To be Refined and Join the Angelic Train:
Race and Slavery at the Old South Meeting House in the 18th Century

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Author's Note

This study was conducted from January to May 2025 and was made possible through funding from Revolutionary Spaces, the nonprofit museum that stewards the Old South Meeting House and the Old State House. Thanks to this funding, I was able to work two to three days a week on this report while also continuing to work for the Visitor Experience department of the organization. I thank Revolutionary Spaces and particularly its Senior Director of Interpretation & Future Projects, Matthew Wilding, who hired me and served as my boss. I can only hope that the contents of this report prove in some measure that their confidence in me was not misplaced.

Historical research is a cumulative exercise, and none of what I have been able to uncover here would have been possible without the efforts of historians and archivists who came before me. One deserves particular commendation. In 2021, Emily Ross, the archivist of the Old South Church, published her study of people of color and those who enslaved them at OSMH. Her meticulously well-researched biographical entries on each OSMH congregant of color made it possible for me to discover at a glance where further effort would likely lead to dead ends and where there might be more to discover. It is no exaggeration to say that her work shaved off weeks of effort from my own project. I would recommend to everyone reading this study that they keep Ross's work, which is available on the church's website, as a reference alongside it.

I also thank the staff of the Congregational Library and Archives. They generously accommodated me during my visit to their library on a cold day when the heating in the reading room had broken down. They have also placed a number of their OSMH records online, so that I could check the accuracy of my work from home. On that note, I also thank the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, who for reasons of their own have placed almost the entire 18th-

century contents of the Massachusetts Archives online, making it possible for me and so many others to do archival research long after bedtime.

I thank Dr. Richard Boles, who visited OSMH to give a talk while I was working on this project. Our conversation before his presentation was brief, but in that short span he was able to confirm certain of my own hypotheses about this study through his vast experience with church records from across New England and instilled a sense of confidence in me that I was working in the right direction.

I thank my fellow Visitor Experience staff members at Revolutionary Spaces for the camaraderie and kindness they showed me during the process of researching and writing this work. They and the others like them who work in public history along the Freedom Trail were the audience I had in mind when I sat down to write. A structural problem in the production of historical knowledge is the vast gulf that so often separates authentic archival research from popular understandings of the past. The people who work in Boston's public history community are among the best at bridging that gap. I hope this work proves helpful to their great mission.

I dedicate this report with deepest love and affection to my mother and father.

'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic die."
Remember, Christians, Negros, black as Cain,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

Phillis Wheatley, *On Being Brought from Africa to America* (1773)

Introduction

This study begins with the most anthologized and ideologically vexing poem in Phillis Wheatley's canon, a full-throated assertion of the equal place of black people in the Christian plan for salvation and a bold chastisement of racist Christians that in the same breath functions as a Christian apologetic for the slave trade. For Wheatley, slavery was "a mercy" to the extent that it brought her to know Christianity. Yet joining "th'angelic train" in Boston proved a fraught task, as she confronted the "scornful eyes" of white Christians who would deny her a place there. Before she could assume that longed-for place in the heavenly host, she had to prove to those same censorious white people that she might "be refin'd." In these terse two quatrains, Wheatley provided us with the only first-person account of what the experience of joining a church meant to a black congregant in Boston during the colonial period. The poem may in some degree be a digest of what Wheatley related to the congregants of Boston's Old South Meeting House (hereafter OSMH) when she made her confession of faith and became a full member of that church on August 18th, 1771.

On that summer morning, Wheatley joined what was by then indeed a long train of OSMH black congregants, stretching back to a woman named Lydia who made her confession of faith

in 1697.[1] During the colonial period, 26 black people became members at OSMH, and over 100 were baptized as children or as adults into the congregation of the church. The aim of this study is to provide some answer to the question of why so many black people made the decision to publicly affirm their desire to be a part of this white institution run by and for an enslaving class, and why that enslaving class invited their enslaved people to join them there.

The answer to these questions are far from obvious. Aside from Wheatley's allusive verses, almost no sources written by black members or congregants of OSMH have come down to us. The clergy and leading laymen of OSMH created voluminous records, yet church leaders almost always preferred not to write about questions pertaining to race or to explicitly address the needs of their black congregants in writing. As would so often be the case in the later history of Boston, the leadership of OSMH dealt with their race issues by pretending that there were no race issues, handing down to us an archive which with rare exception passes over the presence of black people in silence. Nonetheless, by teasing out interpretive details from the records remaining to us, it is possible to draw an outline of the colonial black experience at OSMH, one in which black people, usually enslaved, found a way to the Lord's Table, and in so doing discovered the limitations of charity in the hearts of their white siblings in Christ.

To tell this story, this study will proceed in four sections. The first section will address structural questions: what was the nature of OSMH as an institution, and how did black people go about joining its flock? Here we will take advantage of the two sets of primary sources that unequivocally speak to the presence of black people in the life of the congregation, baptism and membership records. The second section will describe the racial ideology of the white people

[1] *Admissions, 1669-1855,* Old South Church in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library. All admissions, baptisms, and marriages conducted at OSMH have been compiled in the appendixes at the back of this study.

who administered OSMH and made up the majority of its congregants. Here the sermons of OSMH's pastors, the correspondence of white OSMH members, and Wheatley's poetry will all illuminate the dominant racial assumptions that faced black people who wished to join OSMH. The third section will try to recreate the sensual, lived experience of OSMH on a Sunday morning and answer the question of what sort of material benefits might accrue to black people who attended services in such a wealthy meetinghouse. Here we will avail ourselves of the financial records of the church and the few fragmentary first-person descriptions of the meetinghouse that come down to us. The fourth section will examine five case studies of black OSMH congregants to find out how their encounters with OSMH shaped their life outcomes. By the end of this study, the specific details of the lives of the vast majority of black people who attended OSMH in the colonial period will remain as hidden from our gaze as they are now. Yet by reconstituting the broad contours of how OSMH functioned as a racialized institution, we will emerge with a much clearer idea of what this place meant for black Bostonians, how they were changed by it, and how they in turn changed it.

Before proceeding, I must issue a caveat about the sources. Almost all of the primary sources that form the evidentiary basis of this study were written by white people for the immediate benefit of white people. OSMH's white ruling class wanted black people to learn how to read so that they could directly know the Bible and Christian inspirational literature. They saw no need for them to learn how to write. Despite this lack of encouragement, some Black members of the congregation undoubtedly did learn how to write, but with the notable exception of Wheatley, none of their works were published or were considered worthy to be preserved in a permanent archive. As a result, this study about black people is based almost entirely on sources written by white people for their own purposes, with the inevitable result that white observers of black life

will be heard more loudly and more frequently than the voices of black people themselves. To say the least, this evidentiary conundrum is far from ideal, but the alternative to working with racially biased and incomplete sources would be to write nothing about black people at OSMH at all. With that caveat in mind, let us proceed to the task at hand.

I. Joining OSMH

OSMH was born out of factional strife in 1669, and the values that motivated the faction that founded it left an indelible mark on the congregation over the entire course of the colonial period. Like all other communities in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Boston had been founded with only one church, yet the population growth of the town made division into multiple congregations inevitable, and by the time of the American Revolution it boasted ten churches that worshipped in the orthodox Puritan tradition. When Boston's Second Church was founded in 1649, it occasioned no great controversy because its creation was a natural response to population growth in the North End. When Boston's Third Church—OSMH—attempted to break off from the First Church in 1669, it caused the most rancorous ecclesiastical strife in Boston's history since the antinomian controversy of the 1630s.

The trouble began upon the death in 1667 of the long-time pastor of Boston's First Church, the Reverend John Wilson. The dominant, conservative faction at the First Church quickly moved to invite the Reverend John Davenport from his post as pastor at New Haven, Connecticut to assume the pulpit in Boston. A minority faction at the First Church opposed the election of Davenport. That group held a number of grievances against him, but chief among these was his rejection of the Half-Way Covenant. Following the withdrawal of that faction from the First Church in May of 1669 to establish the Third Church, their full-throated acceptance of the Half-

Way Covenant became the distinguishing feature of their church culture and likely contributed to its attractiveness to potential black congregants over the ensuing century.[2]

The Half-Way Covenant was a doctrinal position that structured how Puritan churches related to their greater congregations and to the world outside the meetinghouse doors. For Puritans, the meetinghouse was the physical space where they worshipped, and the congregation was the group that worshipped within its doors—but neither of these things was the church. The church was the group of people who had made a full and public confession of faith before other church members and had been accepted into their fellowship. Ideally, every congregant would be on the path to full membership in the church. There were a number of privileges associated with church membership, and the most important of these was full participation in the two recognized greater ordinances (i.e. sacraments), baptism and communion. Since non-members who had not made the profession of faith could not participate in the greater ordinances, the children of non-members likewise could not be baptized.

The Half-Way Covenant, as the name implies, rejected that all-or-nothing approach. Under its precepts, participation in communion would remain exclusive to members, but baptism would be opened up to all infants, children, and adults. Adults who came to the church for baptism would also covenant with the church, giving their full consensual agreement to live under the discipline of the church leadership. In the parlance of the time, they would "own the covenant." Every baptized member who lived a scandal-free life and continued to live under that covenant was welcome to attend services and participate in the life of the church, with no further pressure

[2] My narrative of the founding of OSMH and my understanding of the importance of the Half-Way covenant is primarily reliant upon Mark A. Peterson, *The Price of Redemption: The Spiritual Economy of Puritan New England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), chapter 1, "A Right Middle Way."

applied to move toward full membership and give a confession of faith. When non-member parents accompanied their children to the baptismal font, they would be invited to renew their baptismal covenant in a public demonstration of their continued devotion to the ordinances of the church. The Half-Way Covenant thus created a kind of quasi-church membership, whereby those congregants who did not feel ready or able to make a confession of faith could nonetheless enjoy formally recognized association with the church.

It is not hard to imagine how the prospect of making a public confession of faith before the entire congregation might pose a significant barrier to entry for black people, as it required a theatrical oration combining autobiographical storytelling and doctrinal exposition that proved difficult to perform even for many white people who had access to far greater social capital and educational opportunities. In 1774, when the Reverend Nathaniel Bacon asked to be dismissed from OSMH on account of reservations he held about the Half-Way Covenant, the church defended its practices in affective terms, writing "[non-members] by their lives and Conversation, in a Judgement of Charity we think are intitled to special Ordinances, but by reason of doubts and Fears are kept back from coming to the Lord's Table: yet are desirous of renewing their Baptismal covenant & publickly devoting their offspring to God in Baptism."[3] Over a century after OSMH was founded, making the confession of faith still provoked such anxiety among potential members that those "doubts and Fears" were cited as a chief defense for maintaining the Half-Way Covenant status quo. Bacon was not the only pastor OSMH lost on account of the Half-Way Covenant; five years before, in 1769, Reverend Samuel Blair had

[3] *Church records, 1768-1816*, Old South Church in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library, 64 (73). When citing a document that is available on the Congregational Library's website, the page number will be expressed first as the actual MS pagination, and secondly in parentheses as the number in the sequence of online images. Hence "64 (73)," is the 64th page of the MS, but the 73rd image on the Congregational Library's scan of the MS.

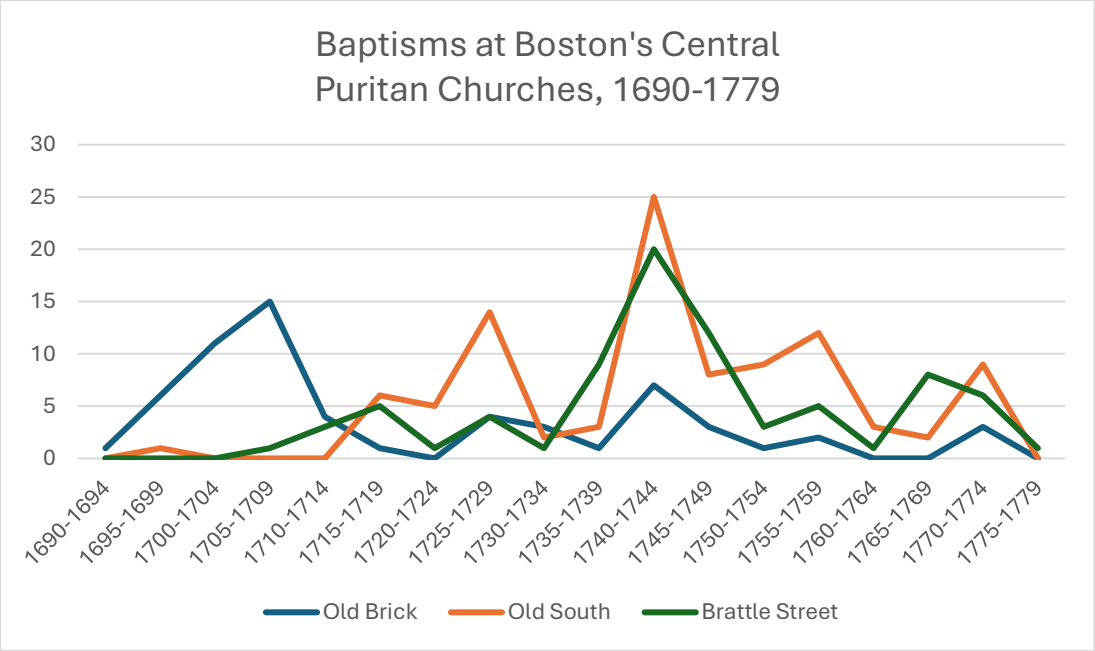
likewise resigned his position over objections to the practice. On that occasion, the church wrote sympathetically of "such among us who do Publickly & Solemnly renew their baptismal Covenant, and whose lives and Conversations are otherwise agreeable to such Christian profession, although they should for reasons best known to their own Consciences abstain from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper." Holding to the Half-Way Covenant entailed respecting the privacy and autonomy of each person in the congregation and withholding judgement about their decision whether or not to make the profession of faith. Black people, whether enslaved or free, spent their days constantly trying to please white people, but the Half-Way Covenant ensured that at least their Sundays would be freed from unreasonable spiritual demands.

Comparing OSMH's pattern of baptismal records with those of the First Church confirms that the Half-Way Covenant helped to attract and retain black congregants at OSMH. By the mid-18th century, Boston counted ten churches that worshipped in the orthodox Puritan style. No other community in the American colonies had so many churches all worshipping in the same style on Sunday mornings. As a result, we can speak to some degree of a consumer market for churches in eighteenth century Boston in which black people both enslaved and freed participated.[4] The people of Boston generally preferred to stay within their own neighborhood when choosing a church, and so OSMH's biggest competitors for black congregants would have been the other two large Puritan churches located in the center of Boston, Old Brick (a.k.a. the first church, from which OSMH had separated), which was located one block north of OSMH

[4] The majority of enslaved congregants worshipped at the same meetinghouse as their enslaver. Nonetheless, there were enough cases in Boston of an enslaved person worshipping at a church that was not their enslaver's to posit a degree of autonomy for at least some of the enslaved. In the case of free black people, autonomy was a given.

on the Cornhill, and Brattle Street, which was founded in 1699 and was located just one block north of Old Brick.

Old Brick, as a congregation that did not accept the Half-Way Covenant, insisted that any adult who came forward to be baptized also had to make their profession of faith and become a member at that time or be ready to do so shortly thereafter. Brattle Street, like OSMH, accepted the Half-Way Covenant and considered baptism as a first step on the way to full communion. The results of these differing policies for black congregants are striking:[5]



After a period of prodigious growth in the first decade of the 18th century, Old Brick dramatically fell in popularity among black Bostonians and never recovered. The vast majority of the black people who approached Old Brick's baptismal font during the 18th century were

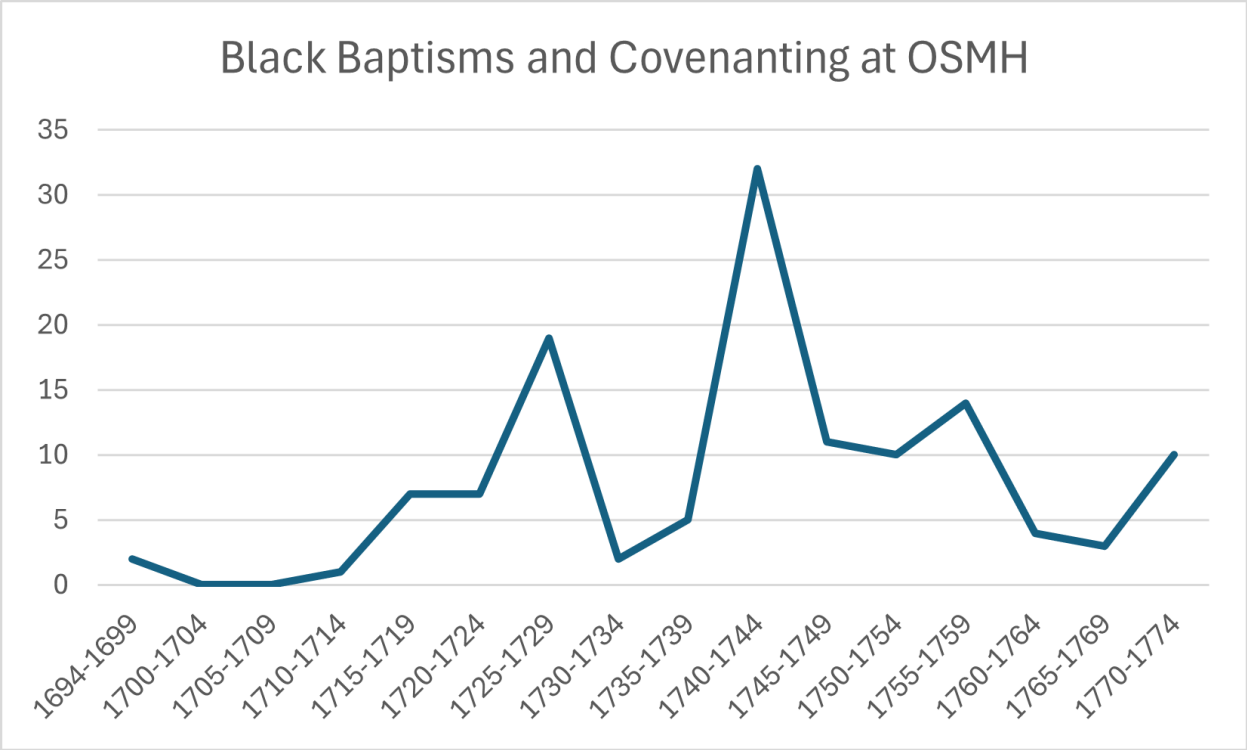
[5] *The Manifesto church: Records of the Church in Brattle Square, Boston, with Lists of Communicants, Baptisms, Marriages and Funerals, 1699-1872*. Boston: The Benevolent Society of Fraternity of Churches, 1902.
Richard D. Pierce, ed., *The Records of the First Church in Boston, 1630–1868. Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, VOLUME XXXIX. Portland: The Anthoensen Press, 1902.
OSMH Baptismal Records, 1669-1875, OSMH Admissions, 1669-1855.

infants and older children. Old Brick held out the expectation that all congregants would act in a timely fashion to become members, making even baptism a daunting proposition. Old Brick may very well have had a large black community who accompanied their enslavers to services, but if so those congregants do not turn up in their baptism records because the barriers to sacramental entry were too high. By comparison, while the baptism records of both OSMH and Brattle Street contain numerous peaks and valleys, the baptisms of many black adults and children over time attest to the ongoing presence of actively engaged black communities at both churches. At the time of the start of the American Revolution, Brattle Street had baptized 85 black people and OSMH had baptized 106, whereas Old Brick had only baptized 62, out of which 37 had been baptized before the year 1715.

