁸ *Registers of St. Augustine’s Church*, Bristol Record Office; cited in Habib, 344.

⁸¹⁹ *Bedfordshire Registers*, (1934) 18; Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Records Service, 8; cited in Habib, 346.

⁸²⁰ *Registers of St. Dunstan, Stepney*, LMA P93/DUN/258; cited in Habib, 346.

⁸²¹ *Chevening County Registers* CMB 1564-1812, Centre for Kentish Studies; cited in Habib, 346.

⁸²² *Registers of St. Dunstan, Stepney*, LMA P93/DUN/256; cited in Habib, 345.

⁸²³ Habib, *Black Lives*, 155.

⁸²⁴ Habib, 178.

disempowerment...that approaches a social standard.”⁸²⁵ All of these cases as recorded in parochial ministry are indicative of the increasingly entrenched role of English chattel ownership of blacks in the seventeenth century. The hardening of enslavement in seventeenth-century England may also account for the relatively fewer numbers of black records in parish registers.

One exception to the gradual intensification of the phenomenon of black possession is the case of Black Joan.⁸²⁶ From 1626 to 1664, Black Joan is recorded in the St. Mary, Putney, London Churchwarden’s accounts as the recipient of payments for performing menial tasks. From time to time she received relief from the church parish, which is indicative of her unattached status, and records show that in her old age she was placed in the almshouse until 1664.⁸²⁷ Joan was an independent black woman living in seventeenth-century London, who, although menial, received compensation “for her service that are carefully documented for over four decades.”⁸²⁸ Unfortunately, there is no record of her baptism or burial. Thus, this is a case of the church providing a meager, but independent form of employment to a black woman in the early modern period.

Churchwardens could also prove oppressive to seventeenth-century black women surviving in England. In April 1632, “Grace, a blackamoore” was accused before the Stepney, London and Commissary Court on the sexual immorality charge of living incontinently with Walter Church, Stepney.⁸²⁹ However, according to the record, her supposed accomplice, Walter Church, was not also charged. Hence, Grace is exclusively

⁸²⁵ Habib, 178.

⁸²⁶ Habib, 177.

⁸²⁷ *St. Mary Putney, Churchwardens’ Accounts 1623-1693*, LMA< P95/MRY1/413; 36, 42, 48, 55, 58; BL Add. MS 34718; cited in Habib, 323.

⁸²⁸ Habib, 149. See H.E. Malden, ed., “Parishes: Putney,” in *A History of the County of Surrey*, (1912), 76-83.

⁸²⁹ Commissary Court ‘Ex Officio’ Book, GL 9065E/1 fol. 81; cited in Habib, 157.

singled out for prosecution in a situation much like the woman caught in adultery.⁸³⁰

There is no record regarding the resolution of the case. Based on previous parish entries, single black women's relationships with white men was certainly not uncommon, resulting often in "base" offspring christened by the church. Thus this particular situation appears unique perhaps by Grace's refusal to continue living in an insufferable manner, yet unable to withstand the persecutions of the church and civic authorities.⁸³¹

Two Case Studies of the Religious Lives of Early Modern English Africans

The previous sections challenge the scholarly convention that there were no blacks in early modern England and note the diversity of ministerial services to blacks based on parish archival records. What impact, if any, did the metaphorical writing and preaching of early modern English divines with its blackamoor tropes and imagery have on religious culture and society and thus on the lives of contemporary Africans living in England? This section analyzes two anecdotal accounts of black conversion stories. They demonstrate that at the same time as English theologians were using blackamoor rhetoric to symbolize sin in Protestant salvation, at least one black African in England was struggling with issues of racial stigmatization based on sinfulness and worthlessness in their efforts to convert to Christianity. However, she is able to overcome the negative associations of black identity while continuing to appeal to her Christian faith. In another case, while some harbored stigmatized views against blacks in a Baptist religious community, the faith and witness of a black matriarch is inescapable. Thus, the complexity of a culture of black religious rhetoric and ecclesial inclusivity for Africans is

⁸³⁰ John 8:4-11.

⁸³¹ Habib, 157.

reflected in anecdotal case stories of black women whose lives depict multiple dimensions of struggle and triumph for personal salvation and societal acceptance.

Edward Terrill, an elder of the Church of Christ of the Broadmead area of Bristol, a Baptist society that became even more prominent after the Civil War, wrote a religious memoir of the life of a black woman member of the congregation. This account is compelling because of the insight it sheds on contemporary views of black ethnicity in relation to theological beliefs regarding salvation.

By the goodness of God they had one Memmorable member added unto them namely a Blackymore maide named Francis (a servant to one that lived the Back of Bristol) which thing is somewhat rare in our dayes and Nation, to have an Ethyopian or Blackmore to be truly Convinced of Sin; and of their lost State without the Redeemer and to be truly Converted to the Lord Jesus Christ, as she was which by her profession or declaration at the time of reception; together with her sincere conversation; she gave greate ground for charity to believe she was truly brought over to Christ, for this poor Aethiopian's soule savoured much of God, and she walked very humble and blamelesse in her conversation, to her end; and when she was upon her death bed: she sent a remarkable exhortation unto the whole church with whom she walked as her last request unto them which argued her holy, childlike fear of the Lord, and how precious the Lord was to her soule, as was observed by the manner of her expressing it which was this: one of the sisters of the congregation coming to visit her, in her sicknesse, she solemnly took her leave of her, as to this world: and pray'd the sister to remember her to the whole congregation, and tell them, that she did beg every soule, To take heed that they did lett the glory of God to be dear unto them a word meet for the Church ever to remember; and for every particular member to observe, that they doe not loose the glory of God in their families, neighbourhoods or places where God casts them: it being the dyeing words of a Blackmoore, fit for a White heart to store. After which this Aethiopian yielded up the Spirit to Jesus that redeemed her and was Honourably interred being carried by the elders and the chiefest of note of the brethren in the congregation (devout men bearing her) to the grave, where she must rest untill our Lord doth come who will bring his Saints with him. By this in our days, we may see, Experimentally, that Scripture made good...that is God is no respecter of faces: But among all nations &c. Acts 10: 34:35.⁸³²

⁸³² Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Buford Rediker. *The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 73-74. [Hereafter cited as Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many Headed Hydra*]

<http://www.discoveringbristol.org.uk/showNarrative.php?narId=471&nacId+474> According to the web page of Port Cities Bristol: "Many of the black people living in Bristol were Christians, and were baptized, married or buried in church. The church records often refer to their nationality or colour. One individual who appears in the church records of a Baptist chapel was called Frances. She was referred to as 'an

Terrill's narrative is included in a journal of oral and written testimonies that he kept during the Restoration years, a period in which the Broadmead Baptist church faced persecution through laws targeting non-conformists.⁸³³ The Francis account can be read as an example of the Baptist movement's radical commitment to egalitarianism, particularly racial reconciliation. However, it is important to read the text both within the historical setting of the civil war years, as well as the post-Restoration period, when Terrill compiled the story. The danger lies in interpreting the writing of Terrill, by profession a scrivener, and his presentation of Francis, as literal without recognizing his "complex ventriloquism," or rather, post-Restoration English religious patriarchal speech, imposed upon the mouth of a radical Independent black female revolutionary of the 1640s. Thus there are deeper layers to the narrative than those that first appear.

Terrill writes that Francis was a "blackyamore maid" from Bristol who served as a spiritual leader and inspiration to the Baptist community of Broadmead until her death in 1640. He emphasizes the depth of her faith and piety, which has apparently continued to have an impact on the church's collective memory and identity in the 1670s. However, Terrill subverts the radical history of Francis' real story due to the political context of the post-Restoration period. Terrill recounts "a remarkable exhortation" that Francis sends to the church on her deathbed through one of the sisters of the congregation. In this exhortation she commends every believer "To take heed that they did lett the glory of God to be dear unto them a word meet for the Church ever to remember; and for every

Ethiopian or blackamoor'. Ethiopia was often used to refer to the whole of Africa rather than to the country in the North East. So the term Ethiopian probably meant that she was black African, not that she was from Ethiopia. Frances was a servant to a man who lived 'upon the back of Bristol' (now known as Welshback). Frances was a valued member of the Baptist congregation in the Broadmead area of Bristol. She died in 1640."

⁸³³ *The Records of a Church of Christ in Broadmead, Bristol, 1640-1687.*

particular member to observe, that they doe not loose the glory of God in their families, neighbourhoods or places where God casts them.” Terrill presents this incident as a spiritually benign event devoid of the radically religious context in which they were initially uttered. In the 1640s, the Baptist community of Broadmead was a center of revolutionary energy bristling with the eschatological expectation of righteousness and justice made manifest in the land through, among other things, the equal distribution of material resources among the poor.⁸³⁴ Francis, a poor black servant, yet spiritual leader, was the embodiment of all of these expectations. In fact, for many in the Leveller movement (whose ideas spread among radical religious believers reconciling beliefs about political justice with the gospel) the meaning of blackness was being transformed from its traditional understanding of inferiority and debasement to equality. It is noted that the Leveller Edward Sexby argued at the Putney Debates (using the familiar metaphor expanding its meaning) “We have gone about to wash a blackmoor, to wash him white, which he will not...I think we are going about to set up the power of kings, some part of it, which God will destroy.” In his use of the figurative blackamoor trope to signify the refusal of upholding the whitewashing of royalty in English society, Sexby was associating “blackness with republicanism.”⁸³⁵ This was a radical reversal of the metaphoric link between blackness and sin expressed in contemporary doctrinal preaching. Instead, blackness was being associated with liberation. Francis’ exhortation was directed to a community, which had been formed in the 1630s as an assembly of independent, praying women and others under the leadership of Dorothy Hazzard “in

⁸³⁴ See Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1995).

⁸³⁵ Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many Headed Hydra*, 78.

search of the simplicity and equality of the primitive first Christians.”⁸³⁶ This separate gathering of believers was “militant” for God’s deliverance among the people and when Civil War broke out, operated as a truly democratic society in congregational leadership, with room for the voices of all individuals. Francis’ understanding of “glory” for the people “was part of eschatology, the last things” and it was “the promise of an end to bondage” (Rom. 8:15-17). The dying black woman’s holy request was for the people to cultivate the “interior glory that came down to Earth and entered the spirit of the children of God,” a presence that “was democratized” and “became available to all” in the fight to establish an equitably righteous society, free from oppression, slavery, and discrimination, God’s kingdom come.⁸³⁷

However, by the 1670s, the struggles for justice and the equal distribution of material resources as a manifestation of God’s righteousness during the civil war years were ultimately met with failure. In his narrative, Terrill spiritualizes the radicalism of the Broadmead Baptist Church’s history as embodied in the life narrative of Francis. Moreover, importantly, he re-inscribes black ethnicity as inferior in relation to her spiritual status. Specifically Terrill does this in several ways throughout the course of the short memoir. First, he translates Acts 10:34 “of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons” to “that is God is no respecter of *faces*: But among all nations &c. Acts 10: 34:35.” In so doing, he distances himself from revolutionary meanings of the phrase. The Digger manifesto, *The True Leveller’s Standard Advanced* (1649) states:

That every one that is born in the land may be fed by the earth, his mother that brought him forth, according to the reason that rules in the creation, not enclosing any part into any particular land, but all as one man working together, and feeding together as sons of one father, members of one family; not one lording over

⁸³⁶ Linebaugh and Rediker, 79.

⁸³⁷ Linebaugh and Rediker, 83.

another, but all looking upon each other as equals in creation. So that our Maker may be glorified in the work of his hands, and that every one may see that he is no respecter of persons, but equally loves his whole creation...⁸³⁸

Terrill's alternative use of the word "faces" instead of "persons" suggests skin color difference and reflects "something superficial, a mask; and in this case, the mask is that of a "blackamore."⁸³⁹ Second, he notes the spiritual progression of Francis from a state of sin to justification and sanctification as exemplary for an Ethiopian or Blackamoor. He writes of her ability "to be truly Convinced of Sin; and of [her] lost State without the Redeemer and to be truly Converted to the Lord Jesus Christ" as well as "her profession or declaration at the time of reception; together with her sincere conversation," and noting that this "thing is somewhat rare in our dayes and Nation, [for] an Etyhopian or Blackmore." Thus Francis' heightened spiritual state is an anomaly compared to the rest of her black ethnic group. Third, when Terrill writes "it being the dyeing words of a Blackmoore, fit for a White heart to store" he implies that since Francis' noble words of exhortation of were not worthy (or even capable) for a black person, they indicate that she is being transformed from the sinful state of blackness to whiteness in sanctification. Thus, her "White heart to store" will keep her "Spirit to Jesus that redeemed her" while her "Ethiopian" body must "rest untill our Lord doth come who will bring his Saints with him." This is analogous to the contemporary religious rhetoric in theological preaching that uses race to isolate doctrines of sin, justification, and sanctification, resulting in the stigmatization of black Africans and the emphasis of blackness as a symbol of evil and human difference. It also reflects the familiar use of the metaphor of the whitening of sanctification in early modern English religious texts.

⁸³⁸ Linebaugh and Rediker, 85.

⁸³⁹ Linebaugh and Rediker, 85.

Terrill's agenda concerns the persecution that the Broadmead Baptist congregation had to face after the Restoration and he sought to present the character of the community as apolitical, a non-threat to the social order. This "explains Terrill's emphasis on the religious sincerity or authenticity of Francis, his insistence that she truly had been brought over to Christ and was truly convinced of sin."⁸⁴⁰ Terrill's construction of Francis presents "a compliant...disempowered, black woman," serving as a stellar example of "exemplary proselytizing" for the promotion of what has become a Particular Baptist community. This depiction of Francis' blackness is useful for Terrill "because it is deferential and pliable."⁸⁴¹ Although earlier the Broadmead Baptist movement had been actively opposed to black slavery, by Terrill's post-Restoration writing "slavery had become the basis of prosperity for the same church."⁸⁴² Terrill's characterization of Francis' non-threatening spirituality was designed to ease the religious consciences of church members who were also slave traders. In fact, Terrill himself was an investor and planter in the Barbados sugar industry, a legacy he left for his family, which by the eighteenth century was among the West Indian planter elite.

Thus the contemporary religious culture of black inferiority created by doctrinal teaching on salvation in early modern English religious texts proved helpful in justifying the subjugation of Africans in the legalization of the slave trade. A powerful account of the internalization of black inferiority based on this religious culture of stigmatization also comes from the memoir of the celebrated Baptist spiritualist Sarah Wight as

⁸⁴⁰ Linebaugh and Rediker, 77.

⁸⁴¹ Habib, *Black Lives*, 214.