That paltry number is likely not a reflection of the particular culture of Old Brick, but instead of the difficulty inherent in making the full confession of faith, as OSMH had only accepted 26 Black members to full communion by the close of the colonial period.[6] Those 26 members made up only about two percent of all OSMH members. Yet of the 300 adults who chose to accept the baptismal (i.e. Half-Way) covenant during the period from 1717 to 1774, 47 of them, a little over fifteen percent, were black. Between those making the confession of faith, those owning the baptismal covenant as adults, and those infants being baptized, on any given Sunday at OSMH from the 1720s to the 1770s, there was always a chance that a black congregant would walk down the broad alley towards the pulpit to take part in a highly visible religious ritual. The following diagram charts at five-year intervals the aggregate number of Black people at OSMH who took part in one of the three major ordinances (baptism, baptism and covenanting, and

[6] The membership records of Brattle Street Church unfortunately break off with the death of Reverend Benjamin Colman in 1747, so it is not possible to make a full comparison of membership between the three churches.

making the confession of faith/becoming full members)[7] over the course of the colonial period. These distinct practices have been amalgamated because together they constitute all of those times when black people at OSMH descended from their seats in the galleries and became the center of attention for the congregation, performing the same sacred actions in the same spaces and with the same level of dignity as the white master class. At OSMH and other churches of the Half-Way Covenant, black congregants were offered far more opportunities to ceremonially live out the equality of their Christian souls during their mortal time on earth.



A black community remained a fixed presence at OSMH from the late 1710s until the destruction of the meetinghouse at the time of the American Revolution, but as the chart above clearly attests, there was great variation over time in black participation in the ritual life of the

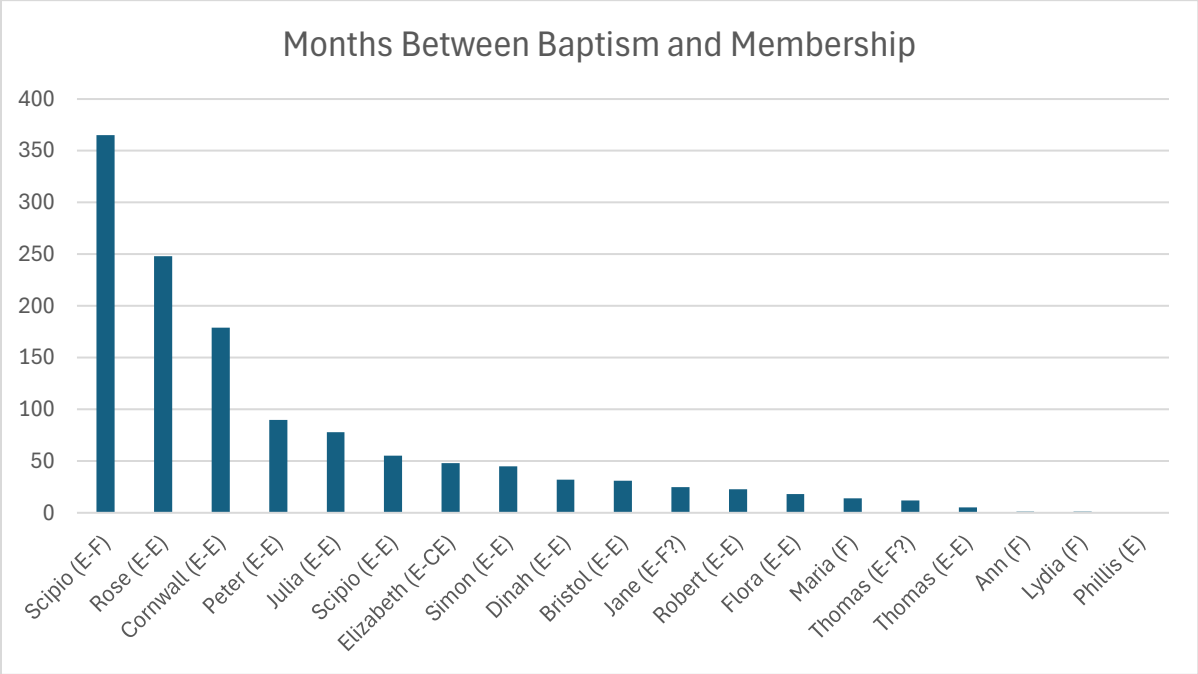
[7] Note that marriages are not included in this tally because while they were performed by clergy, they were not considered religious ordinances and therefore did not take place in the meetinghouse.

congregation, with two tremendous spikes in the late 1720s and early 1740s. As will be fully elaborated in the second section of this study, the pastors of OSMH set an expectation for the enslaving class starting in the 1710s that they should take their enslaved people to church with them on Sundays, and the spike in the late 1720s is a sign that this messaging strategy was bearing fruit. The Great Awakening caused the spike of the early 1740s. Preachers such as George Whitefield and Gilbert Haven, among the most celebrated and charismatic figures of their era, gave sermons to packed audiences at OSMH and other churches around town, leading to overwhelming displays of religious conversion. Black audiences were rarely explicitly targeted at these evangelical events, but they felt the call of faith just as strongly as their white counterparts, as their prodigious baptism and covenanting numbers attest.

These revival events caused dramatic and spontaneous outpourings of faith, but no matter their fervor, black congregants typically had to undergo a drawn-out process of discernment to become full members. The pastors of OSMH ultimately decided who would be allowed to be baptized into the faith and who would be accepted as a full member. The diary of Robert Treat Paine, a young white man of great privilege who had grown up at OSMH, provides us with our only surviving description of this process at the meetinghouse. Paine first broached the subject of becoming a member to Pastor Joseph Sewall on March 10, 1749. Three weeks later, on April 2, his membership was formally proposed to the church. Only two weeks after that, on April 16, he made his full profession of faith before the congregation. He was 19 years old. All told, Paine's journey to church membership took only five weeks from the time of its formal initiation, but in another sense had been ongoing for Paine's entire life, as Sewall had watched Paine grow up in

the church, had nurtured his spiritual development, and could discern whether he was ready to make an authentic confession of faith.[8]

Of the 26 black people who became full members of OSMH during the colonial period, 19 of them had also been baptized at the church. While we cannot know how long they had been attending services at OSMH, we can chart the interval of time between baptism and membership to get a sense of how long it took for a black person to go through the process of becoming a member. The image below charts those intervals from longest to shortest:



As the chart demonstrates, the interval between baptism and membership varied so widely that no clear pattern emerges, which suggests that OSMH's pastors treated each prospective member on a case-by-case basis and made decisions based on their individual assessment. Most of the people who became full members were enslaved (marked as "E" in the chart above; "F" is for

[8] Stephen T. Riley and Edward W. Hanson, eds., "Robert Treat Paine's Confession of Faith," *The Papers of Robert Treat Paine, Volume 1: 1746–1756* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1992). Accessed on the Massachusetts Historical Society website.

free) by prominent white members of the OSMH congregation, and no doubt the recommendation or disapprobation of their enslaver helped to stymie or move the process along; in fact, enslaved congregants were always identified by their relationship to their enslaver and their identities in the eyes of the congregation were clearly tied to them.

At one extreme, there were a few members of OSMH who made their confession of faith almost immediately after baptism. This category included OSMH's most famous black congregant, Phillis Wheatley, whose baptism took place on the same day that she became a member. This same-day process was the case for only one other black congregant, Moses the servant of Josiah Waters, who underwent both ceremonies on September 12th, 1773. Decades before, at the height of the Great Awakening, a free black woman named Anne had made her confession of faith only one week after her baptism in March, 1741. For most black congregants, the interval between baptism and full membership came somewhere between one and four years, with the median time falling at about two years. Notably, there were at most two cases of black congregants baptized as children who became members as adults. Rose, enslaved to pastor Joseph Sewall and baptized by him as a child in 1719, was received by him as a full member of the church twenty years later in 1739. The other example is ambiguous. The Scipio Gunney who became a full member of the church in 1772 may have been the adult who was baptized at OSMH in 1741 or may be the child of that man who was baptized a week later at the Brattle Street Church. In either event, the interval of over thirty years between baptism and membership marks this case as an anomaly. For those black OSMH congregants who eventually became members, the process of discernment from baptism to membership was an endeavor that could be successfully concluded anywhere from a few months to a few years' time.

Yet about half of the 47 black congregants who were baptized as adults at the church never became full members. In this sense, they were not so different from their fellow white congregants, who also frequently did not complete the journey from owning the covenant to making the confession of faith. For some black congregants, the prospect of giving the full confession of faith may have proved too daunting, or for personal reasons they might well have been content to remain at the half-way point of the covenant, just as they were well within their rights to do. Still others may have been sold to enslavers who lived far away from the meetinghouse, the brutal reality of the slave system prematurely ending their journey of faith. One congregant who became a full member may have been sold to another enslaver during their discernment process but was fortunate enough to stay in Boston and was able to continue her relationship with OSMH.[9]

Infants and children formed the second category of black people who were baptized at OSMH. Unlike the adults, they were assumed to lack the capacity to own the covenant, and they were instead sponsored by a consenting baptized adult. They fell into two broad categories: enslaved children of white people who sponsored their baptism, and children whose own parents sponsored them. It is clear that a number of white members of the church took their responsibilities to Christianize their enslaved children seriously. On five occasions, the baptism of enslaved children was accompanied by the notation that their enslaver "engageth for his [or her] education." This same set expression was used on four other occasions to describe the responsibilities of adults who had sponsored white orphaned children for baptism. In 1757, a

[9] Elizabeth, Negro-Servant of John Flagg, was baptized on March 11th, 1725, and made the confession of faith as Elizabeth, Negro-Servant of John May, March 27th, 1729. There is no other black person named Elizabeth in the records of OSMH at this time, and the interval between baptism and membership makes this a more than probable attribution.

mixed enslaved and free black couple, Scipio and Katharine, sponsored an orphaned black child named "John-William Negro," and were commissioned to "take ye child and Engage for his Education." Regardless of whether the child or their sponsors were white or black, enslaved or free, the use of the same set language to describe educational responsibilities suggests uniformity of expectations for all.

Many black parents likewise sought baptism for their children, sometimes as single parents, at other times as couples. The years following the Great Awakening witnessed a small Black baby boom at the meeting house, as several married couples brought forth their families for baptism. Sylvia and Scipio Gunney presented six children for baptism in addition to two earlier children who were not identified with both parents but can nonetheless be safely attributed to them. Cornwall and Kate sponsored four children; James and Ann, Jamaica and Flora, and Pompey and Patience each sponsored two children. In the late 1760s, Peter and Rose brought forward three children for baptism. From the 1720s to the late 1760s, black child baptisms were a common sight on Sunday mornings at OSMH, with several black families with children seated in the galleries.

The membership and baptism records establish that black participation in the ritual life of the congregation was visible and ongoing throughout the colonial period at OSMH. But just how big was the black community there? Unfortunately, it is impossible to answer that question. No records survive that allow us to reconstruct the demography of black or white congregants. We know, for example, that there were 93 pews on the floor of OSMH which housed the wealthiest white families on Sunday mornings. Yet it is impossible to glean exactly how many people would have been seated in those pews. The situation is far more amorphous for the black community, members of which did not rent pews and were relegated to the open seating. Even determining

where black people would have sat is a vexing question. Open seating existed on the floor, in the lower gallery, and the entirety of the upper gallery. Conventional wisdom assumes that black people were confined at all times in the upper gallery, yet there is no evidence that seating was ever officially segregated by race in the colonial period. One oft-cited record from shortly after the opening of the current OSMH building in 1730 requests that "the Deacons be desired to Procure some suitable Person to take the oversight of the children & Servants in the Galleries,"[10] which established that black enslaved people were seated in the galleries, but did not specifically identity those galleries or preclude that at least some black people might not have been seated elsewhere.

Other records inform us that there were black people present in the meeting house who did not take part in either the baptism or covenanting ceremonies. Both Joseph Sewall and Thomas Prince, who served as co-pastors at OSMH for some forty years together, conducted 46 marriages for Black people. Some of these married couples had been baptized at OSMH, but others were not. Since Congregationalists did not consider marriage to be a major ordinance, the rite did not take place in the church and did not require any sort of religious recognition of the couple. It is probably safe to assume that at least some of the non-baptized couples whom Sewall and Prince married had made the acquaintance of the pastors through previous attendance at OSMH, but it is impossible to know for sure.[11]

On two occasions, two otherwise unrecorded black congregants were singled out for disciplinary action. In March 1749, "James Bow, negro was admonish'd & suspended from ye

[10] *Church records, 1669-1767*, Old South Church in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library 117 (145).
[11] See Appendix D of this report for a full listing of all marriages of black people performed by OSMH clergy.

Communion of this Church upon Account of a course of gross lying, promise Breaking & fraudulent Dealing." Bow had not been baptized and was not a member who was eligible to take the Lord's Supper, so "communion" in this instance is probably best understood to mean the fellowship of the congregation in a general sense.[12] Sixteen years later, the church Brethren voted to form a committee to examine "ye Case of Thomas Negro, of our Communion, servant to Mr. Jonathan Mason, who is accused of scandalous sins." A week later, Thomas was "Admonish'd & Suspended from ye Communion of ys Church."[13] Thomas was not referred to as being counted among the brethren, so once again "Communion" should be understood here as the general fellowship of the church.

The punishments inflicted on James Bow and Thomas servant of Jonathan Mason reveal that the community of black people at OSMH extended beyond even those who chose to be baptized. Their formal excommunications from the life of the church indicate that they were part of a subset of black people not captured in the records of members or baptisms whose regular presence at the meeting house on Sunday mornings made them recognizable members of the congregation who were assumed to have both informal insider status within the community and to bear a responsibility to uphold a certain standard of conduct, even if they had never formally assented to it. Thomas and James just happened to be the only people who in the eyes of the pastors and deacons had failed to live up to that standard. We are left to imagine how many more

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[12] In the diary that he kept for a few years just before and during the early years of his pastorate, Joseph Sewall used the word communion quite loosely. He would "take communion" when making visits to his congregants' homes and would refer to his prayers as "having communion" with God. Since Sewall was the person who recorded the disciplining of both James Bow and Thomas, it is safe to assume that he was referring to "communion" in that same loose sense. *Joseph Sewall Papers*, 1703–1716, *Joseph Sewall Diary*, P-363, reel 8.4 (microfilm), Massachusetts Historical Society.

[13] *Church records, 1669-1767*, Old South Church in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library 136 (164).

black people were present on Sunday mornings who did live up that standard, chose not to be baptized, but were nonetheless part of the OSMH congregation.

Finally, it is worthwhile to try to determine how the participation of black people in the life of OSMH correlated with the demographics of black Boston. Here again, the numbers are vague. Based on newspaper slave-for-sale advertisements, the peak years of the slave trade in Boston came in the late 1720s but remained steady until the years immediately preceding the American Revolution.[14] That chronology may help to explain the spike in black participation in the church in the late 1720s but corresponds to little else. Enslaved black presence in probate records, both as a percentage of bound laborers and in total numbers, expanded in almost linear progression throughout the colonial period, in marked contrast to the fluctuations in black participation in the church.[15] In 1754, the Town of Boston made a census of enslaved people aged 16 and older, and recorded 647 men and 342 women, for a total of 989 enslaved people altogether. This is our best firm number for the number of enslaved people in Boston at any given moment; a similar number for free Black people does not exist.[16] OSMH was one of sixteen churches from which they could choose on a Sunday morning, and based on surviving records it seems to be have been one of the more popular options. The theology of the half-way covenant, as described above, does much to explain that popularity. The expectations of OSMH's pastors add another layer of

[14] Robert E. Desrochers jr., "Slave-for-Sale Advertisements and Slavery in Massachusetts, 1704-1781," *William & Mary Quarterly*, 59:3 (July 2002):623-654. See especially Table VIII,page 652.
[15] Gloria McCahon Whiting, "Race, Slavery, and the Problem of Numbers in Early New England: A View from Probate Court," *William & Mary Quarterly*,77:3, (July 2020):405-440. See especially Table I, page 425.
[16] Boston town Selectmen's records contain sporadic lists of free Black men who were forced to perform road work for the town, but this is not anything close to a census substitute.

explanation for why so many black people were present at OSMH on Sunday mornings. To those expectations we now turn.

II. The Ideology of Race and Slavery at OSMH

The churches of colonial Boston agreed that it was incumbent upon them to open their doors to all people and to teach the word of God to all those who wished to hear it. Yet equality in the eyes of God did not translate to equality of earthly status among his people. At OSMH, the majority of fully covenanted members were women, yet no woman was allowed to vote on matters of church governance. Fully covenanted white men ranged in status, but only gentlemen served as deacons and took prominent roles in church leadership. Black people who worshipped at OSMH, whether enslaved or free, found themselves at the mercy of an institution which welcomed their presence but took for granted their marginalized status and did not feel it was their responsibility to improve it. Indeed, evidence indicates that the vast majority of the 93 well-off families who owned pews on the floor of OSMH at one time or another were themselves enslavers or profited from the slave trade and thus had a vested interest in ensuring that the church did its part to promote the continued subjugation of the enslaved underclass within the walls of OSMH.[17] The literature reviewed in this section will show that the pastors and leading lay figures of OSMH did just that throughout the colonial period, in most cases right up to the legal end of slavery itself.

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[17] Emily Ross, *Report on Members of Color at Old South Church and Members who Enslaved People of Color*, Revised November 2021. Ross's compendium is an admirably complete survey of all of the enslaved people who turn up in the membership and baptism rolls of OSMH, but not all enslavers had bondspeople who generated such records; the publisher Thomas Fleet and the painter John Smibert are but two examples of enslavers who were members of OSMH but whose enslaved household members left no trace of their presence in the congregation's records, but who are attested to in probate and elsewhere.

The evidence for these beliefs is scattered, for the people of OSMH rarely spoke directly on the subjects of race and slavery. Through their sermons, their pastors have left us a voluminous record of their thoughts on nearly every theological quandary, yet they almost never tackled the subject of contemporary chattel slavery. OSMH Pastor Samuel Willard (1640-1707) left us 246 sermons which were published in 1726 in a 900-page volume edited by his successors at OSMH, Joseph Sewall and Thomas Prince.[18] References to slavery and servitude abounded in his sermons, but the concepts remained immured in Biblical time. Willard frequently advised his flock to beware lest they become slaves to Satan; their enslavement of others did not concern him enough to merit commentary from the pulpit.