⁸⁴² Linebaugh and Rediker, 97.

recorded by her amanuensis the Baptist preacher Henry Jessey in 1647.⁸⁴³ In this account, Sarah is in consultation with a poor woman who has come to her for spiritual counsel, “Dinah the Moor,” also known as “Dinah the Black.”

<i>Mrs. S.</i>	Do you see a want of faith?
<i>Maid.</i>	I am a filthy wretched sinner.
<i>Mrs. S.</i>	Are you tempted against your life?
<i>Maid.</i>	I am often tempted against my life.
<i>Mrs. S.</i>	Why what causeth it?
<i>Maid.</i>	Sometimes this, because I am not as others are, I do not look so as others do. ⁸⁴⁴

The “Maid” in the dialogue is named “Dinah the Black” in the list of Sarah Wight’s visitors of the 1658 edition of the book, and in the table of contents she is described as “a blakmor.”⁸⁴⁵ In the introduction to the account, Jessey admits difficulty at times in understanding Dinah’s speech, calling attention to the fact that in the transcription he “sometimes guessed at, from the Answers given to [Sara].”⁸⁴⁶ This honest rendering, which incorporates the authentic albeit corrupted voices of Dinah allows for the possibility of seeing her as “one of the first living black subjects in the records” in early modern England.⁸⁴⁷ Dinah complains of despair and depression leading to suicidal thoughts. This sadness arises because of her belief that she is “a filthy wretched sinner.” In the rest of the account, Sarah tries to comfort Dinah by assuring her of the efficacy of salvation through Christ for all believers. But importantly, Dinah doubts that salvific

⁸⁴³ Henry Jessey, *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced*, 7th ed. (1658), 95-97. [Hereafter cited as Jessey, *Exceeding*.]

⁸⁴⁴ Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many Headed Hydra*, 89.

⁸⁴⁵ That Dinah was the woman in the 1647 conversation of Sarah Wight recorded by Henry Jessey is plausibly suggested by his description of her as “a Moor” in his introduction to the episode, and is noted by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Buford Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, p. 368 n. 60. Barbara Ritter Dailey, in “The Visitation of Sarah Wight: Holy Carnival and the Revolution of the Saints in Civil War London” *Church History* 55 (1986): 449, points out that Jessey names her as Dinah Black.

⁸⁴⁶ Jessey, *Exceeding*, 95-97.

⁸⁴⁷ Habib, *Black Lives*, 210.

grace is applicable to her. She states, “He may do this for some few, but not to me.”⁸⁴⁸ Why does Dinah suspect she is not one of the elect? An indication that she believes that she is reprobate because of her blackness is found in the statement, “I am not as others are, I do not look so as others do.” Thus, Dinah’s situation is a reflection of the “plight of the racialized black subject trapped historically in a color-conscious English society” in which stigmatization extends over to the theological realm.⁸⁴⁹ Despite her desire for redemption, the pervasive negativity and marginalization of blackness in the culture causes her to fear that Christ will reject her as well. The contemporary setting of religious preaching and writing on salvation based on Protestant doctrine using blackamoor metaphors symbolizing sin could easily contribute to a worldview including “divinely mandated excludability of the naturally foul-because-sinful black subject.”⁸⁵⁰ Indeed, black ethnicity *is* a symbol for original sin in early modern English religious texts. And, of course, original sin applies to all of humanity in the context of religious teaching. Yet despite the intentions of divines regarding the interpretation of the rhetorical language of blackness, the connotations are indirectly caustic towards early modern black Africans. The implication is that blacks are particularly infected with a double dose of sin. Sarah attempts to counteract this thinking in her pastoral care to Dinah, asserting, “He doth not this to one onely, nor to one Nation onely; for many Nations must be blessed in him. He came to give his life for a ransome for many, to give himself for the life of the world. He is a free agent; and why should you exclude your selfe?”⁸⁵¹ However, in a significant passage, Sarah also reifies the trope of blackness as evil as expressed in contemporary

⁸⁴⁸ Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many Headed Hydra*, 89.

⁸⁴⁹ Habib, *Black Lives*, 211.

⁸⁵⁰ Habib, 211.

⁸⁵¹ Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many Headed Hydra*, 89.

religious preaching. She goes on to say, “When Christ comes and manifest himself to the Soul, it is black in it self and uncomely, but he is faire and ruddy and he clothes the Soul with his comeliness...and makes it comely therein.”⁸⁵² Thus, even though Dinah is not recorded as expressly mentioning her black ethnicity as the cause of her insecurity, the fact that Sarah makes reference to this imagery indicates that the women’s African identity was a prominent cultural and social issue, even in this localized context. Moreover, Sarah’s figurative expression reflects the same metaphorical language of whitening that is prevalent in early modern English doctrinal preaching about salvation as evident in religious texts. Christ symbolizes the whiteness of righteousness that comes to redeem the blackness of the sinful soul. Specifically, we have seen that English writers argue figuratively that the imputed righteousness of Christ covers the black soul like a garment, but in the process of sanctification, begins to lighten the dark soul, thus making it “comely.”

Based on later accounts of Dinah, it is clear that she was moved to overcome the angst and despair probably caused in large part by the racial prejudice in religious culture therefore coming to believe in her own genuine worth as a child of God. In fact, this is quite evident from the fragments of a history from the July 1667 minutes of the Aldermen’s Court in Bristol. A miscellaneous notation written by John Latimer in the Bristol court documents reads,

July 1667: “A curious example of the practice of kidnapping human beings for transportation to America is recorded in the minutes of the Court of Aldermen in July. The justices note that one Dinah Black had lived for five years as servant to Dorothy Smith, and had been baptized, and wished to live under the teaching of the Gospel; yet her mistress had recently caused her to be put aboard a ship, to be

⁸⁵² Linebaugh and Rediker, 89.

conveyed to the plantations. Complaint having been made, Black had been rescued, but her mistress (who had doubtless sold her) refused to take her back; and it was therefore ordered that she should be free to earn her living until the case was heard at the next quarter sessions. The Sessions Book has perished. From the peculiar manner in which she is described, it may be assumed that Dinah was a negro woman captured on the African coast, and had lived as a slave in Bristol.⁸⁵³

Dinah, having lived in service for years in Bristol, resisted her sale and exportation to America as a chattel slave! Undoubtedly she would have known about the hostile conditions of New World plantation slavery, which, in most cases, amounted to a rapid death sentence. Thus, she refuses to capitulate to treatment as a commodity, having been baptized in the Church, and appeals to her status as a Baptist Christian to earn her own living in Bristol. Although, like so many accounts, the final outcome of Dinah's story is unknown, we do know she was successful in convincing the Aldermen's court to allow her to remain in Bristol at least temporarily.

Conclusion

Even if the exact numbers of enslaved black people in early modern England are ultimately impossible to reconfigure based on extant documents, parish records do indicate the substantive nature of the African presence that appears from the middle of the sixteenth century.⁸⁵⁴ These records indicate that the English church, in its ministry to Africans, attempts to transcend the oppressive forces in order to care for human souls in service to Christ. Africans were in England at the same time that religious divines were writing and preaching about salvation using black ethnic rhetoric symbolizing sin and evil conquered by God's sovereign grace in justification and washed white in

⁸⁵³ [1. *The Exceeding Riches of Grace Advanced*, 1651 and 1658, pp. 122-25. 2. Latimer, *Annals of Bristol*, p. 344; cited Shyllon, *Black People*, pp. 19-20]. (John Latimer, *Annals of Bristol*, p. 344).