In contrast, two of Willard's contemporaries in Boston at the turn of the 18th century, Samuel Sewall and Cotton Mather, directly articulated an ideology of enslavement that had a seminal impact on enslaver culture at OSMH. Sewall (1652-1730), the noted diarist and jurist, was a member of OSMH from 1677 until his death in 1730, and was the father of Joseph Sewall, OSMH's longest-serving colonial pastor. Mather (1663-1728), pastor of Boston's Second Church in the North End, was Boston's leading intellectual in his day and proved a great influence upon both Joseph Sewall and his long-time co-pastor, Thomas Prince.[19] Over a period

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[18] *A compleat body of divinity in two hundred and fifty expository lectures on the Assembly's Shorter catechism wherein the doctrines of the Christian religion are unfolded, their truth confirm'd, their excellence display'd, their usefulness improv'd; contrary errors & vices refuted & expos'd, objections answer'd, controversies settled, cases of conscience resolv'd; and a great light thereby reflected on the present age. / By the Reverend & learned Samuel Willard, M.A. late Pastor of the South Church in Boston, and vice-president of Harvard College in Cambridge, in New-England. ; Prefac'd by the pastors of the same church. ; [Six lines of Scripture texts]*. Accessed at Evans Early American Imprints, University of Michigan.

[19] Prince had an especially close relationship with the Mathers, as Increase Mather wrote the preface to Prince's first published sermon, and Prince later delivered a eulogy following Cotton Mather's death. *God brings to the desired haven. A thanksgiving-sermon deliver'd at the lecture in Boston. N.E. On Thursday September 5. 1717. Upon occasion of the author's safe arrival thro' many great hazards & deliverances, especially on the seas, in above eight years*

spanning several decades, Sewall and Mather wrote about enslavement in the abstract and about their own personal encounters with enslaved Bostonians. Their writings displayed an absolute confidence in the Biblical sanction of slavery and a belief that the church had an important role in the process of civilizing enslaved people. These ideas would be accepted and advanced upon by later generations of OSMH leaders.

In 1700, Sewall published a brief pamphlet, *The Selling of Joseph*, which has been lauded ever since as the first published work of American anti-slavery sentiment.[20] Recent research has cast significant doubt on that claim, for Sewall's own actions proved that he did not intend his pamphlet to be read as a call for the abolition of slavery.[21] Over a period of years following the publication of *Joseph*, Sewall took out at least fourteen slave-for-sale advertisements in Boston newspapers in which he announced the sale of over two dozen people, usually from his warehouse on Merchants' Row or from his own home on Winter Street. Scholars have argued over the precise motivations for and contexts in which Sewall wrote *Joseph*,[22] but for our

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absence from his dear & native country. / By Thomas Prince, M.A. ; With a prefatory epistle to the reader, by Increase Mather, D.D. ; [Ten lines from Psalms] and *The departure of Elijah lamented. A sermon occasioned by the great & publick loss in the decease of the very Reverend & learned Cotton Mather, D.D. F.R.S. and Senior Pastor of the North Church in Boston: who left this life on Feb. 13th 1727, 8. The morning after he finished the LXV year of his age. / By Thomas Prince, M.A. and one of the Pastors of the South Church. ; [One line from John]*. Both texts accessed through Evans Early American Imprints, University of Michigan.

[20] Samuel Sewall, *The Selling of Joseph: A Memorial* (Boston: Printed by Bartholomew Green and John Allen, June 24, 1700). Accessed on the Evans Early American Imprints, University of Michigan.

[21] Zachary McLeod Hutchins, *Before Equiano: A Prehistory of the North American Slave Narrative* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022), chap. 2, "Sewall's Secret: The Selling of More than Two Dozen Black Africans," 32–63. Hutchins reprints the text of Sewall's fourteen slave-for-sale advertisements in full.

[22] For example, Mark A. Peterson, "The Selling of Joseph: Bostonians, Antislavery, and the Protestant International, 1689–1733," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 4 (2002): iv, 1–22; Gloria McCahon Whiting, *Belonging: An Intimate History of Slavery and Family in Early New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2024), chap. 2 "Sebastian, Jane Lake, and Their Children: Marriage, Gender, and Power in Slavery," 53–86.

purposes what matters most is that Sewall's work provided a blueprint for how his fellow congregants at OSMH could take solace in a Biblical justification for slavery.

Joseph's opening line announced Sewall's purpose in writing: "FOR AS MUCH as Liberty is in real value next unto Life: None ought to part with it themselves, or deprive others of it, but upon most mature Consideration." Sewall's aim was to provide that "most mature Consideration" which would justify a morally creditable form of enslavement. To arrive at that justification, he confronted head-on the many practical and theological objections to enslavement, doing such a thorough job of it that scholars have confused him for an abolitionist ever since. He based his ideas on assumptions of innate racial differences, writing of Black people that "there is such a disparity in their Conditions, Colour & Hair that they can never embody with us, and grow up into orderly Families, to the Peopling of the Land: but still remain in our Body Politick as a kind of extravasat Blood." For Sewall, Black people, by the very nature of their skin and hair, could never be fully acculturated to white society. Nor did Sewall believe that the Christianization of Black people was itself sufficient reason to excuse the slave trade, as he answered the argument "The Nigers are brought out of a Pagan Country, into places where the Gospel is Preached" with the simple objection that "Evil must not be done, that good may come of it."

Sewall found a rationale for the slave trade in his consideration of the Biblical Abraham, who owned enslaved people both bought on the open market and born in his household. While many of the precise circumstances of Abraham's slaving practices remained unknown, Sewall declared that "Charity obliges us to conclude, that He [Abraham] knew it was lawful and good." He called for "These Ethiopians, as black as they are; seeing they are the Sons and Daughters of the First Adam, the Brethren and Sisters of the Last ADAM, and the Offspring of GOD; They ought to be

treated with a Respect agreeable." From the argument leading to this point, an interpretation of "Respect agreeable" as "abolition of slavery" might be reasonably inferred, but Sewall's own behavior and the lack of abolitionist debate engendered by *Joseph* in the greater communities of which he was a part show that this would in fact be the wrong inference to make. The standard of "Respect agreeable" placed a burden upon enslavers to treat their human chattels in accordance with the Golden Rule (which Sewall quoted immediately thereafter) but did not require them to free them. In fact, Sewall wrote that the idea of freeing enslaved people would have struck his contemporaries as absurd, as "Few can endure to hear of a Negro's [sic] being made free; and indeed they can seldom use their freedom well."

Joseph concluded with a call for enslavers to avoid the moral pitfalls of slavery by inducing the consent of the enslaved. Sewall concluded his pamphlet with a Latin passage from *De Casibus Conscientiae* (1639) by the Puritan theologian William Ames. The published English translation of the quote, which would have been available to Sewall, read "Perfect servitude, so it be voluntary, is on the patients' part often lawful between Christian and Christian, because induced it is necessary: but on the Master's part who is the agent, in procuring and exercising the authority, it is scarce lawfull in respect, it thwarts that general canon, *What you would have men doe unto you, even so doe unto them*."[23] Ames' text then went on to remind masters that God had not granted them "absolute Dominion" over their servants, and that they owed them "all things that are due to them for their labour." In strategically quoting Ames, Sewall established a standard for just, Christian enslavement that put a heavy burden on the enslaver to behave ethically and demanded "voluntary" behavior on the part of the enslaved as signs that their state

[23] William Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof* (London: M. Flesher for John Rothwell, 1639), book 5, chap. 23, 159–161. Accessed via archive.org

of servitude was reaching Christian perfection. In final effect, *Joseph* was no call to action for abolitionists; it was an apology for contemporary chattel slavery grounded in Biblical proofs that provided a moral framework for Christian enslavers everywhere to emulate.

Shortly after the publication of *Joseph*, Sewall put his philosophy on enslavement into action through an amendment to a bill in the Massachusetts House titled "An Act for the Better Preventing of Spurious or Mixt Issue." As the title suggests, the primary purpose of the bill was to establish penalties for sex between black and white people. It also established legal penalties for black people who struck white people and imposed a duty on the importation of the enslaved. Sewall's contribution was a stipulation that "no master shall unreasonably deny marriage to his negro with one of the same nation, any law, usage or custom to the contrary notwithstanding."[24] Sewall noted his authorship of the language on enslaved marriage in his diary.[25] Following passage of the bill, Sewall in his role as Justice of the Peace became a prolific solemnizer of the wedding vows of the enslaved in Boston. The pastors of OSMH would themselves conduct 45 marriages for black couples during the colonial period, the vast majority of which were officiated by Joseph Sewall and Thomas Prince.[26] In the realm of marriage, Sewall established a pattern for others to follow, making reasonable accommodation (i.e., "respect agreeable") for the enslaved in their personal lives, while otherwise maintaining the system of white dominance and using the Christianity of the meeting house to justify control over enslaved people.

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[24] *Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay: To Which Are Prefixed the Charters of the Province, vol. 1 (Boston: Wright and Potter, 1869)*: 578. Accessed on mass.gov.

[25] *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, vol. 2, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 5th ser., vol. 6 (Boston, 1879), 143. Accessed via archive.org

[26] See appendix D of this report.

Across town, Sewall's friend and colleague Cotton Mather pursued much the same end. In 1693, Mather noted in his diary that "….a company of poor Negroes, of their own Accord, approached mee, for my countenance to a Design wch they had, of erecting such a Meeting for ye Welfare of their miserable Nation, that were Servants among us. I allowed their design…. and gave them the following orders, wch I insert for ye curiositie of ye occasion."[27] Mather then listed eight rules that he had devised for black people to follow when meeting on their own for prayer meetings. Yet Mather's diary was not the only place where those rules appeared. Years later, they were published on a single broadside sheet, and one copy to come down to us bears an inscription on the verso in the hand of Samuel Sewall, reading "Left at my house for me, when I was not at home, by Spaniard, Dr. Mather's Negro, March 23, 1713/14."[28] Sewall received these instructions just a few years before the first major upsurge in black participation in OSMH's ritual life as revealed through baptism and membership records, and the timing suggests that a black community had begun to gather a few years before their appearance in the record, with Sewall seeking advice from Mather on how to properly supervise the extracurricular activities of these new black Christians.

Ostensibly, Mather wrote his rules to facilitate the spiritual growth of black Christians, but functionally it acted as a call for the enslaved to surveil themselves when they were gathered together for prayer and to ensure that their Christianity in no way impeded the work they owed their enslavers. Mather even demanded that the enslaved show their loyalty to the congregation by betraying the interests of their fellow enslaved people. In one stipulation that black

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[27] *Diary of Cotton Mather, 1681–1708, Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, 7th ser., vol. 7, (Boston, 1911), 176. Accessed via archive.org

[28] Cotton Mather, *Rules for the Society of Negroes*, 1693 (Boston: Printed and sold by B. Harris, 1693). Accessed via the Library of Congress.

worshippers were supposed to follow, Mather wrote that "….if any of them [freedom seekers] should *Run away* from their Masters, we will afford them *no* Shelter; But we will do what in us lies, that they may be discovered, and punished. And if any of *us*, are found Faulty, in this Matter, they shall be no longer of *us*." In Mather's view, Christianity would liberate the soul, but it could not be used as a justification to free the body.

Mather wrote an expanded analysis on the Christianizing of the enslaved in 1706 in his *The Negro Christianized*,[29] the only extensive work on the subject ever published by a Boston clergyman. A copy of the book was owned by Thomas Prince as part of the OSMH library and was undoubtedly consulted by him and Joseph Sewall when facing questions pertaining to enslaved Christians. Mather's book had the twin objectives of convincing enslavers that they had a duty to Christianize their enslaved people and that doing so would not endanger the value of their human property. In language that foreshadowed Wheatley's reflections on her own journey of conversion, Mather announced that "O all you that have any Negroes in your Houses; an Opportunity to try, Whether you may not be the Happy Instruments, of Converting, the Blackest Instances of Blindness and Baseness, into admirable Candidates of Eternal Blessedness." To that end, he wrote two catechisms designed for the enslaved, and urged not just enslavers, but all people to aid in teaching it, as "In many Families, the Children may help the Negroes, to Learn the Catechism, or their well-instructed and well-disposed English Servants may do it: And they should be Rewarded by the Masters, when they do it." For Mather, the Christianization of the enslaved was not something that happened only at the meetinghouse on Sunday mornings or in private prayer meetings. It was a task for the entire Christian household.

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[29] Cotton Mather, *The Negro Christianized: An Essay to Excite and Assist the Good Work, the Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity* (Boston: Printed by B. Green, 1706). Accessed at the Evans Early Imprint Collection, University of Michigan.

Yet there was an earthly reward for such spiritual labor. Mather argued that Christianity was not simply compatible with slavery; it would strengthen the very bonds of slavery by helping to ensure the consent of the enslaved:

> Be assured, Syrs; Your Servants will be the Better Servants, for being made Christian Servants. To Christianize them aright, will be to fill them with all Goodness. Christianity is nothing but a very Mass of Universal Goodness. Were your Servants well tinged with the Spirit of Christianity, it would render them exceeding Dutiful unto their Masters, exceeding Patient under their Masters, exceeding faithful in their Business, and afraid of speaking or doing any thing that may justly displease you. It has been observed, that those Masters who have used their Negroes with most of Humanity, in allowing them all the Comforts of Life, that are necessary and Convenient for them…. Have been better Serv'd, had more work done for them, and better done, than those Inhumane Masters, who have used their Negroes worse than their Horses.[30]

Mather went so far as to argue that chattel slavery was a divine institution, writing that the enslaved should be told that "it is GOD who has caused them to be Servants; and that they Serve JESUS CHRIST, while they are at Work for their Masters." Moreover, acting the part of benevolent masters was an opportunity for white enslavers to demonstrate the compassion of the Christian religion without fear of financial repercussions: "What Law is it, that Sets the Baptised Slave at Liberty? Not the Law of Christianity: that allows of Slavery; Only it wonderfully Dulcifies, and Mollifies, and Moderates the Circumstances of it."

Sewall and Mather both called for a standard of moderate enslavement that they believed was fully compatible with Christian doctrine and that would elevate both the enslaved and the enslaver while maintaining the hegemony of white Christians and the exploitation of black labor, all while inducing consent on the part of the enslaved. These ideas proved seminal at OSMH, and there are no indications that any pastor or white layperson at OSMH disputed their essential truth during the colonial period. The success of OSMH in attracting black congregants tells us that many of the enslaved accepted the premises of this theology or at least were willing to play

[30] Ibid, 21.

along with it to glean benefits from its operation. Joseph Sewall (pastor 1713-1769) and Thomas Prince (pastor 1718-1758), in both their rhetoric and their relationships with their own enslaved people, served as exemplary role models for their congregations in how to live as Christian enslavers under the standards set by Sewall and Mather.

Joseph Sewall (1688-1769) grew up under the tutelage of his father, who depicted him in his diary as an ever-dutiful son. Sewall himself kept a diary for a brief time when he was a young man.[31] On February 15th, 1711/12, he assisted Pastor William Brattle of the Cambridge Meeting House to prepare for the execution of a black man named Mingo who had been convicted of rape. His own father had served as one of the presiding judges at the trial.[32] Sewall related that on the Sunday before Mingo's death, he went to the prison and "spoke to him of his soul's concern," and concluded that "He seems to be in any suitable measure sensible of his danger." A few days later, he tersely noted that "The Negro was executed betw 2 & 3 PM." Despite the life-and-death drama before him, Sewall's diary revealed an emotional detachment from and fundamental disinterest in the condemned man. He became much more interested in the fate of the enslaved after he ascended the pulpit at OSMH.

Thanks in part to the influence of his father, Sewall was elected pastor of OSMH on April 25th, 1713 at the age of 25, just a couple of months after Mingo's execution.[33] About a year later, his father received the *Rules for the Society of Negroes* from Cotton Mather, which attested to the presence of a black community at OSMH. It was ten years later, after receiving two new black members and conducting five black baptisms, that Joseph Sewall faced a crisis involving

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[31] *Joseph Sewall Papers*, 1703–1716, *Joseph Sewall Diary*, P-363, reel 8.4 (microfilm), Massachusetts Historical Society.
[32] *The Diary of Samuel Sewall*, vol. 2, 333.
[33] *Joseph Sewall Diary*, 34.

race. In April of 1723, a series of mysterious fires caused some Bostonians to believe that enslaved men were conspiring to burn down the town. One of the fires was lit in Samuel Sewall's neighbor's barn.[34] On Tuesday, April 13th, Governor Dummer proclaimed that "the Fires had been designedly and industriously kindled by some villainous & desperate Negroes or other dissolute People," and that he was offering a reward for information leading to their arrest.[35] That Sunday, Joseph Sewall preached on the fires. The Reverend Samuel Dexter of Dedham wrote in his diary that Sewall "made an excellent discourse, particularly Occasioned by ye late fires yt have broken out in Boston, supposed to be purposely set by ye negroes. Lord seems to have a Controversy with his People & is making some of ye vilest Instruments a scourge to us."[36] Sewall's rough notes for that sermon have, miraculously, been preserved,[37] and according to one recent scholar's appraisal, the logic and imagery of Sewall's sermon depends on a racially hierarchical view of Christian ethics, as "[Sewall's] offer of physical and spiritual freedom is predicated on a worldview that treats black African bodies and souls as liabilities, handicaps in the search for civilization and salvation."[38] If Dexter's brief summary of the sermon was at all typical of how listeners heard Sewall's word on that day, then they left convinced that black people were "instruments" wielded by God to "scourge" his people.

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[34] *Boston News-Letter*, April 15, 1723, 2.
[35] *Boston News-Letter*, April 18, 1723, 2
[36] "Diary of Rev. Samuel Dexter of Dedham," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 14 (1860): 36.
[37] Joseph Sewall, *Two Sermons*, Hatfield Historical Museum. Accessed on archive.org.
[38] Hutchins, *Before Equiano*, 59. I am greatly indebted to Hutchins for his analysis of the fires of 1723 and the Sewall family's response to them, although I do not agree with all of his conclusions. I am also reliant on him for his reading of Sewall's sermon notes, for while I have tried to decipher them for myself, time constraints and the inherent difficulty of reading the text made it impossible for me to prepare my own transcription at the time of this writing.

Despite such racial acrimony expressed at a moment of crisis, Sewall in his own household sought to set an example of how to follow his father's directive that the enslaved must be treated with "respect agreeable." In 1719, Sewall baptized Jane, "an Indian woman who belongs to ~~my Family~~ Joseph Sewall," along with her daughter, Rose. In 1725, Jane married Ebenezer Way "Negro," and they had three children together, Ebenezer, Jacob, and a second Jacob, who were all baptized at OSMH. Twenty years after her baptism, in 1739, Rose, "Negro Servant to Rev. Joseph Sewall" made her confession of faith and became the tenth black member of OSMH. In 1762, "Rose, Servant to Joseph Sewall D.D." married "Negro James, Servant to Mr. Jonathan Simpson."[39] Over the course of over 40 years, from baptism, to full membership, and then through marriage, Rose's life showed that Christianization of the enslaved at OSMH was in no way incompatible with the ongoing maintenance of the slave system.