⁸⁵⁴ Habib, *Black Lives*, 172.

sanctification. This rhetoric includes all of humanity as part of God's creation and does not ostensibly limit any one race to the elect. However, from the anecdotal accounts of two black Baptist women in seventeenth-century England there is evidence from the context of their stories that associations were being made between African ethnic identity and spiritual exclusion. Yet, within their particular contexts, there were also other liberating forces at work that empowered them to assert righteous combativeness in the pursuit of equality. Thus, black religious histories of early modern England beckon further scrutiny and analysis as well as the complex and complicated aspects of related theological, cultural, social, economic, and political factors.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: THE LEGACY OF ENGLISH BLACKAMOOR RHETORIC

Whiles they were drinking a Blackamoor-boy of some 14 years of age brought pipes and small beer. [Col] Turner swore and curst the Boy, and said he was like the Devil, for which the company did much reprove him, the Drawer standing by said, the Blackamoor was to be baptized the next Lords day with his Masters child, his wife then lying in. The Citizen to try the Blackamoors fitness for baptism, asked him Who made him? who answered, God. Turner very furiously replied and swore desperately the Devil made him, earnestly saying and swearing, You rogue, the Devil made you, God never made you. The Citizen desired Turner to forbear his swearing, and had much ado to get him to be quiet; whilst he asked him further interrogatories, the Blackmoor replied Christian like answers to the questions of Who redeemed him, Who sanctified and preserved him, wherefore God made him, and several other Christian-like answers the Boy gave, till he came to answer to the Priestly, Prophetical and Kingly Office of Christ.

—Anonymous⁸⁵⁵

This story, which forms part of a biographical account of one Colonel James Turner, includes almost as an afterthought the presence of a “Blackamoor-boy” servant. Perhaps indicative of his character, the colonel, as explained elsewhere, in all probability falsely claimed to have served in the Civil War for four years as captain of horse under the Royalist Marquess of Newcastle.⁸⁵⁶ One of the significant aspects of the narrative is that the fourteen-year-old boy is preparing for baptism in the Church of England. In response to the Colonel’s tirade, “The Citizen” tests the boy’s readiness for the exercise. Due to the nature of the boy’s responses, the questions most likely derive from the *Book of Common Prayer*; for example, “What dost thou chiefly learn in these Articles of thy

⁸⁵⁵ *The Triumph of truth in an exact and impartial relation of the life and conversation of Col. Iames Turner* (1663), 27.

⁸⁵⁶ David Stevenson. “Turner, James (d. 1664),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/article/27852>, accessed 25 Jan 2012]. Turner went on to be executed on January 19, 1664 as a common swindler and a thief.

Belief?” The boy’s answers clearly reflect the salient doctrines of justification and sanctification. As the catechism actually reads:

Ans. First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me, and all the world. Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me, and all mankind. Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God.⁸⁵⁷

The requirement for one who is being confirmed or is of age and has not yet been baptized is to recite “the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and also answer...the other Questions of this short Catechism” before the bishop.⁸⁵⁸ The boy apparently passes the “Citizen’s” impromptu catechetical inspection with flying colors. However, Colonel Turner, obviously drunk, vigorously objects to this boy declaring himself to be divinely created as stipulated by the creed.

Colonel Turner’s verbal attack on the Blackamoor boy servant preparing for baptism envisions all black bodies as not only reprobate but also the spawn of perdition.⁸⁵⁹ This arguably reflects the negative influence of a religious culture affected by the rise of black ethnic rhetoric in early modern England.⁸⁶⁰ The original incorporation

⁸⁵⁷ Archibald John Stephens, ed. “The Catechisms of the Church of England A.D. 1549 and 1662,” in *The Book of Common Prayer, with notes legal and historical*, Vol. III (London, 1854), 517.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁹ Col. Turner’s castigation of the Blackamoor boy to be a creation of the Devil can be interpreted as a metaphorical attribution of original sin. This stems from the theological debate that original sin itself does not come from God nor is part of the divine creation, but instead is a corruption of the nature and essence of humanity; the corruption within the essence or nature of humanity comes from the devil. Article One of the authoritative Lutheran statement of faith, the *Book of Concord* states “a distinction must be maintained between the nature and essence of the corrupt man, or his body and soul, which are the creation and creatures of God in us ever since the Fall, and original sin, which is a work of the devil, by which the nature has become corrupt” [Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., Charles Arand et al., trans. *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000)]. As denoted by Col. Turner, as creations of the devil, blacks become a sign of corruption among humanity, thus symbolizing original sin; as a double entendre they also serve as a metaphor for sin in all humanity.

⁸⁶⁰ Examples of metaphorical uses for black ethnicity can be found in various early modern English texts. In 1660, John Gauden, Bishop of Worcester, wrote a tract attacking Oliver Cromwell for the execution of Charles I, (Gauden, *Cromwell's bloody slaughter-house, or, his damnable designs laid and practised by him and his negro's, in contriving the murder of His sacred Majesty King Charles I, discovered by a person of honor*, London, 1660). Since there is little or no historical evidence to suggest that there were a significant number of black Africans in Cromwell’s New Model Army (or in the House of Commons of the

of black rhetoric in early modern English religious texts was to aid in the transmission of the gospel, and was preached to English audiences irrespective of racial identity. But the sinful imagery was easily interpreted by some sections of society as literally applying to real black Africans. Such exploitation and perpetuation of beliefs about essential differences between Africans and Europeans were easily used to justify the burgeoning system of British transatlantic slavery.⁸⁶¹ Further, the culturally normative assumption

Rump Parliament which convicted him of high treason) it can be assumed that Gauden is using the word “negro” in the title as rhetorical invective in expressing his outrage and horror at regicide. Black ethnicity is being used as the metaphorical embodiment of evil. Also, Satan, the ultimate manifestation of evil, is commonly depicted as black in religious texts in seventeenth-century texts. A stereotypical image of the devil is as a “black man with a pair of Horns on his head, and a Cloven Foot, and a long Tayl,” (Thomas Ady, *A candle in the dark shewing the divine cause of the distractions of the whole nation of England and of the Christian world*, London, 1655, 150). Moreover, this perception transcends theological or ecclesiological proclivities. At the height of Cromwell’s Protectorate the notable anti-puritan Laudian Peter Heylyn writes that the devil “is black, and the Master or Prince of the dark night,” while the moderate Presbyterian Edward Leigh affirms that elements commonly associated with “the devil are “raven [and] ink” since usually “he appears to men in some black and terrible shape,” (Peter Heylyn, *Theologia veterum, or, The summe of Christian theologie, positive, polemical, and philological, contained in the Apostles creed* (London, 1654), 206; Edward Leigh, *Of the Angels good and bad* (London, 1654), 7). Roger Williams, dissenter from the Church of England and founder of the first Baptist church in the English colonies, describes Satan as “the Father of Lies...[a] murderer from the beginning...this ugly Blackmore” (Roger Williams, *The bloody tenent yet more bloody*, (London, 1652), 302). For Williams, “the bloody tenent” was when governments attempted to impose one particular way of worship on its people, leading to the oppression, suffering and execution of men and women seeking in their own way to worship God. *The bloody tenent yet more bloody* was published during a second stay in England, from 1651 to 1654, following an initial stay in 1643, when he established Providence, Rhode Island. In his second visit, Williams used his experience of persecution in the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a basis for advocating in favor of toleration in England and in the colonies. *The bloody tenent yet more bloody* was also part of an extended debate with John Cotton about the right of the magistrate. Williams’ use of the term “Blackmore” to describe satan would have been contemporaneous with the arrival of Africans as slaves in the English colonies during this period. Further, those sharing the metaphysical characteristics of the devil are also described as black. The English Jesuit Robert Parsons writes on the eve of the Gunpowder Plot that “the bodies of the damned shall be as black and vglie, as silthe it selfe” (Robert Parsons, *The first booke of the Christian exercise appertayning to resolution* (Rouen, 1582), 10). Black religious rhetoric can even be used as a tool of vicious slander. During the Civil War, in the pamphlet *Truth Still Truth, though shut out of doors*, the moderate Presbyterian Edmund Calamy complains that the Separatist Henry Burton (on the occasion of Calamy barring Burton from the biweekly lectureship of St. Mary Aldermanbury Church, of which Calamy was rector), portrays him as “painted out to the world in all my worst apparell, and rendred as *Blackamore-like*, and as odious as the pen of an angry Scribe could make” (Edmund Calamy, *A just and necessary apology* (London, 1646), 4). Henry Burton, who along with William Prynne and John Bastwick, were famously sentenced to having their ears cropped off for writing against the policies of Laudianism in the late 1630s, wrote angry protests in response to being locked out of Calamy’s church. For Calamy, a prominent ministerial leader and representative in the Westminster Assembly, to be considered ‘Blackamore-like’ is exceptionally insulting.