Sewall's co-pastor at OSMH, Thomas Prince, likewise adopted the belief that Christian faith would create a gentler form of slavery. Prince is perhaps most famous today for the enormous library that he accumulated and kept in the steeple of OSMH which now constitutes one of the most important collections of the Boston Public Library. Far more cerebral in bent than Sewall, he nonetheless had an emotionally charged, traumatic early life experience with slavery which left him with intimate knowledge of the full moral hazards of its practice. In March of 1709, Prince joined the crew of the *Thomas & Elizabeth* for a voyage to Barbados, and he kept a journal during his journey.[40] His voyage was provoked by scientific curiosity, and he filled much of the journal with meteorological observations. Yet in Barbados, he felt compelled to record the state

[39] I once again acknowledge my gratitude to Emily Ross (2022) whose work on reconstructing family groups of black families at OSMH and placing them in a convenient reference format has made my own in this area so much the easier.
[40] Thomas Prince, *Thomas Prince Journal, 1709–1711*, P-110, 1 reel (microfilm), Massachusetts Historical Society.

of enslavement that he saw there, and his description is insightful enough to be worth quoting in full:

> J*—& saw the most affecting spectacle in the world.
>
> 'Tis computed that in this Island, to no more than 8000 Whites, there are no less than 45,000 negros, all absolute slaves, till kind Death wrests them out of the hands of their Tyrannical Masters. But Alas! That miserable [people] are intensely restrained from Reflecting on themselves & Thinking on a future state; they know no interest but theirs that own them, when without Ingress[?], all their Strength & Labor & the Time also, except that which the supreme Governor has mercifully reserved for himself: Then they are at Liberty to Enjoy their own Thoughts & to Regale themselves in the mean pleasures of a brutal appetite & which scarce reach any farther than a Drowsy Joy for the Transitory Intermission of their Slavery.
>
> They it is, who endeavor to Drown or Forget their…. Cares, by the most Frantic amusements they can imagine. But their Spirits are so abject & Feeble and their minds so effectively Debased, that they can neither think of nor Relive any Refined Delight, but charm or rather Doze them with their most Prodigious expressions of a confused folly as can search [or] lay claim to the greatest of pleasures.
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> Their rendezvous was at the Place of their Revival, their Entrance into another World, which they have such a Faint Prospect of, as they are loath to lose that miserable life, till rendered by the Barbarianism of Christians almost intolerable. And they yet shall run the risk of a Future Reckoning, and in the meanwhile think it impossible that the almighty shall be severer to them than to the Mortals.[41]

Prince preserved for us one of the more harrowing depictions of Caribbean sugar plantation slavery, notable because he focused not on the physical brutality of what he witnessed, but on the psychological and spiritual toll on the enslaved, on their debased minds and their seeming loss of ability to even experience pleasure. Most strikingly, Prince left the reader in no doubt of what was to blame for this abject state: "the Barbarianism of Christians."

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[41] Thomas Prince deliberately employed eccentric spellings and punctuation in his Journal ("'m" for "them," "eibsolute" for "absolute," etc. to the point where a straight-forward transcription of his words renders the text almost unintelligible. I have standardized and corrected his spelling in the passage above and in some cases have changed his wording to make his text read more smoothly in modern English. It is in that sense a translation, and in the interest of transparency I have included the original text as an appendix to this study.

Prince sailed from Barbados to Britain, where he spent several years as a country pastor. Despite his traumatizing experience in the Caribbean, neither in Britain nor upon his return to Boston did Prince become an abolitionist. Like Joseph Sewall, he too became an enslaver and used his position as pastor to set an example of how to be a Christian enslaver who would not stoop to the barbarism he had witnessed in Barbados. In 1728, "Lucy Manoel a ~~free~~ negro woman, who dwells with Mr. Prince" was baptized at OSMH. As was always the case during these years, Joseph Sewall made the record of Manoel's baptism, and the fact that he was apparently not sure of Manoel's legal status may indicate that Prince was treating her with a great degree of latitude. Prince eventually decided to extend that latitude to full manumission, as ten years later, Joseph Sewall married "James Basset & Lucy Manwill, both free Negroes." No other enslaved person bound to Prince was recorded in the OSMH records and there were no enslaved people mentioned in 1758 in his will, so he may well have decided to give up on the practice of enslavement entirely following the release of Lucy from his service.

Over the course of their several decades serving the OSMH pulpit together, Sewall and Prince only occasionally and obliquely touched upon the condition of the enslaved, and their messages were nearly always addressed to the enslaver and were usually couched in terms of religious duties to the entire household taken together. In 1716, quite early in his pastorate, Joseph Sewall gave a series of sermons that when published functioned as a virtual manifesto on this subject called *That Joshua's Resolution Would be Revised*[42] which is best understood as Sewall and

[42] Joseph Sewall, *Desires That Joshua's Resolution May Be Revived: Or, Excitations to the Constant and Diligent Exercise of Family-Religion: Being the Substance of Sundry Sermons* (Boston in N.E.: Printed by B. Green, for Samuel Gerrish at his shop on the north side of the town shop, 1716). Accessed on the Evans Early Imprint Collection, University of Michigan.

Prince's baseline expectations for heads of enslaver families at OSMH. In *Joshua*, Sewall made those standards clear:

"WHAT are the Duties incumbent on such as have the Charge of Families? How should they use their Indeavours, that Religion and the Power of Godliness may be kept alive, maintained and encreased in their Houses? For Answer,

"THE Heads of Families should take care to Instruct their Houses, and to Teach them the good Knowledge of the LORD, His Mind & Will. They should look to it that their Children and Servants be taught to know the LORD, and what it is He requires of them, that so they may Serve Him….

"(1) THE Heads of Families should take care that their Children and Servants be taught to Read….

"(2.) THEY should take care to Catechise their Children and Servants….

"(3.) THEY should back and enforce their Instructions with solemn Warnings and Exhortations…."

Sewall made two further demands of household heads in *Joshua* which were particular to their enslaved men and women. He expected enslavers to grant time and space to the enslaved for the solitary practice of religion at home, accusing those enslavers who did not make such allowances as guilty of theft from God himself, writing "Our Servants are not so ours, but they are the LORD's still, and GOD expects that part of their time be daily devoted to His more immediate Service; so that if we refuse to grant convenient time for such Duties, we rob GOD of His due." He also made it clear that he expected to see all of the enslaved people of his congregation at the meetinghouse on Sundays: "They must see that they do not Command or Allow their Servants to Work on the LORD's-Day. And it is their Duty also to use their Authority to Restrain them from Play and vanity; yea, from such Recreations as may be Lawful on other days." For Sewall, neither the desire of the enslaver for work nor the need of the enslaved for rest would excuse an absence from the meetinghouse on Sunday.

In *Joshua*'s sermons, Sewall set high expectations for the household heads of his congregation, and the question remains whether his advice was descriptive or prescriptive, and if the latter, whether his prescription was taken. Here the demographic history of OSMH's black community reviewed in the first section of this study proves instructive. Prior to Sewall's pastorate, OSMH had only baptized one black congregant. In the ten years following the publication of *Joshua* in 1718, 30 black and indigenous adults and children had been baptized in the church. Since there was no notable population pressure or outside cultural stimulus for this surge in baptisms, the most probable cause for the black community's increased presence in the records of OSMH was a deliberate campaign on the part of Sewall and Prince to improve the opportunities for religious devotion for enslaved people both at the meetinghouse and at home, of which *Joshua* was one facet. Black people themselves were not the target audience of this campaign; instead, it was the enslaving class who were enjoined in the name of their own Christian propriety and reputation to facilitate the Christianization of their bound labor.

Some of these enslavers either ignored their pastors' expectations entirely or else were unable to force their religious practices upon their enslaved men and women. One sign of noncompliance came in the form of the absence of the names of the enslaved people from the household in the baptism and membership records of the congregation. The household of OSMH member and pew owner Thomas Fleet provides perhaps the most glaring example of such an absence. Fleet printed the *Boston Evening-Post* and numerous other publications from his home at the corner of the Cornhill and Water Street and was also proprietor of the Cross & Crown tavern at the same location. Fleet's own fame has been eclipsed in recent years in favor of one of his enslaved people, Peter Fleet. A talented woodcut artist who signed some of his own works, one recent scholar has suggested that Peter Fleet may have also exercised some editorial control

over the *Evening-Post* itself.[43] Peter Fleet was far from the only enslaved person in the household; when Thomas Fleet died in 1758, his probate inventory recorded five other enslaved people, including a 33-year-old woman named Venus and four children between the ages of fourteen and three named Pompey, Caesar, Fanny, and Abram.[44]

None of the six enslaved people in Fleet's household for whom we have record were baptized at OSMH either as children or adults. Fleet never arranged for Venus, who was likely the mother of at least some of the children in the household, to marry the children's father.[45] The absence of infant baptisms in a household with at least four enslaved children points to negligence on the part of Thomas Fleet. The failure of the two enslaved adults to take part in OSMH's ritual life in contrast suggests agency, especially in the case of Peter, who clearly was able to exercise some autonomy in his work for Fleet. If Peter was indeed taking an editorial role in his enslaver's newspaper, then he surely had the ability to read a catechism and make an affirmation of faith, and so the fact that he was never baptized at OSMH points to the probability that he did not want to be. The Fleet household, likely for a variety of reasons, failed to live up to the standards for the Christianization of the enslaved set by OSMH's pastors. The open question, unanswerable at this juncture, is how typical that experience was.[46] The records of baptisms and covenanting,

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[43] Justin Pope, "A Slave at the Press: Peter Fleet and Reports of Slave Unrest in the *Boston Evening-Post*, 1735–1758," *Slavery & Abolition* 42, no. 4 (2021): 691–709.

[44] Suffolk County, MA: Probate File Papers, Case Number 11882.

[45] In 1751 Thomas Fleet took out an advertisement in his own newspaper for "A very likely spry and healthy Negro Woman, not more than 24 or 25 years old, that has lived in Boston most of her Days, and can do all sorts of Houshold Business very well. She is offer'd to Sale for no other Reason but her frequent Pregnancy." *Boston Evening-Post*, October 28, 1751, 1. Based on their ages at the time of Thomas Fleet's probate inventory in 1759, the advertisement is likely describing Venus, perhaps in the wake of her pregnancies with Pompey and Caesar.

[46] There may yet exist a source that could answer that question. In 1865, the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* received and published two pages of extracts from a diary kept by Thomas Fleet's daughter, Mary. The diary has never resurfaced. Mary Fleet,

which always included both the names of the enslaved and the enslaver, stand as a monument to those households that succeeded in attaining the standards set by *Joshua*.

There is no record of Sewall or Prince directly addressing the enslaved people in the OSMH congregation from the pulpit during the first two decades of their dual pastorate. The outpouring of popular religious enthusiasm in the black community that accompanied the Great Awakening changed their approach—at least for a time. Sewall and Prince were both champions of the movement of the spirit witnessed in Boston in the early 1740s, with Prince acting as a historian of the revival events in Boston. According to Prince, he and Sewall invited George Whitefield to preach at OSMH for the first time on September 20th, 1740. Prince was particularly struck by Whitefield's appeal to the congregation's people of color, noting that he "distinctly applied his exhortations to the elderly people, the middle aged, the young, the Indians and negroes; and had a most winning way of addressing them."[47] Whitefield, for his part, approved of the spiritual condition of the black people he met in Boston, writing that "Family worship, I believe is generally kept up. The negroes, I think, are better used, both in respect of soul and body, than in any other province that I have yet seen."[48] A week after preaching at OSMH, Whitefield met with Massachusetts Royal Governor Jonathan Belcher, perhaps the most prominent member of the OSMH congregation at the time, who made a special request of Whitefield: that he preach to "a great number of negroes on the conversion of the Ethiopian (Acts VIII)."[49] One can only speculate if Whitefield spoke to his black audience in the governor's own meetinghouse.

"Extracts from the Diary of Ms. Mary Fleet of Boston, 1755–1803," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 19 (1865): 59–61.

[47] Thomas Prince, *An Account of the Revival of Religion in Boston in the Years 1740–1–2–3* (Boston: Kneeland and Green, 1743), 8. Accessed on archive.org

[48] George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 483. Accessed on archive.org.

[49] Ibid, 464.

In March of the following year, Gilbert Tennant made a preaching tour of Boston, and he appealed to a similarly diverse audience. Prince wrote that in the wake of Tenant's visit, "there repaired to us many boys and girls, young men and women, Indians and negroes, heads of families, aged persons; those who had been in full communion and going on in a course of religion many years."[50] After years of working to bring religion to the enslaved of Boston through the agency of their enslavers, Prince observed a religious movement that had taken on a life of its own and emanated from religious experiences in the black community itself. "In this year, 1741, the very face of the town seemed to be strangely altered…." he wrote, "….Even the negroes and the boys in the street surprisingly left their usual rudeness: I knew many of these had been greatly affected, and now were formed into religious societies."[51] The enthusiasm on the streets found its way into the ritual rhythms of OSMH, as the early 1740s marked the highpoint of black participation in the life of the church. In the first half of the 1740s, Sewall and Prince baptized and covenanted 16 black adults, all but one of them enslaved.

It was at this apex of black participation at OSMH that Joseph Sewall delivered his one recorded sermon in which he addressed the black people of his congregation directly. The sermon was likely delivered on April 26th, 1741, at a Sunday service where Cornwall, the enslaved man of John Ellery, made his confession of faith and became the thirteenth full black member of OSMH's church. Sewall's comments should be read in that context, reflecting not just on black and indigenous participation in the congregation in a general sense, but on the specific example of covenanting that Cornwall had just set. Sewall wrote:

Nor shall I forbear to exhort our Indians and Negroes to submit to Christ, and stand on his Side. Your Names indeed are not reckoned in our Muster-Rolls; but tho' our Lord needs none, he alone is able to subdue the Enemy, and whatever Instruments are used by him, his is the Power

[50] Prince, Op. Cit, 19.
[51] Ibid, 24.

and the Victory; yet I say, He condescendeth to accept the Service of the meanest, who are willing heartily to espouse his Cause. Now then, that God has bro't you out from the dark Places of the Earth, where Satan had his Seat, to a Land of Gospel-Light, where it is declared that the Son of God was manifest in the Flesh, and hath redeemed a People to God by his Blood, out of every Kindred, and Tongue, and People, and Nation; seeing this is the happy State of Things, despise the Slavery of the Devil, shake off the Chains of Darkness in which you have been bound, and cry to your Saviour, that you may be delivered from the Bondage of Corruption, into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God. Come over to Christ, and you shall also overcome, and sit down with him on his Throne.[52]

Sewall's sermon, viewed as a defense of racial inequality and the institution of slavery, was an ironical tour-de-force. Sewall called his black and indigenous audience to "shake off the Chains," "be delivered from the Bondage," and claim "the glorious Liberty," spiritual goals that were only made possible because God, acting through the agency of the slave trade, had "bro't you out from the dark Places of the Earth," so that he might "condescendeth to accept the service of the meanest." Such deliberate and pointed co-optation of the language of liberation suggests that Sewall's words were not meant merely as encouragements to piety on the part of the enslaved but were also confronting a discourse which posited that liberty found in Christ might in turn lead to the liberty of the enslaved. Sewall, like Prince, approved of the outward manifestations of Christianity that he witnessed in the countenances of his black congregants, but he made absolutely clear to them that their service to God would be expressed through their service to their white enslavers, just as Cotton Mather had argued years before.

Over the course of their long co-pastorate, neither Sewall nor Prince ever showed signs of softening their defense of enslavement in its properly conducted Christian form. Yet by mid-century, there were some among their flock who began to show doubts. In 1739, a year before

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[52] Joseph Sewall, *The Holy Spirit Convincing the World of Sin, of Righteousness, and of Judgment, Considered in Four Sermons: The Two Former Delivered at the Tuesday-Evening Lecture in Brattle-Street, January 20th & March 3: The Other at the Old-South Church in Boston, April 17 & 26, 1741* (Boston, 1741), 130. Accessed on Evans Early Imprints, University of Michigan.

he encouraged George Whitefield to preach to a black audience in Boston, Governor Jonathan Belcher wrote to a British correspondent about slavery in Boston, "Indeed, I was alwayes in that way of thinking, that no part of mankind was made to be slaves to their fellow creatures…. Nor do even Christians treat them much better than they do their horse & other cattle."[53] Belcher clearly found himself unimpressed by the efforts of Christian enslavers at OSMH, although he was himself an enslaver and built much of his fortune from the slave trade. Like the Fleets, none of the enslaved people in Belcher's household were ever baptized, married, or became members of the church, perhaps indicating that Belcher viewed the Christianizing efforts of enslavers as a form of hypocrisy in which he would not partake.

It took another generation for the pews of OSMH to seat a genuine abolitionist. James Otis married Ruth Cunningham in 1755, and in doing so also married into one of the most respected and wealthy families at OSMH.[54] Otis never made the confession of faith to become a full member, but he was listed as a pew owner and was a member of the committee of the congregation that in 1758 informed Thomas Prince's successor, Alexander Cumming, of his election to the pastorate.[55] As was the case for a number of men of his generation, his anti-slavery arguments developed as a consequence of his support for the right of white colonists to resist Parliamentary taxation. Otis couched his objections to slavery in an Enlightenment discourse on universal natural rights that had not been available to earlier generations at OSMH or indeed to

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[53] *The Belcher Papers, Volume II*, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 6th ser., vol. 7 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1894), 410. Accessed on archive.org

[54] The OSMH church bell, which still rings on Sunday mornings in the steeple of Old South Church in the Back Bay, was given in the memory of Ruth Cunningham's uncle, Timothy, in 1730.

[55] *Church records, 1669-1767*, Old South Church in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library, 127 (155).

anyone who lacked the depth of Otis's reading. After citing Montesquieu's arguments against slavery, Otis wondered:

> Does it follow that tis right to enslave a man because he is black? Will short curl'd hair like wool, instead of christian hair, as tis called by those, whose hearts, are as hard as the nether millstone, help the argument? Can any logical inference in favour of slavery, be drawn from a flat nose, a long or a short face. Nothing better can be said in favor of a trade, that is the most shocking violation of the law of nature, has a direct tendency to diminish the idea of the inestimable value of liberty, and makes every dealer in it a tyrant, from the director of an African company to the petty chapman in needles and pins on the unhappy coast.[56]

It is telling that Otis's only reference to Christianity in this pamphlet came in this passage, where he cast the defenders of slavery as those who defined their own hair as "Christian." Otis was likely referring to the Christians that he knew most intimately, the ones he saw each Sunday at OSMH. By the time Otis wrote these words in 1764, black baptisms and new memberships at OSMH had slowed to a trickle; during the entire decade of the 1760s, the church would welcome only one new black member into its ranks. Otis may thus have been reflecting on the failure of the Great Awakening to create the conditions for a long-term racial rapprochement through Christ.

Otis's natural rights-based critique of enslavement influenced an entire generation of Bostonians, including one of his own pastors. Pastor John Bacon, along with his co-pastor John Hunt, had one of the shortest tenures of any OSMH minister, lasting less than two years from September of 1773 until the destruction of the Meeting House during the occupation of Boston in 1775. In 1772, before Bacon's official appointment as pastor, "David, Servant to the Reverend Mr. Bacon," was baptized at OSMH, continuing a tradition started by Sewall and Prince of

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[56] James Otis, *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved. By James Otis, Esq; [Four lines in Latin from Virgil]* (Boston: Printed and sold by Edes and Gill, in Queen-Street, 1764), 29. Accessed on Evans Early Imprints, University of Michigan.

pastors setting an example of Christianizing their enslaved people. When Bacon parted ways with OSMH during the war, he left the ministry entirely, moving to Stockbridge and reinventing himself as a lawyer and politician.[57] In 1779, while serving as a delegate to the State Constitutional Convention, he spoke out against voting restrictions targeting black and indigenous men, which had been broached on the theory that such persons were foreign elements within the body politic of Massachusetts:

> What, unless it be their color, constitutes them as foreigners? Are they not Americans? Were they not (most of them at least) born in this country? Is it not a fact, that those who are not natives of America, were forced here by us, contrary, not only to their own wills, but to every principle of justice and humanity? ….These people, Sir, by our present constitution, are intitled to the same privileges with any of their fellow-subjects; and by what authority we are now to wrest these rights and privileges from them, I cannot conceive, unless by dint of mere power.[58]

Bacon's belief in 1779 that natural rights could only be wrested from black people by brute force was a world away from the ideology of Christian enslavement that had held sway at OSMH for decades and which had posited that the enslaved served God by serving their enslavers. Over the course of the years leading up to the American Revolution, discourse about slavery had begun to change at OSMH. But how?