⁸⁶¹ As early as 1681 the Barbados Assembly piously demurred: “We are ready to do anything for the encouragement of Christian servants,” it assured the governor, “but as to making the Negroes Christians,

regarding innate differences between black Africans and Europeans, partially influenced by religious beliefs, fueled the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Enlightenment pursuit of the development of taxonomies and scientific theories of race.

As Chapter Two has specifically demonstrated, black ethnic rhetoric, arising from a classical past, was utilized symbolically to reflect universal sin, not the specific characteristics of Africans. Inspired probably by a confluence of Renaissance culture and the growing presence of black Africans in society, by the 1570s English divines were using a proverb, “you can’t wash a blackamoor white” in religious texts. The biblical reference from Jer. 13:23, “Can a Blackamoor change his skin” was also very popular. These tropes of black ethnic identity were adopted as metaphorical tools in descriptions of sin. Highlighting the resilient features of dark skin color in scripture and phrase emphasizes the intransigence of the evil characterizing human nature. The use of black imagery in religious texts thus rhetorically displays the inherited, depraved nature of the human condition passed on to all souls after Adam’s fall. Blackness becomes a metaphor for iniquity in all people. Yet, doctrinal identification of original sin with early modern English black ethnic religious rhetoric also reflects one contemporary perception of Africans. As the seventeenth-century English development of the Hamitic myth illustrates, there was a decisive connection being made between black skin and evil during this period. Thus the washing the blackamoor trope emerges as a double entendre. There is a subtlety in which the nuance of the trope works to signify the sinful condition of universal humanity while at the same time marginalizing one group.

their savage brutishness renders them wholly incapable. Many have endeavoured it without success. If a good expedient could be found, the Assembly and people would be ready to promote it.” [Sainsbury et al. eds., *Cal. State Papers*, (1681-85), 25. See also J. Harry Bennett, Jr., “Of the Negroes Thereon,” ed., Frank J. Klingberg, *Codrington Chronicle: An Experiment in Anglican Altruism on a Barbados Plantation, 1710-1834* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1949), 93-95, 98.]

Chapter Three demonstrates that black ethnic tropes are also used to represent Protestant teachings of salvation in early modern English religious texts. Images of blackness are symbolically redeemed. The adapted English fable “The Washing of a Blackamoor,” which dramatizes the helpless and impossible attempt to wash the black skin off a person in order to make him white, illustrates that some labor is in vain. Usually, nature will not allow one to change black skin. But the stress on impossibilities is then extended to theological meaning. Just as in the fable it is futile for human persons to attempt to wash a blackamoor white, similarly, it is impossible for human works to achieve redemption. The phrases “to wash a blackamoor white” or “can a Blackamoor change his skin” (Jer. 13:23) are incorporated in this way to denote a Protestant understanding of justification. Jesus Christ accomplishes the work of salvation *sole fide*, *sole gratia*, without the cooperation of sinners. Due to the human incapacity to contribute to salvation in any way, only through the power of God’s justifying grace alone, given freely by Christ through faith, is one able to be saved. Black ethnic tropes in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religious texts are therefore used to symbolize the limited atonement. God forensically declares righteousness only upon the elect. By the 1660s, there are cases of Dissenting Presbyterians, Quakers, Particular Baptists, Anglicans, Catholics, and Arminians all using blackamoor euphemisms in religious texts. However, the majority of divines using the blackamoor phrase are Reformed/ Calvinist clergymen. Writers espousing Reformed theology overwhelmingly emphasize Black tropes representing the drama of God’s sovereign and irresistible reconciliation to humanity through salvific grace alone.

This theological expression is most apparent in some seventeenth-century English commentaries on the *Song of Songs*. The black or dark bride's skin color (1:5) in the text is associated with Blackamoor or Ethiopian ethnic identity to symbolize her sinfulness. For the bride, justification takes place while her sin remains. Thus she is saved without her black ethnicity being changed; that is, the bride does nothing to contribute to her own salvation. The black skin color of the bride allegorically characterizes Martin Luther's famous phrase—*simul iustus et peccator*—simultaneously justified and sinful. She is righteous in God's sight, not because of any good she has done, but due to the grace of Christ.⁸⁶² Origen's concept of "Ethiopian beauty" prefigures Luther's idea of the simultaneous condition of sin remaining while God declares forgiveness. English divines capitalize on this imagery and theology, amazingly using the symbol of a black woman as representative of humanity. Blackamoor tropes symbolizing sin and evil in commentaries on the *Song of Songs* emphasize the bride in the representation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The white imputation of righteousness covering black evil depicts Christ's gracious activity in salvation. The Song imagines God the Father as turning away from the bride's black skin color to rest His eyes on the luminous whiteness of the Son and thus declaring the sinner justified. Hence, inspired by fables of human impotence in removing blackness juxtaposed with Origen's triumphant exposition of "Ethiopian beauty," early modern English religious writers converge on Martin Luther's theological insight into the teachings of Paul with rhetorical expressions affirming God's declaration of war against the figurative blackamoor. In Martin Luther, Origen's

⁸⁶² Martin Luther is often credited with saying that human beings are like "snow-covered dunghills" when the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them. While this is not exactly accurate, Luther does mention that humans are like "dung" in their sins (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, eds., Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman (St. Louis, MN: Concordia, 1955-86), 34:178, 184; 30:294).

“Ethiopian Beauty” has theological mooring, but is given rhetorical execution in the blackamoor phraseology of early modern English religious writers.

Yet the black bride cannot *solely* be covered with whiteness. Her redemption does not cease with forensic justification. She must also be transformed white. Chapter Four indicates that many early modern English writings go on to promote the symbolic removal of black ethnicity in order for further participation in the Christian life. Sanctification is imaged as whiteness. Metaphorically, as in Ben Jonson’s *Masques*, any usurpation of divinely ordained authority is a manifestation of blackness. It must be subdued, beaten back, washed into whiteness, or like the characters Niger and Night, cast forever into oblivion. These early modern English writings understood whiteness to be aligned with the English kingdom and the kingdom of God. It reflected the imperial magisterial reign of the early modern era organized into hierarchical authority and ornamented with Laudian ceremony. The Jacobean formulation of purity is thus designated as the symbolic washing away of the dark skins of African goddesses allowing them, now whitened, to bask in the splendor of English righteousness. In a strange twist, society’s most marginalized and despised become the highest elevated. The redemption of blackness into whiteness therefore becomes emblematic of Christ’s incarnational glory. Therefore, many early modern English religious texts depict the drama of sanctification as the figurative transformation of the black African into the white European. Described as a “whitening” of the blackness of sin, the texts also formally juxtapose this with the classical phrase “to wash an Ethiopian (or Blackamoor) white.”