Fortunately, perhaps the most articulate and insightful source on popular opinion about enslavement during the revolutionary period was himself a long-time member of the OSMH community. Jeremy Belknap (1744-1798) grew up in the congregation and made his confession of faith in 1763, thus witnessing in his childhood the critical years between the Great Awakening and the start of the liberty movement. In 1795, Belknap answered a series of queries on the

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[57] Bacon had without question the most interesting post-pulpit career of any OSMH pastor, serving as a State Representative, State Senate President, US Congressman, and Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

[58] *The Independent Chronicle and the Universal Advertiser*, September 23, 1779, Boston, MA, 1.

subject of slavery put to him by St. George Tucker of Virginia, in which he identified a shift in public opinion as the means that brought about its end:

> The mode by which slavery hath been abolished there? Whether by a general and simultaneous emancipation ? or at different periods? or whether by declaring all persons born after a particular period free?
>
> The general answer is that slavery hath been abolished here by public opinion; which began to be established about the time of the stamp-act. Several persons who had before entertained sentiments opposed to the slavery of the blacks, did then take occasion publickly to remonstrate agt the inconsistency of contending for our own rights Liberty & at the same time depriving other people of theirs.[59]

Despite his own religious upbringing and vocation—he was, for a time, pastor of the Long Lane Meeting House in Boston—Belknap made no mention of the role of Boston churches in the disestablishment of slavery, aside from noting that "The Quakers were Zealous against it." For Belknap, "popular opinion" emerged from the inconsistencies inherent in the rhetoric of a liberty movement adopted by an enslaving society and from a Christianity that called for universal brotherhood and mercy but upheld an inherently brutal system. Abolitionist sentiment at OSMH were rooted in the discomfort of those essential contradictions.

By the close of the colonial period, the congregation at OSMH had begun to overgo an ideological change in their approach to enslavement. Yet there is little evidence that their attitude towards blackness followed a similar trajectory. OSMH's ministers consistently referred to black people as "wretched" and "mean." In 1701, Samuel Sewall recalled being insulted by Cotton Mather using provocatively vulgar, racially charged language: "Mr. Cotton Mather came to Mr.

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[59] Jeremy Belknap, *Queries Respecting Slavery in Massachusetts with Answers* (manuscript draft, April 1795), Jeremy Belknap Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, 17. Accessed on the MHS website. The text above is the MHS's transcription of the document.

Wilkin's shop, and there talked very sharply against me as if I had used his father worse than a Neger; spake so loud that people in the street might hear him."[60] A few days later, Sewall made a peace offering to Mather's father, once again making a negative comparison to black people, writing "I sent Mr. Increase Mather a Hanch of very good Venison. I hope in that I did not treat him as a Negro." Such casual derision for black people found expression decades later in the diary of 12-year-old OSMH congregation member Anna Green Winslow, whose disappointment in a new hat led to fear that passersby would think her a black girl from the North End black enclave of New Guinea: "I hope aunt wont let me wear the black hatt with the red Dominie—for the people will ask me what I have got to sell as I go along street if I do, or, how the folk at New guinie do?"[61]

During the colonial period, black congregants joined a white enslaver community at OSMH which regarded their submission to Christian doctrine as a necessary proof of the moral efficacy of Christianized slavery. At no point did the meetinghouse encourage the public expression of an alternative theology based on egalitarian or abolitionist principles, and in that sense was no different from just about any other non-Quaker house of worship in colonial America. The vast gulf that separated white enslavers from black enslaved people was based on a fundamentally racist ideology that was reinforced and given real power through the deployment of material wealth. To that subject we now turn.

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[60] Sewall, *Diary of Samuel Sewall*, Volume I, 454.
[61] Anna Green Winslow, *Diary of Anna Green Winslow, a Boston School Girl of 1771*, ed. Alice Morse Earle (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1894), 8. Accessed on Gutenberg.org.

III. Consumption, Charity, Money, and Race at OSMH

Entering OSMH today, one is confronted by the severity of unadorned walls painted white, an anachronistic Greek Revival aesthetic that masks the opulence which would have confronted congregants when they entered the building at the time of its construction in 1730. Throughout the colonial period, the congregation of OSMH was notable for its extraordinary wealth which it spent flamboyantly. Its members included many of Boston's merchant elite and a number of the chief political power brokers of the colony. When Wheatley wrote of Christianization as a process of becoming "refin'd" and joining "the'angelic train," she may well have been speaking metaphorically, but at least in part she was referring to the seemingly supernatural refinement of the wealthy white people who gathered in the pews on OSMH's floor.

As Mark Peterson has persuasively argued, for the Puritans of OSMH, religion and wealth were not inimical forces; in fact, the continuing success of their church in the later 17th and early 18th century was made possible through the massive accumulation of capital.[62] The construction of the original Cedar Meeting House in 1669, the first Puritan meeting house in Massachusetts built on private land from entirely private funds, was itself an ostentatious statement of the congregation's resources. According to Peterson's calculations, the Boston tax census of 1687 revealed that the 239 households affiliated with OSMH were on average about 29.5% wealthier than people affiliated with other congregations.[63] Throughout the ensuing century, the congregation continued to rank among Boston's wealthiest. Following the Boston fire of 1759, churches throughout the town were asked to make voluntary contributions to assist the fire's victims. In the Thanksgiving collection taken in November 1759, OSMH ranked second in

[62] Mark A. Peterson, *The Price of Redemption: The Spiritual Economy of Puritan New England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997).
[63] Ibid, 70-74.

Boston at £744 13s[64] and at a public fast day in the following April, they contributed £1862 9s 4d. to the fire relief effort, once again the second-largest sum among Boston churches, just behind the Brattle Street Church.[65] Throughout the period under study, OSMH remained one of the churches most favored by Boston's merchant elite.

The faces of many of those wealthy congregants can be seen today thanks to their patronage of portrait artists, giving a visceral impression of the wealth of the congregation that can no longer be glimpsed in the architecture of the building itself. In the first generation of the church, Major Richard Savage and Martha Patteshall and her child sat for Thomas Smith, their pale forms almost overwhelmed by rich lace and shining silks.[66] When the London-trained painter John Smibert unexpectedly arrived in Boston in 1729, he became a member of OSMH, in part because of his Presbyterian Scottish roots, but no doubt also because of the many potential clients with disposable income to be found there. He soon painted canvasses for Samuel Sewall and the three Oliver brothers and would then move on to paint a host of other OSMH congregants.[67] Robert

[64] *Old South Meeting House Treasurers' Accounts*, Congregational Library MS, 1.
[65] Ezra Stiles, *Extracts from the Itineraries and Other Miscellanies of Ezra Stiles, D.D., LL.D., 1755–1794: With a Selection from His Correspondence*, ed. Franklin Bowditch Dexter (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916), 120.
[66] Thomas Smith, *Major Thomas Savage*, 1679, oil on canvas mounted on Masonite, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Thomas Smith, *Mrs. Richard Patteshall (Martha Woody) and Child*, 1679, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
[67] John Smibert, *Judge Samuel Sewall*, 1729, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; John Smibert, *Daniel, Peter, and Andrew Oliver*, 1732, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Throughout his career, Smibert kept a record of every painting commission he ever received. It has been published as John Smibert, *The Notebook of John Smibert*, ed. Richard H. Saunders and Barbara Luck (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1969).

Feke,[68] Joseph Blackburn,[69] Joseph Badger,[70] and John Singleton Copley[71] all found lucrative subjects to paint at OSMH, with each sitter displayed in their most sumptuous finery. In 1894, Alice Moore Earle, the editor of the Diary of Anna Green Winslow, accused her subject of being full of "youthful vanity" and a "vain little Puritan devotee" for her constant and recurring focus on her own clothes and those of her fellow OSMH congregants.[72] Based on all of the portraiture that has come down to us from the colonial era of OSMH, Winslow's vanity should be interpreted less as a function her youth and more as a product of the status-conscious culture of conspicuous consumption that dominated the floor pews at OSMH.

Popular tradition has long assumed that some of this largesse trickled down to the black community through the collection plates at Boston's churches. This is not to suggest that most black people at OSMH at any given time would have been charity cases. Most of the covenanted black members of OSMH were enslaved and would have been the financial responsibility of their enslavers during the time of their enslavement. Yet those who were freed rarely had a chance to accumulate appreciable capital, particularly if they were manumitted late in their working lives. In that case, we should expect to see black members of the church join the list of elderly

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[68] For example, Robert Feke, *Isaac Winslow*, c. 1748, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Robert Feke, *Sarah Hubbard Fayerweather*, c. 1740–1752, oil on canvas, Historic New England; Robert Feke, *Thomas Fayerweather*, c. 1740–1752, oil on canvas, Historic New England

[69] For example, Joseph Blackburn, *Isaac Winslow and His Family*, 1755, oil on canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

[70] For example, Joseph Badger, *Thomas Dawes*, c. 1764, oil on canvas, Harvard Art Museums; Joseph Badger, *Thomas Cushing*, c. 1745, oil on canvas, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

[71] For example, John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. Alexander Cumming, née Elizabeth Goldthwaite, later Mrs. John Bacon*, 1770, oil on canvas, Brooklyn Museum; John Singleton Copley, *Andrew Oliver, Jr.*, c. 1758, oil on copper, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

[72] Anna Green Winslow, *Diary of Anna Green Winslow, a Boston School Girl of 1771*, ed. Alice Morse Earle (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1894), iv. Accessed on Gutenberg.org.

and indigent white people for whom charity was regularly set aside. Nian Shen-Huang, in her analysis of charity at Boston's churches, summed up the criteria for charity as follows: "Neither Boston nor any other town offered unbounded charity for the poor. Recipients of assistance not only had to be members in good standing of a church, they also had to suffer unusual circumstances. Poverty alone did not make them eligible for support. The able-bodied poor, especially if "idle," were largely denied any benefits."[73] The OSMH sacramental contribution book, kept by the Congregational Library, recorded charitable donations in unbroken succession from 1708 to the end of the colonial period, listing the names of those who received charity.[74] Additionally, the library holds another manuscript detailing the records of a private, clandestine bank founded in the 1730s by a group of men who were not officially affiliated with the church but who nonetheless drew many of its members from it.[75] As in the deacon's account book, the governors of the bank listed by name the objects of their charity. Examining these two sources will tell us whether black members of OSMH could rely on the assistance of wealthy white congregants when they fell on hard times.

There were yet other ways that money circulated at OSMH. The Congregation owned a campus in Boston consisting of three buildings: the meetinghouse itself, and the parsonages of the two pastors. These buildings demanded upkeep. The parsonages required fuel and provisioning for the pastors and their families. All of these things had to be paid for, and members of the congregation at OSMH were frequently the people who were awarded the contracts. The work of maintaining OSMH, in short, was used as a mechanism to redistribute charitable

[73] Nian-Sheng Huang, "Financing Poor Relief: In Colonial Boston," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 8 (2006): 75.
[74] *Sacramental Contribution, 1708-1798,* Congregational Library MS.
[75] *Unnamed Charitable Society 1734-1771,* Congregational Library MS.

donations back into the community's economy. The OSMH treasurer's accounts, which are held at the Congregational Library and given unbroken records of such expenses and payments, begin in 1747, run through the end of the colonial period, and can tell us the extent to which the black community as OSMH benefited from work that the congregation could provide them.[76] Finally, there were material benefits that accrued to all people who became members of OSMH, regardless of race. Most particularly, full members of the church enjoyed dining on bread and wine at the Lord's Table. This section will evaluate the evidence to discern whether church attendance and membership on its own provided the potential for material benefits to black congregants.

The Sacramental Contribution book recorded on the right hand the total contribution taken from pew tax each Sunday, and on the left hand the two types of expenses in which that money was immediately invested: the provisioning of the elements of the Lord's Table (bread, wine, and the upkeep and cleaning of the communion silver), and the provisioning of poor relief. Poor relief was generally distributed three or four times each year, with the largest disbursement occurring in November, around the time of Thanksgiving, when those gathered in the meetinghouse would be called upon to make a special collection for the poor of the congregation. The Thanksgiving poor relief effort was first instituted in October, 1734 at a meeting of the brethren of the church, where they voted that "the money collected to be dispos'd of to charitable & pious uses, as this Church shall determine."[77] Accordingly, the impressive sum of £99 7s was

[76] *Treasurer's Accounts 1747-1827*, Congregational Library. This MS has sometimes been referred to in the literature as the "Deacons' Account Book."
[77] *Church records, 1669-1767*, Old South Church in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library, 65 (93).

collected a few weeks later, and in the following years the Thanksgiving collection would never dip below £90.

The indigent population of the congregation remained stable over the years, averaging about 15 to 25 names at each round of disbursement. Sometimes a specific reason was given for why an individual was receiving charity, but in large part the conditions went unsaid, because the individuals in question were typically elderly women and had become long-term charity cases who were always remembered at each disbursement. Sometimes the purpose of the disbursement was specified, typically for the provisioning of fuel, but in large part the money was distributed without a particular function in mind. Finally, it should be noted that the amount of money distributed was never exorbitant, ranging from about 15 shillings for a typical disbursement, to up to 4 or 5 pounds for unusual circumstances where an individual was facing emergency conditions.

In large part the same individuals, the vast majority of them white widows, appeared as objects of charity in each round of disbursement, sometimes for periods lasting decades. These widows can be difficult to identify because they were designated only by their last names, but there was one white widow on the charity list whose identity is quite clear and who can serve as an example of the type. On December 7th, 1755, the sacramental contribution book recorded that the ”Wido Bodman” was “added to charity collection,” and granted £6 16s 6d.[78] This new addition to the charity list was Catherine Bodman, who had become a member of OSMH in 1747.[79] She had been born Catherine Treadway and had been married to Captain William

[78] “Sacramental Contribution.” The SC book at this point is unpaginated, and one has to search by date.
[79] “Admissions, 1669-1855,” Old South Church in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library, 40.

Bodman in 1726 by the Reverend Timothy Cutler at Christ Church in the North End.[80] Captain Bodman featured in numerous newspaper advertisements of the 1730s and 1740s, sailing to ports ranging from the Carolinas to Antigua, and selling goods at Warehouse Number 4 on Butler's Row near Faneuil Hall.[81] The couple must have joined the OSMH community by 1742 at the latest, because it was in that year that their enslaved woman, Flora, accepted the baptismal covenant there. When the deacons drew up a listing of pew-holders in 1752, the Bodmans jointly occupied floor pew number eighty-four with the Dupees.[82] The Bodmans were pew-owners, enslavers, and outwardly prosperous—in short, model members of OSMH, making Catherine exactly the sort of person whom the congregation would want to care for when the death of her husband left her destitute.

Between the time of her first appearance on the widow's charity list in 1755 and her death in 1769, Catherine Bodman appeared as a recipient of charity fourteen times. She very likely received charity on other occasions, as record-keeping became spotty in the 1760s on account of Joseph Sewall's growing senescence. She died without a will, and her probate inventory reveals that she lived in fairly comfortable lodgings that included a large looking glass, walnut and mahogany furniture, 11 gowns and other clothes, two featherbeds, and all of the accoutrements needed for serving tea and coffee.[83] Her death notice in the Boston newspapers said that she

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[80] Record Commissioners of Boston, *Boston Marriages from 1700 to 1751* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1898), 130.
[81] For example, "To be sold by Bodman and Shipton, at their Warehouse No. 4 in Butler's Row, at reasonable Rates, for ready Money, Provisions, or West India Goods, Broad Cloths of all sorts, Kerseys, Half Thicks, embossed Cloths, Buttons and Mohair, Iron Work for Ships Uses, Iron Crows, a Set of New Rudder Irons for a Ship of about 150 or 160 Tons; and sundry other Goods lately imported." *Boston Evening-Post* (Boston, MA), October 25, 1742, 2.
[82] *Standing Committee Records, 1735-1819*, Old South Church in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library, 58.
[83] Suffolk County, MA, *Probate File Papers*, case 14551. Accessed on americanancestors.org.

lodged with a young woman who may have been a caretaker for her.[84] Because she did not own her lodgings, her estate was only valued at £53 1s, making her impoverished indeed by the standards of the average OSMH floor pew-owner. Yet the contents of the probate inventory reveal a comfortable, genteel poverty, one that had been financially supplemented over the years by regular infusions of cash from her beloved church. For white widows, there were considerable benefits to being part of the OSMH community.

In contrast, the black people of OSMH were almost never named in the distribution of charity. On January 31st, 1725/26, 15 shillings was given to "Negro Juno, sick."[85] Sixteen white members of the congregation received charity on that day. Seven, like Juno, received 15 shillings, two received less, and six received more. This Juno is likely the same Juno who was baptized in 1718 and became a member in 1720 and at that time was enslaved by Katherine Winthrop. If so, her inclusion in the charitable giving list six years later would indicate that she had been freed. Having once disbursed money to a black person, the congregation decided not to repeat that experiment again until 1758, when they awarded 18 shillings to "the widow Cornwall," who was almost certainly Katherine, the black widow of a formerly enslaved OSMH member named Cornwall.[86] They then waited until March 3, 1771 to award 3 shillings to "Meriah, a Negro."[87] No Meriah or any variant of that name appears among the ranks of the baptized or covenanted at OSMH at that time, but she could well be one of several enslaved Marias who appeared in records of the 1730s and 1740s.[88] On October 18th, October 27th, and November 19th, 1773, the

[84] *The Boston Weekly News-Letter* (Boston, MA), August 24, 1769, 1
[85] *Sacramental Contribution*, 21r.
[86] Ibid, 40r. The case of Cornwall and Kate will be discussed in full in the final section of this report.
[87] Ibid, 65r.
[88] To explore these possibilities, see Ross, "Report on Members of Color."

congregation awarded Dinah respectively 3 shillings, 3 shillings, and 14 and ½ pence.[89] On the first two occasions, she was noted as "sick." During these years, the church would sometimes distribute funds to the poor that were not designated for particular individuals, and it may well be that some black people received money through the means of that general fund. Nonetheless, we can say with confidence that from 1708 to 1775, OSMH distributed exactly £2 2s 14.5d to named individuals in the congregation's black community, less than one-third of what they once awarded Catherine Bodman on a single occasion.

This number stands in stark contrast to the vast amount of money that members of the OSMH congregation earmarked for distribution to the poor during the colonial period. During those years, the church received 24 large gifts totaling several hundred pounds in value from the estates of white congregants with specific stipulations that the money be spent on the poor.[90] OSMH's member rolls included some of the most business-savvy people in New England who were excellent money managers. A number of them joined forces in 1734 to found a secret joint-stock society for "the benefit of any of our number their heirs or nearest relations that by the providence of God may be reduced to low circumstances or others that may stand in need of the same."[91] Their number included John Scollay and Thomas Cushing, at the time two of OSMH's five deacons. Since their work began in 1734, it is possible that they had been inspired by the Thanksgiving charitable collections that had begun at OSMH in that same year.