Broadly interpreted in these writings, sanctification is the ongoing effect of God's salvific grace on the human soul. Good works and righteous deeds become an outgrowth of *sole fide*.⁸⁶³ The possibilities originate in this life and are executed completely in heaven. According to this emphasis, in the *Song* imagery, the bride is eventually changed and becomes white like her spouse, Christ. The imputed whiteness of Christ at justification gradually transfers to the believer through impartation as the blackness of sin is ultimately removed. As Anthony Burgess so eloquently exclaims, God performs the impossible. Yet because most divines also stress that the work of sanctification is gradual, beginning with the effect of the Holy Spirit in this life, the black believer slowly becomes lighter and lighter. With the hope of glory, the heavenly anticipation is the figurative fading of that blackness completely into whiteness.

This dissertation argues that the writing and preaching of black ethnic religious rhetoric, despite its metaphorical imagery, had mixed responses in early modern English society. Indeed, according to Chapter Five, religious language of this kind reflects some perceptions of Africans in early modern England. Moreover, it was the growing presence of blacks in the country during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that elicited frequent literary references to blackness in contemporary texts. Previous research has held that prior to the rise of English slavery in the late seventeenth century, "Africans in early modern England often exist for contemporary readers of the period in the realm of the anecdote." The work of Imtiaz Habib, however, makes clear that according to archival records significant numbers of blacks were present in the country prior to the

⁸⁶³ Anthony Burgess, *Spiritual refining: or A treatise of grace and assurance* (London, 1652), 325; *A treatise of original sin* (London, 1658), 148; Samuel Slater, *Poems in two parts* (London, 1679), 3.

1660s.⁸⁶⁴ The earlier view, established by Shakespearean scholars like G. K. Hunter, was that the inclusion of blacks in early modern English literature did not reflect real encounters with them. This position had been sustained by inconclusive information regarding the actual numbers of Africans in England during the period.⁸⁶⁵ Yet new scholarship has shed additional light on the black populations of early modern England.⁸⁶⁶ Hence “the significance of blackness as a troping of race” documented in early modern English literary scholarship emerges arguably based not simply on an increasing *awareness* of the existence of Africans. There was actual contact with blacks brought to England as a result of business enterprise stemming from commercial participation in the transatlantic world.⁸⁶⁷ Beginning in the mid-1540s the English African emerged as a result of merchant trading with kingdoms off the West Coast of Africa.⁸⁶⁸ Religious divines, just like dramatists and artists, were affected by the influx of

⁸⁶⁴ Imtiaz H. Habib, *Black Lives in the English Archives, 1500-1677: Imprints of the Invisible*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 1-2; Kim F. Hall argues that for example, that even Elizabeth I's proclamations of expulsion of blacks in 1596 and 1603 “belie[s] their actual numbers” in England at the time (*Things of Darkness*, 14). See also Hall's essays, “Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? Colonization and Miscegenation in *The Merchant of Venice*,” *Renaissance Drama* 23 (1992): 87-111; and “Reading What Isn't There: Black Studies in Early Modern England” *Stanford Humanities Review* 3/1 (1993): 23-33. In “Blacks in Tudor England,” *History Today*, 53 (2003), 41, Marika Sherwood indicates recorded instances of blacks in late sixteenth-century London: “In 1568 Paul Banning, a London alderman, had three 'blackamore maids' in his household. In 1582, 'Ferdinando, a Blackmore' was recorded at 'All Sayntes Stayninges Parish'. In 1596, in Aldgate parish, was recorded the burial of the 'negar' Frauncis, servant to Mr Peter Miller...Two years later we have...a 'negra' at 'Widdow Stokes'; Maria, a 'negra' at 'Olyver Skynnars Lawse'; an unnamed negro at 'Mr Mitons'; and Marea 'a negra at Mr Woodes.' In 1599, at 'All Hallowes, Barking,' we find 'a blackamore servaunt to Jeronimo Lopez' and 'Mary a Negra at Richard Woodes.'”

⁸⁶⁵ G. K. Hunter, *Dramatic Identities and Cultural Traditions: Studies in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978), 32. See also Anthony Gerard Barthelemy in *Black Face, Maligned Race the representation of blacks in English drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987, 1-17). Michael Neill in “‘Mulattoes,’ ‘Blacks,’ and ‘Indian Moors,’ *Othello* and Early Modern Constructions of Human Difference,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49, 4 (Winter 1998): 361-74, and Margo Hendricks, “Surveying ‘Race’ in Shakespeare,” in *Shakespeare and Race*, eds., Catherine M. S. Alexander and Stanley Wells (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1-22.

⁸⁶⁶ See Kathleen Chater, *Untold histories: Black People in England and Wales During the Period of the British Slave Trade, c. 1660-1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

⁸⁶⁷ Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 14.

⁸⁶⁸ Habib, *Black Lives*, 378.

Africans into England and incorporated black representations into their work as early modern period materials attest.⁸⁶⁹

In fact, historical archives show Anglican divines actively ministered to blacks in England during this period. There are dozens of church records of burial services of black persons, both servants and free, beginning late in the reign of Henry VIII and throughout his son Edward VI's reign. Throughout the Elizabethan era and continuing into the Stuart reigns, documentation of black baptisms, marriages, and funerals are evident in parish records. Divines performed black and interracial wedding ceremonies, christened black babies, and proselytized black adults.⁸⁷⁰ Blacks baptized as adults or christened as infants were laid to rest in parish churchyards after death. Data from church records also indicate that church parsons buried numerous black bodies in unconsecrated ground at the end of Elizabeth's reign, many Africans having suffered disproportionately during that time as a result of the great hardship and desolation years.⁸⁷¹ Therefore, beginning in the late 1570s, just as divines were beginning to use blackamoor rhetoric to preach about sin and salvation, some ministers were attending to the pastoral needs of English Africans. This occurred even while various aspects of religious popular culture embraced notions of the incompatibility of black skin color with righteousness. It follows that since black Africans were included in the allocation of church services and spiritual needs in some local parishes of the Church of England, their physical appearance was not indiscriminately perceived as a barrier to gospel evangelization or church membership to clerical leadership and religious communities.

⁸⁶⁹ Habib, *Black Lives*, 378.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid., 96.

⁸⁷¹ Ibid., 97.

Yet the simultaneous rise of slavery, which grows in particular after the Restoration, ironically, resulted in a backlash against evangelization for blacks in many groups. This is evident in the writings of many missionaries in the English colonies.⁸⁷² Although the goal of conversion of Africans was one reason why initial English participation in the transatlantic slave trade was justified, by the late seventeenth century many preachers were beginning to face resistance to slave proselytization.⁸⁷³ After all, for many late-seventeenth-century English slaveholders, maintaining the religious difference between the Christian English and heathen Africans rationalized the system of slavery. Conversion threatened to break down those barriers.⁸⁷⁴ Thus, one of the reasons used to prevent ministry to black slaves on plantations after the Restoration was recourse to the motif of blackness as evil, itself ironically perpetuated partly by the legacy of rhetorical tools used in English doctrinal preaching. That is, the very rhetoric used to preach salvation also contributed to a culture of hostility that hindered the evangelism of black slaves. The myth that black Africans were inherently evil, a view easily extracted from the culture of early modern black religious rhetoric, was conveniently exploited to

⁸⁷² Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 24. According to the record, in 1555, the first group of black Africans came to England. They were brought to England by one John Lok, a London merchant, after a trade expedition in part due to England's attempt to cash in on the Spanish and Portuguese monopoly of material stuffs. This particular group of Africans was not brought as slaves. But, the first recorded instance of English acquisition of African persons for slavery occurred with Sir John Hawkins, who embarked on a triangular voyage from England to Africa, to the New World and back to England in 1562-3. Having taken about three hundred persons as slaves from Guinea, Hawkins transported and sold them to Spanish traders on the island of Hispaniola, making a substantial profit. Later, a Company of Adventurers of London Trading into the Parts of Africa had been created by James I* as early as 1618...the Guinea Company [was] reconstructed in 1631 or 1632 [and] by 1651 its administrators could ask "Wee pray you buy for us 15 or 20 young lusty Negers of about 15 years of age, bring them home with you for London" (See Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution of Washington 1930-35), 126; 128)., Ltd, 1971).

⁸⁷³ Jordan, 24.

⁸⁷⁴ For example, by about the end of the seventeenth century, Maryland, New York, Virginia, North and South Carolina, and New Jersey had all passed laws reassuring masters that conversion of their slaves did not necessitate manumission.

perpetuate beliefs about essential difference between Africans and Europeans, needed to maintain the economically lucrative system of slavery.⁸⁷⁵ Indeed, blackamoor religious rhetoric, used to stress notions of human depravity in ecclesial settings, dovetailed with social and cultural myths of African barbarism perpetuated by early modern travelogues, legends, and other sources.⁸⁷⁶

Further, one consequence of the spread of black religious rhetoric arguably was the development of intellectual ideas about race, a modern construct.⁸⁷⁷ For example, the contrast between understandings of African identity reflected in black religious rhetoric and developing Enlightenment era views of blackness is exhibited in the example of John Locke. In 1662, James II, Duke of York and brother of King Charles II, re-established an imperial monopoly over England's slave trade with the creation of the Company of Royal Adventurers Trading to Africa.⁸⁷⁸ This company dramatically increased the volume of the number of slaves shipped both to Britain and to the colonies. By this time, Locke, the great defender of liberty, freedom and religious tolerance, and author of *The Two*

⁸⁷⁵ As early as 1681 the Barbados Assembly piously demurred: "We are ready to do anything for the encouragement of Christian servants," it assured the governor, "but as to making the Negroes Christians, their savage brutishness renders them wholly incapable. Many have endeavoured it without success. If a good expedient could be found, the Assembly and people would be ready to promote it." [Sainsbury et al. eds., *Cal. State Papers*, (1681-1685), 25. See also J. Harry Bennett, Jr., "Of the Negroes Thereon," ed., Frank J. Klingberg, *Codrington Chronicle: An Experiment in Anglican Altruism on a Barbados Plantation, 1710-1834* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1949), 93-95, 98.]

⁸⁷⁶ Jonathan Burton and Ania Loomba, eds., *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 12.

⁸⁷⁷ A modern definition of race is the intellectual conceptualization of hierarchical divisions of human groups based on somatic variations. This includes the birth of Enlightenment taxonomies based on pseudo-scientific and quasi-biological theories formulated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Keith Wailoo, Alondra Nelson, Catherine Lee, eds., *Genetics and the Unsettled Past: The Collision of DNA, Race, and History* (New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 2012); David N. Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Human Origins* (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008); Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

⁸⁷⁸ In 1662, Charles II had granted a slave-trading monopoly to the Royal African Company but six years later Parliament rescinded this monopoly and the slave trade was open to anyone with the capital, nerve, and ambition to make a quick profit (See Peter Fryer, 8; also James Walvin, *The Black Presence: A Documentary History of the Negro in England 1555-1860* (Orbach & Chambers, Ltd, 1971).

Treatises on Civil Government, was himself involved in commercial African slaving ventures, eventually reaping considerable profits. It seems that the quality of “mankind” that Locke attributed to persons who had natural rights in his writings did not apply to blacks. For in the *Second Treatise*, which argues against slavery, even in the case of war, servitude does not extend perpetually to the descendants of the enslaved. Yet, for black Africans, these views appear entirely exempt, since the writing of this famous work of modern civilized philosophy took place during the 1670s, a period when Locke was actively involved in England’s governmental colonial slave trading policies.

Locke’s philosophical views on slavery for most of humankind as well as his muted acceptance of black slavery highlights the significance of English divines’ inclusion of blackamoor phraseology in religious rhetoric. Because divines used blackamoor tropes to symbolize the original sin of all of humanity, they stressed Christ’s inclusion of justified believers regardless of color or ethnicity. Ironically, contrary to a dominant, burgeoning Enlightenment culture, which insisted on the bestial, non-human nature of blacks in order to support the burgeoning slave trade, late seventeenth century religious writers implicitly defended the humanity of black Africans. Although discriminatory, blackamoor rhetoric signifies the human worth of every person and the potential saving grace to redeem lost souls. In contrast, the developing racial ideologies espoused by Enlightenment thinkers commended ontological and essential difference.

In the final analysis, the use of Ethiopian or Blackamoor ethnicity to symbolize sin, even for the elect and justified, stigmatizes the “black race” in early modern English religious commentary. Just as black Africans were noticeable on English Renaissance stages for their striking color difference, and were often used to embody characters that

shocked sensibilities or elicited mainstream rage in order to evoke a national consciousness that repelled outsiders, similarly, Blackamoor tropes in religious texts were effective in demonstrating the spiritual trauma of sin. This ideologically demarcates blacks in early modern religious thought, isolating them, so to speak, on the basis of Protestant doctrine. Using Africans as the ultimate lowly sinners only served to reify the culture's negative conception of black ethnicity. Even though all God's elect, regardless of color, are symbolically understood as an Ethiopian or Blackamoor, there is an unavoidable castigation associated with ethnic blacks. During a period socially and politically when notions of "race" and "ethnicity" were forming, marginalizing black Africans in religious texts could only serve to support the isolation of these groups into separate and differentiated social and cultural (and later biological) categories. In fact, the metaphorical marking of blacks in religious texts contributed to the political ideals of the British state. This is because "[t]he colonialist exercise of authority requires the production of differentiations, individuations, identity effects through which discriminatory practices can map out subject populations that are tarred with the visible and transparent mark of power."⁸⁷⁹ Etching racial difference into theological discourse gave divine sanction to societal inequities. Even the inclusion of Africans into the human family in some religious writings was tempered by the assumption that blackness must effectively be removed—the ultimate goal of "to wash a blackamoor white."