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[89] *Sacramental Contribution*, 70r.
[90] Joseph Ballard, *Account of the Poor Fund and Other Charities Held in Trust by the Old South Society, City of Boston: With Copies of Original Papers Relative to the Charities and to the Late Trial Before the Supreme Court of Massachusetts in 1867* (Boston: Press of G.C. Rand and Avery, 1868),11-19. Ballard helpfully summarizes each bequest.
[91] *Unnamed Charitable Society 1734-1771*, 2.

November of 1746 saw the death of John Ellery, an OSMH member of the company. He left the organization £200 Old Tenor "to be by them disposed for pious & charitable uses in such a method as they shall think to be most for the Glory of God and ye Interest of our Holy Religion."[92] Ellery was the son of an enslaver, and his father's enslaved man Cornwall had been baptized, made his confession of faith, married, and had four children at OSMH. Cornwall died about two years after Ellery's death, and no one at the joint-stock society applied any of Ellery's funds to the relief of Cornwall's widow and surviving children. Meanwhile, the stock of the company appreciated so successfully over time that in 1756 the trustees declared "the Joint Stock of this Society is at present two [sic] large to be without great difficulty & inconvenience improved in Trades. Therefore that the present Trustees are Directed to Invest the said Joint Stock in their hands as soon as Possible in this Government's notes."[93] In 1761, the trustees reiterated their charitable purpose, writing "That all the above Stock belonging to this Society…. be appropriate only for the Relief of Persons in poor & indigent circumstances, preference being always given to our own Members, their Heirs, or Relations and that it be disposed of for no other use."[94]

The charitable preferences of the company trustees were spelled out plainly in their records, for each donation was recorded with the name of the trustee who requested it. Only two black people received donations during the course of the company's existence: "Fortune, a negro" who was granted £2 on November 3rd, 1739, and on July 4th, 1747, £2 was given to "a negro woman named Sarah Saul, and then another £3 to "Sarah Saul, a poor free negro," on February 4th,

[92] *Unnamed Charitable Society 1734-1771*, January 7th, 1747.
[93] Ibid, January 1st, 1756.
[94] Ibid, January 1st, 1761.

1747/48.[95] Their sponsors were respectively John Welch and Thomas Baxter, neither of whom were congregants of OSMH.[96] OSMH trustees sponsored many charitable contributions, and it is notable that some of them were the names of the same white widows who appeared with great frequency in the charity rolls of the OSMH Sacramental Contribution manuscript. It seems that the joint-stock company trustees replicated many of the giving patterns to which they were exposed on Sundays.

Those patterns almost completely excluded black people from the distribution of charity. The OSMH treasurer's account book reveals similar racially exclusive practices in how the congregation contracted out work, revealing a system where white people were paid by OSMH at high rates for work that was then performed by their enslaved people, while free black people were compensated at significantly lower rates for the same sort of labor. Hence the OSMH treasurer's accounts on April 11th of 1748 recorded "cash to Mr. Loring for sawing & piling 30 Cord for Mr. Prince £17 5s." A similar payment a year and a half later revealed that Mr. Loring was not the one performing the labor for which he was being paid, with an entry in October of 1749 for a payment "to [OSMH pastor] Mr. Prince for Mr. Loring his negro sawing the last yrs wood" for £27 10s."[97] "Mr. Loring" in this case was probably Jonathan Loring, a long-time OSMH member whose profit from cutting Thomas Prince's wood would significantly defray the cost of the tax on his floor-pew.[98] His enslaved woman, Margaret, had accepted the baptismal covenant in 1738. In 1752, Loring died, and another enslaver, Gamaliel Rogers, now took over

[95] Ibid, on the dates specified. This MS is not paginated.
[96] Welch was a furniture-maker whose most famed accomplishment in modern times has been the carving of the so-called "Sacred Cod."
[97] *Treasurer's Accounts 1747-1827*, Old South Church in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library. This MS is not paginated, but it is in chronological order.
[98] "The Widow Loring" appears in the 1752 pew list in Pew 37. *Standing Committee Records, 1735-1819*, Old South Church in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library, 58.

the work of cutting Thomas Prince's firewood, as an entry recorded "cash paid Mr. Rogers for his Negro's sawing 56 cord," for £39 11s. Two years later, in February 1755, Rogers was paid £38 12s for "his negro's sawing & piling minister's wood."

The treasurer's account books reveal that Prince and Sewall had an expense account of several hundred pounds per annum, which they used to richly pay contractors who were frequently members of their own church. Despite this largesse, they would not pay black people at similarly generous rates. On May 27th, 1751, the treasurer's book recorded "cash pd Negro's for Emptying the Vault at Doctor Sewalls." The black workers were compensated 20 shillings. In September of 1756, they were once again paid to clean out the vault, and this time received 11 shillings. On October 24th, 1766, John Rowelstone was given £2 to pay "3 negroes ½ day each in clearing away Dirt in Meeting house yard," which works out to about 13 shillings each.[99] John Rowelstone was a white man whose title was never given in the OSMH records, but who seems to have functioned as sexton and general laborer for the meeting house and pastors. In contrast to the hired black men, Rowelstone was comparatively well compensated. In 1752, for example, he was paid a salary of £36, divided into two payments, for his services. He also regularly submitted invoices to the town of Boston for the public service of ringing Old South's bells,[100] and a widow Rowelstone, almost certainly related to him, was included on the charity lists in the OSMH sacramental contribution book for many years. The salaried compensation of John Rowelstone, viewed in the context of the poorly paid free black men occasionally employed by the church, shows that the congregation of OSMH put a premium on white skin when valuing labor.

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[99] Unpaginated *Treasurer's Accounts*, on the dates specified.
[100] "Boston: Town Papers: vols. 6-7: 1759-1776" (finding aid), Boston Public Library, accessed on the BPL's website.

So much the more did the congregation value the labor of their pastors. Writing about an earlier period of OSMH history, Mark Peterson argued that the congregation of OSMH "maintained the ministers as richly as anywhere in New England."[101] The treasurer's accounts show that through the 18th century, OSMH's ministers were maintained in a style appropriate to the worldly wealth of OSMH's floor-pew society. Between March and June of 1752, for example, Pastors Sewall and Prince were paid together at the rate of £80 every two weeks, for total compensation of £720 over a period of less than four months. Peterson wrote that the congregation benefited from such high compensation because it freed their pastors from the constant worries about money that bedeviled so many rural ministers, putting them at liberty to spend all of their time serving their flock.[102] Yet the pastors also played critically important roles in OSMH's continuing drama of conspicuous consumption, and it was important that they be able to perform their assigned parts with the conviction that only a lifestyle of abundance could inculcate. The liturgical apex in this drama, and the time when high Calvinist theology met the pleasures of sheer sensory indulgence, came when the pastors administered the ordinance of the Lord's Table. It was also the moment when white and black church members appeared most equal, both in the eyes of the Lord and of one another, for they ate and drank the same food and drink from the same pattens and chalices.

OSMH had been founded in 1669 in part from a fortune in silver. John Hull, one of the twenty-eight founders of the meeting house, had served as master of the colony's first mint from the time it opened in 1652, and he and his partner, Robert Sanderson, used the excess silver they collected at the mint to make silver objects for private customers and religious societies. Hull's

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[101] Mark A. Peterson, *The Price of Redemption: The Spiritual Economy of Puritan New England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 124.
[102] Ibid, 123-125.

daughter, Hannah, married Samuel Sewall, making Joseph Sewall Hull's grandson. The collection of beautiful silver objects that Sewall used to prepare the ordinance of the Lord's Table in the 18th century included at least one cup and one beaker made at his grandfather's mint,[103] and the congregation continued to receive communion silver as pious gifts from wealthy members throughout the 18th century. Altogether, twenty-nine different drinking vessels for Communion have come down to us, consisting of nine cups, ten beakers, three tankards, six flagons, and a basin.[104] These vessels were used without distinction of class, gender, or race among members of the church, although the standard practice in colonial America no doubt remained true as OSMH as well, whereby communion would be taken in order of social standing, with black people descending from the galleries only after the white people had taken their fill.[105]

There was no danger that the Lord's Table would ever run out of provisions, for the financial records show that the members of OSMH consumed an extraordinary amount of communion wine. For example, on April 28, 1719 (a little over two weeks after Easter in that year), the congregation purchased 32 gallons of Canary wine for £10 16s and 32 gallons of green wine for £6. On June 2nd, they paid a Mr. Bristow £3 9s 4d for an unspecified amount of "Sacrament Bread." On the 21st of August, a Mr. Winslow was paid "To cash" for 31½ gallons of Canary wine, for a total of close to 100 gallons of wine purchased in that single year.[106] In April 1712,

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[103] A complete description of OSMH's colonial silver, along with photographic plates, is found in E. Alfred Jones, *The Old Silver of American Churches* (Letchworth, England: Privately printed for the National Society of Colonial Dames of America at the Arden Press, 1913), 47-59.

[104] Ibid, 47.

[105] Personal conversation on 3/10/2025 with Professor Richard J. Boles, who has read through the records of every colonial church of New England and the Middle Atlantic for which records are extant.

[106] *Sacramental Contribution*, Congregational Library, 16r, 17r. In the British Empire in the 18th century the standard gallon was the Queen Anne gallon, which is the exact equivalent of a modern United States gallon.

Joseph Sewall recorded that 67 OSMH brethren voted on his election to the pastorate;[107] in February 1727/28 he recorded 61 brethren voting to build the new meetinghouse.[108] Assuming that non-voting women made up over half of the communion-taking membership at this time, perhaps about 150 people would have eligible to drink communion wine on, at most, six occasions over the course of the year,[109] working out to a little over a half-gallon of wine per member in the year 1719. The records do not always specify the amount of communion wine and bread purchased from year to year, but communion wine remained one of the congregation's biggest regular expenses throughout the colonial period. The wine would come in numerous varieties: Canary, green, white, Madeira, and even brandy. At OSMH, their cups always ran over.

Peterson has written quite movingly about how for Samuel Sewall the use of communion silver was "constitutive" of his "religious sensibility."[110] Sewall ruminated on the communion silver in his diaries, which gave Peterson an opportunity to query what these sumptuous material objects meant in the context of a religious culture often stereotyped as austere. The black community at OSMH has not left us any written thoughts on what it meant for them to take communion, but we can imagine it from their perspective. Looking down from the upper gallery, the gleaming silver beckoned from far below. As the Lord's Table was prepared, richly dressed white men and women prepared to take an abundance of bread and wine. Black people had been promised by their pastors that if they refined themselves by studying their catechism and

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[107] *Joseph Sewall Papers*, 1703–1716, *Joseph Sewall Diary*, P-363, reel 8.4 (microfilm), Massachusetts Historical Society, 34.
[108] *Church records, 1669-1767*, Congregational Library, 19 (47).
[109] I have found nothing in the records that states exactly how often OSMH prepared the Lord's Table. There was some variety in the custom between congregational churches of the period, with six times per year at the high end of the scale.
[110] Mark A. Peterson, "Puritanism and Refinement in Early New England: Reflections on Communion Silver," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (April 2001): 324.

scripture, then they too could join that angelic train. For some, that may well have meant a journey on an inwardly directed, deeply spiritual conversion experience. For others, it may simply have meant the desire to assume for a few fleeting seconds the otherwise unattainable status of equality with white people, an equality that meant a stomach full of bread sopped up with a flagon full of wine. Unlike for some white members, becoming a member at OSMH for black people would not lead to the possibility of receiving charitable donations or remunerative work. But it did mean an opportunity to come closer to Christ through communion. Failing that, it brought the warmth of wine.

On February 9th, 1761, the brethren and congregation of OSMH met together and voted to host an "entertainment" to commemorate the installation of their new pastor, Alexander Cumming.[111] A committee of deacons was appointed to make provision for the occasion. This event would put OSMH's lavish culture of consumption on full display before all of Boston, and in doing so cause it some controversy. On March 2nd, the *Boston Gazette* published a report on the event, in which it described

> "….A very sumptuous and elegant Entertainment for the Elders and Messengers that assisted: To which his Excellency the GOVERNOR, who honor'd the Ceremonial of the Instalment with his Presence, was also invited; together with a considerable Number of the principal Gentlement of the Town, and some of the Country. One House, tho' capacious, not being sufficient to accommodate so large a Number of honourable and reverent Guests on such an Occasion, two, or more, were provided for that Purpose. The principal Entertainment, however, (which is said to have been very grand) and consequently the greatest Concourse of People, was at the Rev. Dr. Dewall's own House. And it is concluded, that many poor People were the better for what remained of so plentiful and splendid a Feast; such was hardly ever known among us on a similar Occasion."[112]

[111] *Church records, 1669-1767*, Congregational Library, 95 (269).
[112] *Boston Gazette* (Boston), March 2, 1761, 2.

At least one reader of the *Gazette* found OSMH's lavish display disturbing enough to feel that it warranted public reproach.[113] That initial condemnation touched off a series of complaints and rejoinders published in that newspaper over the course of two months, culminating in an exposé of the catering at the entertainment and its expense:

> "….as I had an opportunity to converse with one of the messengers who was at the entertainment, and who is a particular acquaintance of one of the caterers, let the public know the dishes that were served up, and the cost of this moderate refreshment, so that everyone may judge whether is was a sumptuous elegant entertainment, or only a common dinner. There were six tables, that held one with another 18 persons; upon each table a good rich plum pudding, a dish of boiled pork and fowls, and a corned leg of pork with sauce proper for it, a leg of bacon, a piece of à la mode beef, a leg of mutton with caper sauce, a piece of roast beef, a roast line of veal, a roast turkey, a venison pasty, besides chefs' cakes and tarts, cheese and butter. Half a dozen cooks were employed upon the occasion, upwards of twenty tenders to wait upon the tables; they had the best of old cider, one barrel of Lisbon wine, punch in plenty before and after dinner, made of old Barbados spirit. The cost of this moderate dinner was upwards of fifty pounds lawful money."[114]

That description of the entertainment put an end to the public debate about it. The extent of the church's profligacy having been exposed in gluttonous detail, it seemed that its defenders retired to ponder their appetites in silence.

The entertainment of 1761 was in a number of ways a metaphor for OSMH's place in the greater Boston community. A house of God, it was also a house of very wealthy white men who enjoyed spending money on displays of their own magnificence. The moral question the people of Boston asked in 1761, and the question that has concerned us in this report with particular respect to black men and women, is whether we can agree with the *Gazette* writer's statement that "many poor People were the better for what remained of so plentiful and splendid a Feast."

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[113] *Boston Gazette* (Boston), March 9, 1761, 1

[114] *Boston Gazette* (Boston), May 11, 1761, 1. In fact, there does not seem to be any extant record of the cost of the entertainment. Record-keeping in both the sacramental contribution book and the treasurer's book was particularly sparse in 1761.

One would love to know whether the black members of the congregation were invited to sit on equal terms at one of the six tables of eighteen people. If not, were they then given a lesser table of their own? If they were not given a table of their own at the principal entertainment, were they invited to one of the entertainments at one of the other houses on that occasion? If they were not allowed to attend the party as guests, were they allowed at least to work as caterers and earn some money? If they could not work at the party, were they allowed to take home leftover food and wine afterwards? If they were allowed to take home food and wine, could they go to the front of the line, or did they have to wait until poor white men and women chose their portions first? That these questions must be asked at all underlines a central reality of the black experience at OSMH: this was a house to which they had been invited, but whether slave or free, they would remain guests, always serving at the whims of the white slave-owning class by whom and for whom it was established.

On April 7th, 1772, 12-year-old Anna Green Winslow was writing a letter to her mother about her young friend and fellow OSMH congregant, Polly Vans. She was interrupted by her aunt, Sarah Deming, who instructed her niece to write to her sister-in-law that she "takes the liberty to remind you, that Miss Vans is a sister of the Old South Church, a society remarkable for Love."[115] It was a pithy statement of what Deming valued about this society that had nurtured her from the time she was a child. That love is indeed reflected in the diary entries of her niece, who despite suffering through the travails of an awkward adolescence spent away from her birth family, managed to find at OSMH a circle of friends and a supportive community. There were no black people in that narrative. There were certainly black people in the meeting house, located in the

[115] Anna Green Winslow, *Diary of Anna Green Winslow: A Boston School Girl of 1771*, ed. Alice Morse Earle (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1894), 55. Accessed on gutenberg.org.

upper gallery just above her aunt's pew near the northeast corner of the floor. The charitable and financial records of OSMH bear witness that whatever love radiated from that pew, it did not travel upward.

IV. Consequences and Case Studies

This study has thus far spoken in generalized and at times oblique terms about how racial hierarchies affected the lives of black congregants at OSMH. It should be clear that this format has not been a matter of choice but rather is a function of the sources available and what they can tell us. With the exception of Phillis Wheatley, it is not possible to tell the entire life story of any black congregant at OSMH in great detail. Nonetheless, there are a few cases where we can draw some lessons from the rough outline of their lives, and other cases where their lives come into full narrative resolution at a particularly critical instance that can provide us with some insights about the conditions under which they lived. In this section, we will examine some of those rare instances, and we will particularly focus on what can be gleaned about each subject's relationship to OSMH. We will ask how the trajectory of each subject's life was changed or not changed by their relationship to OSMH and by the people that they met there.

A. Cornwall and Catherine

The story of Cornwall and Catherine has already been mentioned on two occasions in the last section of this report. Cornwall first appeared in the records of OSMH on the day he was baptized in 1726, when he was designated the "Servt. to Capt. Ellery." Captain Ellery was John Ellery, sr., who had himself become a full member of the church in 1719, joining his wife Jane, who had made her confession of faith in 1712; their one surviving child John Ellery, jr., became

a member in 1734, marking the entire family as deeply committed to their faith.[116] Ellery was a ship's captain, and according to numerous newspaper articles published between the 1710s and 1730s, his journeys often took him to Barbados, Antigua, and other points in the West Indies, giving him many opportunities to purchase someone like Cornwall. The ideology of enslavement preached at OSMH, predicated on the notion that a Christian enslaver would be judged good if he treated his bondspeople with "respect agreeable," might well have appealed to Ellery, given that a large part of his income was derived from supplying and receiving goods from Caribbean sugar plantations. Cornwall's baptism took place during the first great wave of black involvement in the ritual life at OSMH, when Joseph Sewall's preaching, aimed at convincing enslavers to cultivate their enslaved people's Christianity, first bore first fruit.

That message did not take hold in the household of Katherine's enslavers, Joshua and Elizabeth Winslow, for neither Kate nor any other enslaved people from that household were ever baptized at OSMH.[117] When Joshua Winslow died in 1769, there were four enslaved people in the household, putting the family at the prolific end of Boston's enslaver scale.[118] Joshua and Elizabeth had both been baptized and raised at the meetinghouse, and in fact Elizabeth's grandfather, Thomas Savage, had been one of the 28 founders of the church, making her a third-generation congregant when she was baptized in 1704. Despite this sterling OSMH pedigree, neither Joshua nor Elizabeth ever became members of OSMH. They seem to have been exactly the sort of couple that was envisioned by the Half-Way Covenant on which the church was founded. They were financially committed to the institution and always maintained a floor pew,

[116] Portraits of both John and Jane Ellery have come down to us and are in the collection of the Connecticut Historical Society.
[117] Portraits of Joshua and Elizabeth, both by Smibert, are in the collection of the Boston Athenaeum.
[118] Suffolk County, MA, *Probate File Papers*, case 14559. Accessed on americanancestors.org.

they had all of their children baptized there, yet for whatever reasons, they could not bring themselves to make the confession of faith. Based on that behavior, they would not seem like the sort of enslavers capable of catechizing their bondspeople and vouching for their Christian education, and for that reason it should not surprise us that none of their bondspeople appear in OSMH's records.