Regardless, some English preachers and religious writers openly eschewed these ideas, rejecting notions of African inferiority and emphasizing the rhetorical usage of black euphemisms in religious texts. As noted above, divines generally attempted to use

⁸⁷⁹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 111.

these tropes to humble all Christ seekers in the realization of the debased nature of humanity, as well as their helplessness in the face of God's sovereignty, *not* to castigate black people particularly. In fact, many divines appear to have gradually sensed the potentially of error in the interpretation of black ethnic rhetoric and sought to reign in its usage by the end of the seventeenth century. For example, some English preachers are careful to differentiate rhetorical expressions of black skin color and evil. Bishop of Norwich Joseph Hall states, "The spots are not of the essence of that beast; the blackness is not of the essence of an Aethiopian: yet how hard these are to put off, we know."⁸⁸⁰ Thus the black skin and spots of Jer. 13:23 do not seem to have been *literally* regarded by many as actually iniquitous, only illustrative as a rhetorical device. William Fenner notes that skin color is accidental, not intrinsic to human nature when he writes, "The blacknesse of the Blackmore is only in the out-side of the skin, yet all the Art under the heavens cannot blot it out."⁸⁸¹ This perspective stresses that color is only a symbol of the intractability of malevolence in the human condition. Divines even state explicitly that tropes of blackness are metaphors and should be only understood rhetorically. Richard Baxter explains:

But you cannot say that an accustomed sinner cannot learn to do good were he never so willing: nor yet that he can be as easily willing as the Ethiopian, nor as hardly made willing as the Leopard. Figurative speeches are frequent in Scripture, and may alike be used by us in the like cases. But in Controversies a trope is an equivocal till explained, and must not be used without necessity and explication.⁸⁸²

In other words, applying rhetorical statements about black skin color to real Africans is problematical. William Lorimer actually ridicules those persons who take blackamoor

⁸⁸⁰ Joseph Hall, *The contemplations upon the history of the New Testament* (1661), 320-2.

⁸⁸¹ William Fenner, *A divine message to the elect soule* (1647), 78.

⁸⁸² Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, (1696), 45.

rhetoric plainly, assuming for example that a black person is remiss morally for not actually attempting to change his skin. Lorimer makes reference to the familiar proverb, stating, “Like as they that have accustomed themselves to do evil, cannot do good, as a Blackamoor cannot change his skin.” Then, he is quick to qualify, “yet with this difference,” that while the average man is not excused for not repairing his sinful life, “not so the Blackamoor for not changing his skin.” There is a distinct difference between the ordinary case of a man refusing to cease sinning and a figurative one of an African who supposedly stops being black. Lorimer goes on to complain that, “such is the shameful issue of them that confound Impotency Moral with Impotency Natural, as if there were no difference, &c.”⁸⁸³ Presumably Lorimer makes use of the saying due to its familiarity to the religious audience. But he minimizes the application of the simile, or comparison, in the expression itself to actual life. One must comprehend the distinction between rhetorical language and reality in comparing the ability of a human being to alter physical nature with the desire to change moral weakness. Some divines even go so far as to espouse the cultural relativity of beauty with regard to blackness. Hall recognizes that European features may not necessarily be considered attractive in other lands. He declares that in Africa “our Whitenesse would passe there for an unpleasing indigestion of form.”⁸⁸⁴ Nor is there indication of belief that blackness, as a symbol of evil, literally signified eternal reprobation to all ministers. For example, with regard to the question of the color of bodies in glory, there is a hint in the belief from at least one divine that the

⁸⁸³ William Lorimer, *An apology for the ministers* (1694), 110. A contrary view, taken by a non-cleric that blacks are indeed evil can be found in Sir Thomas Herbert, *Some Years Travels* (1638) who writes, “Negroes in colour so in condition are little other than Devils incarnate” and “the Devil...has infused prodigious Idolatry into their hearts, enough to relish his pallat and aggrandize their tortures when he gets power to fry their souls, as the raging Sun has already scorcht their cole-black carcasses” (10, 7; quoted in Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black*, 24).

⁸⁸⁴ Joseph Hall, *The contemplations upon the history of the New Testament* (1661), 464.

immortal transfiguration of human flesh would eclipse earthly hues. As Samuel Purchas proclaims:

[T]he tawney Moore, blacke Negro, duskie Libyan, ash-coloured Indian, olive-coloured American, should with the whiter European become one sheep-fold, under one great Sheeheard, till this mortalitie being swallowed up of Life, wee may all be one, as he and the father are one...*without any more distinction of Colour, Nation, Language, Sexe, Condition*, all may bee One in him that is One, and onely blessed for ever.⁸⁸⁵

Thus, there is a distinct distancing from associations from negative black images and actual people on the part of some English divines.

But it remains that the negative association between evil and black bodies would of course have lasting implications in modern society. This explains why Francis the “blackmore maid” is described as remarkably having intense spiritual gifts uncharacteristic of an “Ethyopian or Blackmore.” Stereotypically, Africans are not expected to have such facility with verbal articulation. Indeed, her dying words of eloquence that reverberate to the succeeding faithful generations are “fit for a White heart to store,” implying that Francis will eventually be transformed from her own sinful body of blackness to a white one when “our Lord doth come.” Similarly, the minister Sarah Wright, genuinely concerned about the spiritual plight of her African sisters and brothers, interpreted that affliction as manifest physically in blackness. For her, including some inquirers of London’s first successful periodical, *The Athenian Mercury*, it was believed that Africans were fated to endure the black curse in this life. Yet, surely Christ will rescue them from that bodily prison of darkness in the next one. Indeed, many ordinary late seventeenth-century Britons were perplexed about the relationship between black

⁸⁸⁵ Samuel Purchas, *Purchas His Pilgrimage*, 2nd ed. (1614), 656. Emphasis added.

bodies and souls as Catherine Molineux has recently shown.⁸⁸⁶ In the *Athenian Mercury*, the debate regarding whether “Negroes shall rise so at the last Day,” reoccurred repeatedly “in part because colonists and travelers questioned the editors’ explanations of blackness.”⁸⁸⁷ Readers could not reconcile the idea that black bodies would ascend in that state to heaven along with white bodies. Ultimately, they were informed by the editors that an African would slough off his blackness in the “darkness of the Grave, exchanging it for a brighter and a better at his return agen [sic] into the World.”⁸⁸⁸ Thus, at salvation, black bodies would actually become lighter, even white. Black skin color was viewed as an “accidental monstrosity,” much as any other kind of birth defect. Through glorification, such imperfections would be corrected in heaven.⁸⁸⁹ The editors of the *Athenian Mercury* therefore disagree with the teachings of religious divines who write that blackamoor ethnicity is symbolic of the postlapsarian condition of humanity. Although blackness is not the result of sin, the belief that black skin color is a “defect” to be corrected by whiteness in the afterlife is compatible with the theological expectations of eschatological glorification expressed in the phrase “to wash a blackamoor white” in early modern English religious texts. Despite ideological difference, the common agreement is that blackness reflects a malediction that must be removed. Ironically, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, precisely when blackamoor imagery was being incorporated to justify slavery, English religious writers had ceased using black ethnic rhetoric to symbolize the drama of human salvation. Perhaps at this time they recognized

⁸⁸⁶ Catherine Molineux, *Faces of Perfect Ebony: Encountering Atlantic Slavery in Imperial Britain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 90-99.

⁸⁸⁷ The Athenian Editors were John Dunton, a bookseller and publisher; Richard Sault, a mathematician and hack writer; Samuel Wesley, an Anglican clergyman and father of the abolitionists John and Charles Wesley; and John Norris, a neo-Platonist (Molineux, 90).

⁸⁸⁸ *The Athenian Mercury*. London, May 23, 1691 (Quoted in Molineux, 99).

⁸⁸⁹ Molineux, 95.

the danger of the association of skin color with evil in the ongoing modern political and intellectual climate. Unfortunately, the damage had already been done.

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