Katherine's first appearance in the records of OSMH came in March of 1740/41, when she and Cornwall were married by Joseph Sewall. Their marriage took place just after Gilbert Tennant's preaching tour of Boston, and one can only speculate that the religious enthusiasm on the streets had stoked their desires to solemnize their relationship. Less than two months later, Cornwall made his confession of faith and became a full member of OSMH. As noted in the first section of this report, his was the second-longest time on record between making the baptismal covenant and owning the covenant, with a total of 14 years and 11 months separating the two events, making it likely that his religious life had lain dormant for some years until it was roused by the Great Awakening. Since Joseph Sewall preached on the subject of race and addressed black people directly perhaps for the only time in his long career on this day, there can be no doubt that he enthusiastically approved of Cornwall's statement of faith.

Following a long illness, John Ellery died on July 17th, 1742.[119] By then, Katherine either would have been very pregnant or already a mother, as her first child was baptized at OSMH just a couple of weeks later. Awareness of that pregnancy may have influenced Ellery's decision to free Cornwall in his will, which he had composed in December of the year previous: "My will

[119] "Last Tuesday died here, after a long Indisposition, Capt. John Ellery, who was formerly a very industrious and noted Sea-Commander; but of late Years applied himself to Merchandize, and was well respected among us. He died last Tuesday." *Boston Evening-Post*, July 26, 1742, 3.

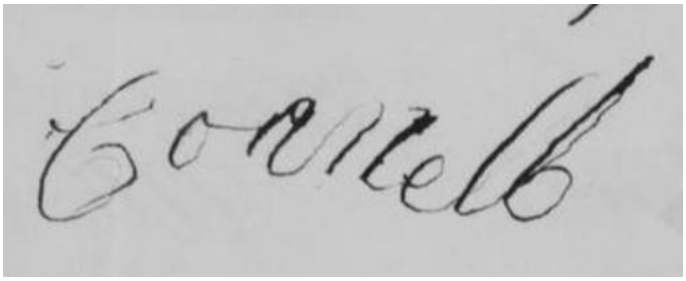
is and I hereby order that my negro man servant named Cornwall have his freedom immediately after my decease."[120] Yet there were two other enslaved people in Ellery's will who were not freed. His "negro man servant named Glocester" was willed to remain in bondage to the executor of the will (his son, John Jr.) for the Biblically sanctioned span of seven years and then be freed, a decision which no doubt reflects on Ellery's religious education at OSMH. A third enslaved person, "my negro girl Kate," was willed in perpetuity to Ellery's niece, who had lived with him for ten years prior to the issuing of his will. Since Katherine was recorded as "Kate" at the time of her marriage to Cornwall, there is a chance that Ellery had recently purchased her from Winslow in a bid to keep the couple together and she is in fact the same young woman mentioned in the will.

If that were the case, Katherine did not remain enslaved for long, for by the time Cornwall and Kate's second child was baptized in 1745, they were both listed as "free-negroes." By that time also, John Ellery, Jr. had died at Hartford, Connecticut, to which he had recently removed. His will, far more than his father's, speaks to the deep religious convictions of the family. He willed a silver tankard that had belonged to his father to the South Church in Hartford for the serving of Communion and gave a gift to the North Church at Hartford for the provisioning of the Communion plate. He also made provision for Glocester, reasserting that he would be manumitted seven years from the day that his father's will had been proved "if he desires it." He also made a small gift to Glocester, "the value of £10 old tenor in tools or instruments, at cash price, suitable for the business he may follow for an honest livelihood; also the value of £10 more old tenor in wearing apparel suitable for him, according to the judgement of my

[120] Suffolk County, MA, *Probate File Papers*, case 7781. Accessed on americanancestors.org

executors."[121] If the father was any example to the son, then we can guess that John Ellery, sr. may have provided Cornwall with tools, clothes, or some similar small help when he manumitted him.

One of the largest provisions in John Ellery, Jr.'s estate was the £200 granted to the charitable society back in Boston of which he had been a founding member, which his will reserved for "pious and charitable uses in such methods as they think to be most for the glory of God and ye interest of our holy religion." As related in section three of this report, the trustees did not register this bequest until the following year. Not long after, Cornwall and Katherine's young family needed help. Cornwall was dying. His will was proved in December of 1748, one of the only wills for a free black man ever filed in colonial Boston.[122] He signed the will, showing that he not only knew how to read, but had received some rudimentary education in writing as well; it is reproduced on this page. His will asks that his funeral arrangements and debts be paid for, with the remainder of his estate willed to Katherine. No property was itemized and no amount of money was specified in the will, attesting to the couple's relative poverty. Cornwall wrote that Katherine should use her inheritance for her "subsistence and support and bringing up my boy Joseph an infant and such child and children as my wife Katherine may have by me," indicating that their two first children, Katherine and Prince, had been lost to them. The future child that Cornwall referenced in the will, Lucy, would be born two



[121] Charles William Manwaring, *A Digest of the Early Connecticut Probate Records*, vol. 3, *Hartford District, 1729–1750* (Hartford, CT: R.S. Peck & Company, 1906), 544-546
[122] Suffolk County, MA, *Probate File Papers*, case 9153. Accessed on americanancestors.org.

months after Cornwall's death, in February 1749. The record did not mention that the child's father had already passed.

It must have been a sad and affecting sight indeed on the cold morning when Katherine descended from the upper gallery down to the baptismal font with Lucy in her arms, perhaps leading two-and-a-half-year-old Prince with her free hand. Her husband had been a presence at OSMH for over twenty years. Not only was he gone, but the enslaver family that had cultivated his Christianity had likewise passed on. Perhaps because there were no longer any Ellerys remaining to take up the cause of the family, Katherine was not added to the list of pious widows who could expect regular help from the congregation. Years later, in 1748, Katherine became one of just three named black people to receive financial aid from the church when she accepted a gift of 18 shillings. The reason for this one-time act of generosity was left unstated. If her two children still lived at that time, they would have been aged nine and twelve.

The story of Cornwall and Katherine is important for this study because it shows in relatively rich documentary detail both the possibilities and limitations of the Christian ideology of enslavement preached from the pulpit of OSMH. The Ellerys seemed to have embodied the sort of enslaver piety that Cotton Mather and the Sewalls idealized. They were people who, like most people in the congregation, made at least part of their living from the slave trade and who had to make a moral accommodation with its practice, and they did so by encouraging the Christianity of the enslaved people in their household. Cornwall, for his part, embodied exactly the sort of pious enslavement that the pastors of OSMH encouraged, taking the vow of baptism when young, then taking his time until, upon mature consideration, he was ready to relate his conversion experience, learning how to read and how to write his name in the process. It was perhaps because of his good behavior and publicly avowed Christian faith that his enslaver

ultimately decided to support his desire to marry and eventually to free him. But for the early deaths of nearly every party involved, this was an enslaver-enslaved relationship that seemed to work out precisely in the sort of best-case scenario that Cotton Mather himself might have envisioned.

Katherine, in contrast, came from a less pious household, and may have received fewer opportunities for improvement at OSMH as a result. Had she not married Cornwall and had children with him, she might very well have been lost entirely to the record. Following his passing, she once again disappeared from the record, and seemed to be all but forgotten by the white people of OSMH, only once becoming a beneficiary of charity. The contrasting trajectories and fates of this single married couple prove that agency was not a simple matter of willpower on the part of the enslaved; the disposition of the enslaver made just as much of a difference in final outcomes.

B. Harry & Nancy

Perhaps the most fabulously wealthy congregant at OSMH in the first half of the 18th century was Nathaniel Cunningham. In February of 1729 he gave the church what is perhaps the most long-lasting bequest in its history. Just before he died at sea, his brother Timothy willed to the congregation £200.[123] Nathaniel paid over his brother's promised funds, but came with a request of his own: that the money be used to pay for a bell for the new meetinghouse that would soon be constructed.[124] Ringing for the first time at the new brick meetinghouse in 1730, to this day the bell resounds over the Back Bay from the current Old South Church. Despite his clear love for and financial support of OSMH, Nathaniel Cunningham never made the confession of faith

[123] Suffolk County, MA, *Probate File Papers*, case 5700. Accessed on americanancestors.org.
[124] *Church records, 1669-1767*, Congregational Library, 33-34 (61-62).

at OSMH, nor did anyone in his family until his daughter Ruth (who by that time had married James Otis) became a full member in 1766. Not surprisingly, no enslaved member of his household was ever baptized either.

When Cunningham died in 1748, the contents of his house were valued at over £6000, yet it included no enslaved people. There must have been enslaved laborers there are one time,[125] as the will that he composed in 1745 included a provision that "I give and bequeath unto each of my white servants who may be in my service at the time of my decease a suit of mourning at the discretion of my executors."[126] By the time of his death three years later, Cunningham had somehow disposed of the black servants who were not worthy to receive suits of mourning. Yet there was one enslaved man whose presence would haunt him in the afterlife. In 1739, Thomas Prince had married Cunningham's enslaved man, Harry, to Nancy, the enslaved woman of Josiah Willard. At some time between their marriage and Cunningham's death, both Harry and Nancy secured their manumissions. Now free and destitute, they moved to Cambridge.

In Cambridge the couple attracted the attention of the selectmen, who learned that Harry had once been enslaved by Timothy Cunningham. When Cunningham had died, he had left £500 to OSMH for the provisioning of poor relief, the largest charitable bequest in the church's colonial history. Perhaps Cambridge had gotten wind of this donation, or perhaps they simply knew Cunningham by reputation. Either way, in 1764, sixteen years after his death, the Selectmen

[125] There is in fact one enigmatic document attesting to an enslaved man in the Cunningham house, a jail delivery from Roxbury to Boston dated October 12th, 1737, in which it was alleged that Primus, a servant of Nathaniel Cunningham, "last night at about three of the clock broke into the Dwelling House of Coll Heath at Roxburry to the Terror of the familly and against the peace & etc." One suspects there was an dramatic story here which may have contributed to Cunningham's later callous treatment of his enslaved people. *Suffolk Files*, 44938, Massachusetts Archives. Accessed on familysearch.org.
[126] Suffolk County, MA, *Probate File Papers*, case 9161. Accessed on americanancestors.org.

wrote to Peter Chardon, the executor of Cunningham's estate, looking for money to compensate for "house rent, firewood, clothing, and other necessaries, provided for Henry and Nancy, two of Nathaniel Cunningham's late of Boston, left upon the Town of Cambridge, viz: from the 1st of November 1762 to the 2nd of June 1764 amounting to Twenty-Nine pounds one shilling and eleven pence lawful money."[127] Chardon then recorded a payment to the Selectmen of Cambridge for £29 2s. In a separate ledger book (likewise included in Cunningham's probate file), Chardon recorded three further payments to Cambridge for £20 each, the last annotated as "for the future Support & Care of the Old Negro Man & Woman, which are now in good health & likely to continue many years, tho ancient." In November 1766, Chardon became so apprehensive about the financial drain on the estate that he petitioned Governor Francis Bernard for relief in the form of being granted permission to sell off part of Cunningham's real estate to defray the cost of supporting Henry and Nancy, writing that "your petitioner is very apprehensive that the said Negroes who are now in a suffering condition may perish for want of the Necessarys of life (as the winter is approaching) before the sitting of the superior court in March next."[128]

The governor and council unanimously concurred with Chardon's request.[129] We will never know if Chardon made good on his promise to pursue the matter in Middlesex Superior Court, for its records do not survive for the 1760s. What we are left with from this legal wrangling is a series of striking images. On the one hand is the opulence of what was one of the wealthiest families in New England. On the other is the utter destitution of Harry and Nancy, an elderly black couple who labored for that family for years only to be turned out of doors. The

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[127] Ibid.
[128] *Massachusetts Archives Collection*, Volume 9 (Domestic Relations), 451. Accessed on familysearch.org.
[129] *Massachusetts Archives Collection*, Volume 85 (Minutes of the Council, 1760-1770), 602. Accessed on familysearch.org

Cunninghams seemed to be among those OSMH families who did not feel the need to show "respect agreeable" to those they enslaved. And yet Harry and Nancy managed to receive from their former enslaver a greater sum of money—at least £89, according to Chardon's accounts—than any other enslaved people who had been part of the OSMH community. The cause of this windfall was neither the Christian generosity of their former enslavers nor their own self-advocacy but was instead the result of wrangling among white people over whose responsibility their welfare should be.

C. Jethro Boston & Hagar

Harry and Nancy were not the first black congregants from OSMH to have their fate determined by the Governor's Council. In March of 1741/42, an enslaved man named Jethro Boston petitioned the council for a divorce from his wife, Hagar. As one of the few divorces granted to an enslaved person in colonial Massachusetts, his case has attracted scholarly attention in recent years.[130] The basic facts of the case are not in dispute. Jethro and Hagar were married in September 1731, probably by Joseph Sewall.[131] According to the testimony of Jethro and his former enslaver, John Gyles of Roxbury, Jethro and Hagar were living in Gyles' house as a married enslaved couple when Hagar gave birth to a mixed-race child. Hagar admitted to Gyles that the child had been sired by a soldier named William Kelly who was then stationed at St. John's River. Sometime shortly after this incident, Jethro became enslaved to Edward Bromfield.

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[130] "Petition of Jethro Boston for Divorce, 1741," in *The Earliest African American Literatures: A Critical Reader*, ed. Zachary McLeod Hutchins and Cassander L. Smith (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021): 88-90. Hardesty, *Unfreedom*, 153-154, 160-161. Whiting, *Belonging*, 80.

[131] Record Commissioners of Boston, *Boston Marriages from 1700 to 1751* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1898), 170. The record states that Samuel Sewall performed the marriage vows, but since he had been dead for well over a year at the time of their nuptials, it was likely his son.

An independent witness, Thomas Saunders, testified that John Gyles had "used all possible endeavours to reconcile the said Jethro & Hagar but all in vain." [132]

Where scholars have differed is on the interpretation of this evidence, with Gyles typically viewed as the active white party, desperately trying to save his enslaved people's marriage, and Bromfield relegated to a passive or even absent role. Yet it was Bromfield's intervention on behalf of his enslaved man that brought this case to the attention of the Governor's Council in the first place. Bromfield had served as both a Boston Town Selectman (at a time before the construction of Faneuil Hall, when Selectman meetings took place in the Town House Council Chamber), and as a member of the Representatives' Chamber, working with the Council and Governor. Moreover, his family owned a pew on the floor of OSMH that was located right next to Governor Jonathan Belcher (who had just departed office at the time of this case), and just down the aisle from Josiah Willard, the Secretary of the Province who was serving on the Governor's Council when Jethro Boston's petition arrived there. While it is possible that Jethro Boston might have had the resources to bring his case to the Governor's Council on his own, it certainly would not have been heard had his enslaver disapproved of it. It is far more reasonable to assume that Bromfield, one of the most powerful men in Boston, drew up the petition on Jethro Boston's behalf and had probably already primed the Governor's Council to rule in his favor. In the minutes of the Council, Secretary Willard referred to the case as "Mr. Bromfield's negro's affair," attesting to the foregrounded place of Bromfield in the proceedings, even though his name never appeared on the petition.[133]

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[132] *Massachusetts Archives Collection*, Volume 9 (Domestic Relations), 248-250. Accessed on familysearch.org.
[133] *Massachusetts Archives Collection*, Volume 82 (Minutes of the Council, 1733-1753), 252, 254. Accessed on familysearch.org.

John Gyles, the former enslaver of Jethro Boston, was also a member of OSMH, but unlike Bromfield, he did not own a floor pew. In fact, we have no record of Gyles owning a pew at all, although the family of his character witness, Thomas Saunders, owned a pew in the gallery in 1767, which is the only year in which we have a listing for the gallery pews.[134] By that year Gyles was long dead. Since a long-time member like Gyles would have been expected to own a pew, it is reasonable to assume that, like his friend Saunders, his pew had been in the gallery, a location where pews cost anywhere from two-thirds to one-fifth of the price of those on the floor.[135] If that assumption is correct, then the divorce of Jethro Boston takes on an aspect of class warfare among the white people of OSMH, with the wealthy and resourceful Bromfield using his political connections to trump the claims of Gyles and Saunders.

But this case was not merely decided on the pure exercise of power. To all appearances, Bromfield also held the moral high ground. John Gyles was a local celebrity in Boston thanks to his unusual life story, which he had published in 1736.[136] When Gyles was nine years old, his family's home in Maine was attacked by Maliseets, and he was abducted. Six years later he was sold to the French, and two years after that he was ransomed to the British. In the following years, he worked in Maine as a soldier and translator. He helped to build the fort of St. George, and in fact the title of his memoirs referred to him as "commander of the garrison on St. George's River." Thus, while we cannot know the nature of the relationship between Hagar and William

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[134] *Treasurer's Account Book,* Congregational Library.
[135] *Standing Committee Records, 1735-1819,* Congregational Library. The pew prices are listed on the first four pages of this unpaginated volume.
[136] John Gyles, *Memoirs of Odd Adventures, Strange Deliverances, &c. in the Captivity of John Gyles, Esq; Commander of the Garrison on St. George's River. Written by Himself. Eight Lines in English from Homer's Odyssey* (Boston, in N.E.: Printed and sold by S. Kneeland and T. Green, in Queen-Street, over against the prison, [1736?]). Accessed through the Evans Early American Imprint Collection on the University of Michigan website.

Kelly, we can assume that, as a soldier stationed at St. John's, Kelly was known to Gyles and was probably staying at Gyle's home as his guest. Regardless of whether Hagar consented to sex with William Kelly, the Governor's Council would have judged him at least partly to blame for Hagar's pregnancy, and since he had been Gyles' guest, Gyles himself was on some level complicit.

Edward Bromfield, in contrast, was considered one of Boston's moral paragons. He served on the Overseers of the Poor in Boston for over twenty years, was a deacon at OSMH, and was granted the rare honor of a eulogy from the pulpit delivered by Thomas Prince when he died a few years later.[137] His obituary in the Boston *Gazette* called him "Attentive to the Complaints of the indigent,—diligent to maintain the good Order and publick Vertue of the Inhabitants.—Firmly attach'd to the RELIGION OF JESUS…. An affectionate Husband—a tender Father—an indulgent Master. His House was a little CHURCH, where every Thing that had the Appearance of Vice was resolutely banish'd; the Exercises of Devotion were regularly perform'd; the Religion of the Sabbath strictly observ'd: He took a conscientious Care to promote the temporal, as well as spiritual Welfare, of all committed to his Charge."[138] In short, Bromfield had not only lived up to the standard of Christian enslaver behavior called for by Joseph Sewall so many years before, but had exceeded it, for not only did he take care that everyone in his household receive the catechism and go to church, but he also attended to their "temporal" welfare, even to the point of "indulgence," far beyond the purely spiritual standard that Sewall had set.

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[137] Thomas Prince, *The Case of Heman Considered. In a Sermon on Psal. LXXXVIII. 15. "I Am Afflicted and Ready to Die, from My Youth Up: While I Suffer Thy Terrors, I Am Distracted." Occasioned by the Death of Mr. Edward Bromfield, Merchant of Boston, in New-England. April 10. 1756. Aet. 61* (Boston: Printed and sold by S. Kneeland, in Queen-Street, 1756).
[138] *Supplement to the Boston-Gazette, &c.*, April 19, 1756 (Boston, MA), 2.

There were no enslaved people mentioned in Bromfield's will in 1756, and while he was politically prominent, his will also revealed that he was not as wealthy as many of his fellow floor-pew owners. No other enslaved person owned by Bromfield appeared in the OSMH records, so there is a chance that Jethro Boston was his only bondservant. If that was the case, then his obituary spoke quite directly to the circumstances surrounding his purchase of Jethro Boston from John Gyles and his maneuvering to get him a divorce. Boston would never be baptized or become a member at OSMH, but he did remarry. Almost exactly one year after his divorce, Jethro Boston married Hannah, an enslaved woman of Captain John Wendell. Thomas Prince, the pastor who would eulogize Edward Bromfield a few years later, performed the wedding vows. In a coincidence that was surely lost on no one, Captain John Wendell was the nephew of Jacob Wendell, one of Governor's Council members who had granted Jethro Boston his divorce and made his new marriage possible.

C. Scipio Gunney

In recent years, Scipio Gunney has become one of the focal points of the public interpretation of OSMH black congregants at Revolutionary Spaces thanks to a National Park Service-funded report written by Sara Dean in 2019 and a website on his life assembled by students at Carleton College in 2022.[139] The reason for Gunney's popularity is quite simple: unlike most black OSMH congregants, he took a last name, and that unique last name can be used to positively identify him across a range of documents. Or can it? In 2021, wondering at the four marriage intentions that "Scipio Gunney" announced between 1777 and 1780 (at least three of which seem to have

[139] Sara Dean, *Report on Eighteenth-Century African and Native American Participants Old South Meeting House* (Unpublished Word document, 2019). Siena Leone-Getten, Miyuki Mihira, and Molly Schwartz, *Mapping Congregants of Color at Old South Church: A collaboration between Revolutionary Spaces and students at Carleton College*, 2022. https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/6d6e0e77bef24370989689642b1d2a73.

been brought to completion), Emily Ross argued that "it seems very unlikely he made all four marriages and more likely that one or more of them involved a Scipio Gunney Jr."[140] This "hypothetical Scipio Gunney, jr.," as Ross dubbed him, was in fact a real person who has eluded previous researchers because he was not baptized at OSMH, but rather was baptized in 1741 at his mother's enslaver's meetinghouse at Brattle Street.[141]

Scipio Gunney, jr.'s existence potentially complicates matters extensively. A free black man named "Scipio Gunney" a.k.a "Scipio Osborne" appeared four times in the records of the Boston Selectmen between December 1761 and December 1762.[142] Since Scipio,, jr. was an adult by that time, any references to "Scipio Gunney" from this chronological point forward could refer to either the son or the father. Yet there is an argument to be made that there was only ever one adult Scipio, since 18th-century Boston record-keepers frequently took care to note whether they were referring to a senior or a junior where both existed in a single community, and no record about "Scipio Gunney" ever included a generational signifier. In fact, if we read all of the extant documents on Scipio Gunney as the life of one man, it all makes a great deal of sense, without ever having to account for Scipio Gunneys in multiple locations at the same time.

Gunney entered the record on August 27th, 1741, when he was married by Joseph Sewall to Sylvia, an enslaved woman who belonged to Edmund Quincy, who worshipped at the Brattle Street Church. Gunney's enslaver at the time of his marriage was Robert Rand, a joiner who was a member of the Old Brick Church. Two months later, when Gunney was baptized at OSMH

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[140] Emily Ross, *Report on Members of Color at Old South Church and Members who Enslaved People of Color*, 2021: 8.
[141] *The Manifesto Church: Records of the Church in Brattle Square, Boston, with Lists of Communicants, Baptisms, Marriages, and Funerals, 1699–1872*. (Boston: The Benevolent Fraternity of Churches, 1902), 164.
[142] *Records Relating to the Early History of Boston: Selectmen's Minutes, 1754–1763*, vol. 19 (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1889), 172, 195, 196, 240.

with his infant son Charles on October 11th, his enslaver was listed as John Osborne. Osborne served as a deacon at OSMH, was a member of the Governor's Council for over twenty years and was altogether one of the most respected people in the congregation.[143] A month later, on November 5th, Scipio joined with John Osborne at the Brattle Street Church to serve as baptismal co-sponsors for "Scipio, negro of Mr. Quincy, 1 Y(ear)." Based on these records, it seems most likely that John Osborne became aware that Scipio and Sylvia had a young child and that another was on the way. The enslavers of neither Scipio nor Sylvia attended OSMH, but the couple may have met Osborne at one of the revival events of the early 1740s there. Osborne took an interest in them, going so far as to arrange for their marriage by his pastor, becoming a baptismal sponsor to their child, and even purchasing Scipio so that he could keep a watch over them. Osborne, in short, was behaving in precisely the paternalistic way that his pastor had preached as the Christian enslaver ideal.

Over the course of the next eighteen years, Sylvia and Scipio together sired six more children: Joseph, Isaac, Nancy, Eunice, Tabitha, and Katharine. With eight children altogether, Sylvia and Scipio were by far the most prolific black parents at OSMH. In 1758, the family's life came crashing down when Edmund Quincy declared bankruptcy. The advertisement for the public auction of his property promised "one negro man, one negro woman, and three negro girls."[144] It is presumed that the "negro woman" was Sylvia and that the "three negro girls" were Nancy, Eunice, and Tabitha. Sylvia remained in the Boston area for at least a few more months, as Katherine was not baptized until February 4th, 1759.

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[143] John Osborne would later marry Sarah Foster Hutchinson, Thomas Hutchinson's widowed mother. Edmund Quincy's daughter was Dorothy Quincy, who later married John Hancock. Thus, in a strange coincidence, Scipio and Sylvia were both enslaved by people who would become fathers-in-law to the Governor of Massachusetts.

[144] *Boston Post-Boy*, April 24, 1758, 4

It was less than three years later that Scipio appeared in Boston for the first time as a free man. At the Boston Selectmen's meeting of December 28th, 1761, the town clerk was directed "to write a letter to Capt. Western of Plymouth, acquainting him that unless he immediately secures the Town from all damage and charge that may arise by his bringing Scipio late a Negro Servant of the Honorable John Osborne Esq., now a Free Negro, and also a White Person into this Town, he may depend upon being immediately prosecuted, for his breach of Law in that respect."[145] Scipio was not unknown to the selectmen; at least two of them, Thomas Cushing and John Scollay, were both deacons of OSMH and no doubt were quite familiar with Scipio, his relationship to John Osborne, and his many children who had been baptized there over the preceding two decades. Warning out was generally the job of the Warner himself, not of the Board of Selectman, and their special interest in warning out Scipio given their personal knowledge of him suggests that relations between some members of OSMH and Scipio had soured before he began the sojourn that took him to Plymouth. At the Selectman's meeting of May, 1762 they made a census of the free black men of Boston and listed the date of their manumissions. Scipio was listed as being freed in August of 1761, and for the first time appeared with the surname "Gunney."[146]

Gunney settled back into life in Boston, but he moved away from his congregation to the North End. As first reported by Dean, in January of 1765 the Boston Court of Common Pleas awarded John Pulling £20 in damages for money that "Scipio Gunno" owed him for several cases of lemons.[147] In August of that same year he was back again in front of Judge Ezekial

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[145] *Selectmen's Minutes*, 172.
[146] Ibid, 196. "Captain Western" likely refers to Captain Eliphas Weston of Weymouth. Scipio might have spent some time at sea with him.
[147] *Suffolk Court of Common Pleas*, 1765 Jan 397, Massachusetts Archives. For this case and for the two other Commons Pleas cases, I have relied on the excellent digital photographs of

Goldthwait, this time appearing as "Scipio Gunney a free negro man of Boston…. Labourer," and now the subject of a suit of ejectment for failure to pay a full year's rent for his lodgings on Middle-Street.[148] Apparently the mid-1760s had been a financially rough time in Gunney's life, as he was once again sued in January, 1773, this time by John Sword, a merchant who claimed that Gunney owed him money for lemons, a salmon, and olives, dating back to 1764.[149]

By the end of 1765, he had moved back to the South End, where he was recorded by Robert Love in his warning book as a "trader" who was subletting rooms to other black people in a rented house in the South End.[150] On July 3, 1767, Love found "Eunice Gunion," who "belongs to Barnes" staying with Scipio in the South End. "Barnes" in this case must have referred to Seth Barnes, the star witness in the sordid lawsuit of 1770 that gives the Scipio Gunney story much of its pathos.[151] According to testimony taken from Barnes, he had purchased Eunice from John Hunt of Watertown in October of 1768 (a date that seems to be flatly contradicted by the record of Robert Love), at which time he was informed that Scipio Gunney was her father. He then negotiated a price for Scipio to purchase Eunice from him. Because Gunney did not have all of the money needed to buy his daughter upfront, he borrowed money from a man named Estes How, agreeing that he would pay How back with interest. How took Gunney's money and then sold his daughter away anyway, and Gunney sued How both for the money that he owed him

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the original documents taken by Dean and included in her report. The John Pulling in this case is likely the same man who joined Robert Newman in putting out the signal-lanterns from Christ Church on the evening of April 18th, 1775.

[148] *Suffolk Files*, Massachusetts Archives, 86515, 86559. The plaintiff was John Clark of Waltham.

[149] *Suffolk Files*, Massachusetts Archives, 91310, 91402

[150] Cornelia H. Dayton and Sharon V. Salinger, *Robert Love's Warnings: Searching for Strangers in Colonial Boston* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 113-114; Ch. 5, Fn. 31; Ch. 6, Fn 59.

[151] *Suffolk Court of Common Pleas*, 1765 Jan 397, Massachusetts Archives. 1770 January 187.

and for the damage done by the loss of his daughter. He placed the value of all of his suffering at £50. The court attached the estate of How for the full amount.

Barnes and How stood at center stage in this drama, but they were marginal figures in Boston society who have left almost nothing to memory. Two other figures lurking in the background of this case had far greater impacts on its resolution and on the lives of Scipio and Eunice and are more richly documented. John Hunt, despite living in Watertown, was in fact a member of OSMH. Based on escaped slave advertisements, he was an active participant in Boston's slave market. He also owned pew #9 on the floor of OSMH, separated by just one pew from John Osborne at pew #7.[152] If Osborne's concern for Scipio and Sylvia's family was unabated at the time of Edmund Quincy's bankruptcy in 1758, we can easily imagine him trying to find a local buyer for Eunice so that the family could remain together, and Hunt would have fit the bill. Osborne's involvement also explains the timing of Hunt's sale of Eunice to Seth Barnes. Barnes said that he purchased Eunice in October of 1768; John Osbourne's death had been announced in the Boston newspapers on September 1st.[153] If Hunt had been holding on to Eunice at the insistence of Osborne, his death would have freed his hand. It also explains the discrepancy in Robert Love's record; in July of 1767, Barnes did not yet legally own Eunice, but he may have been promised her by Hunt and was already playing the part of the enslaver. Such a long lead up to Eunice's legal handover also explains another confusing aspect to this story, which is why Barnes would purchase Eunice only to immediately enter into negotiations with Gunney to sell

[152] *Standing Committee Records, 1735-1819*, Old South Church in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library, 58. At the time of the pew survey of 1767, the Hunts' pew is listed as vacant, meaning that they had fallen behind in their pew tax payments, which may indicate a shift in their sentiments towards OSMH just prior to the sale of Eunice.
[153] *Boston News-Letter*, September 1st, 1768,1.

her. If Barnes had known about Gunney's relationship to Eunice for some time, it would have placed him in an ideal position to financially exploit his love for her.

There was a second well-known character in this drama who came to Gunney's aid. By the time of this lawsuit, Gunney had become familiar with Boston's Court of Common Pleas as a defendant on two occasions. Yet his own familiarity was not enough for him to manipulate this system on his own. He needed to be able to call on someone powerful. The person who took Seth Barnes' deposition was none other than Edmund Quincy—the very man who had enslaved his wife and children and had later had to auction them off when he went bankrupt. The person who composed Gunney's lawsuit was Samuel Quincy, Edmund Quincy's nephew. Years after watching Eunice grow up in his household, Edmund still felt some sense of responsibility to her. Gunney's lawsuit stated that he was "motivated by Humanity & parental affection," an assessment made by Quincy after knowing Gunney and his children for decades. While we do not know the fate of Eunice, we can say that Gunney was able to call on powerful allies in his time of need and to have his day in court, allies who understood his motivations intimately.

In April of 1772, Scipio Gunney was a poor man who lived on the margins of Boston society, yet he still felt enough at home at OSMH to make his confession of faith, over thirty years after he had first been baptized there. In his life story, we can see why. There were men like John Hunt in the meetinghouse who would callously treat his own family as mere marketable objects. Yet there were others, like John Osborne and Edmund Quincy, who had acted at strategic moments during his life to come to the aid of him and his family. The God of OSMH would not countenance the end of slavery, but its pastors demanded that white men mitigate the conditions of the enslaved. Occasionally, they did.

E. Phillis Wheatley

This report began with Phillis Wheatley and it is altogether fitting to end with her as well. During her all-too-brief period of fame, Wheatley was among the most celebrated black people in the British Empire. Today, she is recognized as the foremost poet of the era of the American Revolution. Yet in her time at OSMH she would walk up the two flights of stairs to the upper gallery along with all of the other relatively anonymous black people who have populated this study, and she received no special treatment from her fellow black congregants or the white people on the floor. She was subjected to the same messages from the pulpit and the same degree of respect or lack thereof from the enslaver class of the meetinghouse. That environment had a profound effect on Wheatley's poetry, much of which was suffused with her projection of a Christian persona that she performed on Sundays before a critical white audience at OSMH. The following brief overview cannot even begin to scratch the surface of the superabundant scholarship on Wheatley;[154] we shall attempt simply to contextualize her experience within the community of OSMH as it has been presented thus far in this report.

How Wheatley came to worship at the meetinghouse is an unanswered question. Waldstreicher suggested that Wheatley attended OSMH because it was an easier walk for a frail girl like her, that it had a large black congregation, and that it embraced the Half-Way covenant.[155] All of these attractions were equally true of the Brattle Street Church, which was

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[154] Good places to start exploring that literature would include David Waldstreicher, *The Odyssey of Phillis Wheatley: A Poet's Journeys Through American Slavery and Independence* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2023), and Vincent Carretta, *Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a Genius in Bondage* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011). This section of this report is highly indebted to both sources for their thorough surveys of all of the extant prose and poetry of Wheatley.

[155] Waldstreicher, 125. Waldstreicher wrote that OSMH had in fact done away with the "test of relation" such that new members owning the covenant no longer had to make a confession of faith, but this is not entirely correct. Samuel Blair, one of the pastors who left the church

about the same distance from the Wheatleys' home on King Street. Whatever drew Wheatley to OSMH must have had a remarkable pull on her, because evidence indicates that she began attending services there by 1765 at the latest, long before she was baptized and became a member at the estimated age of eighteen in 1771. According to Wheatley herself, her first poem was the now lost "On the Death of Dr. Sewell, when sick, 1765." Her earliest extant lines were also written in 1765 and were copied down on two different occasions by Jeremy Belknap, who believed that she wrote them when she was about 11 years old. The lines concerned the deaths of members of Oxenbridge Thacher's family.[156] All three of these people—Sewall, Belknap, Thacher—were members of the OSMH community. Belknap's retention of the poems meant, if nothing else, that Wheatley must have shown him her scribblings, and that he was entranced enough to jot them down long before she became a famed published poet. Such an intimate remembrance suggests that there were moments of meaningful contact between white and black congregants during their Sundays at the meetinghouse that were not otherwise recorded in the sources left to us.

OSMH was thus not simply the place where Wheatley chose to become a member when she reached adulthood. This was the community where she spent many Sundays throughout her adolescence. No one at the meetinghouse had a greater impact on her during those formative

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because of his disagreement with the Half-Way Covenant, had asked the church to make much stricter requirements for the confession of faith, and when he left they reverted to their former practice, by which they demanded that all new members "give to the Church Orally or in writing a profession of their repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, of their Belief of the Scriptures, and of their Resolution by the Grace of God to walk according to them." *Church records, 1768-1816*, Old South Church in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library. Since almost no black congregants at OSMH could write proficiently—with the obvious exception of Wheatley herself—the provision that allowed for a written relation in place of an oral confession would have been meaningless for a black congregant.

[156] For a discussion and the text of these early works, see Carretta, 46-47, and Waldstreicher, 45-46.

years than Joseph Sewall, on whose death in 1769 she composed the elegy "On The Death of The Rev'd Dr. Sewall," in which she wrote "I too, have cause this mighty loss to mourn/For this my monitor will not return." When Wheatley first became acquainted with Sewall, it had been fifty years since he had first preached *That Joshua's Resolution Would be Revised* in the old cedar meetinghouse to a congregation that had almost no black people active in the ritual life of the church. Over the course of his career, he had preached a Gospel of full inclusion of black people into the life of the church with a corresponding submission to white authority that was itself part of that holy covenant. Wheatley entered the meetinghouse long after Sewall's vision had become reality, and her published writings brooked no quarrel with her mentor's vision. In "On Being Brought from Africa to America," the poem with which this study began, Wheatley wrote that her enslavement was a mercy because it had provided her with the opportunity to become a Christian, so that she could "be refined and join th'angelic train." In "An Address to the Deist," written in 1767 when she was probably about 14 years old, she wrote to a deist "Must Ethiopians be employ'd for you?/Much I rejoice if any good I do," with the implication that being enslaved to Christians was itself a cause for rejoicing. Wheatley could not have channeled the words of Cotton Mather any better: "Your Servants will be the Better Servants, for being made Christian Servants. To Christianize them aright, will be to fill them with all Goodness."[157] The Christian slavery apologetics of Wheatley bear the impress of the theology of Christian slavery first argued in Boston by Samuel Sewall and Mather decades before Wheatley arrived there.

Yet when discussing Wheatley, it is important to separate the poems from the poet. While she played the role of a happy bondswoman in her publications and in her public presentation, she was ultimately a person of tremendous savvy and ambition who was laboring all the while

[157] See section two of this report.

to create a career for herself and secure her freedom. Like other black members of OSMH who preceded her, she nurtured her white connections at the meetinghouse and called upon them in her time of need. In September of 1773, when her poems first went on sale at Archibald Bell's bookshop in London, it included an attestation from eighteen men of Boston confirming that Wheatley was the author of the poems published under her name. The signatures were said to have been collected about a year before, in October of 1772. Two of the names on that list were deacons of OSMH: Andrew Oliver, the lieutenant-governor, and Thomas Hubbard, a member of the Governor's Council. She wrote poems for the families of both men. She had written "To Mrs. Leonard on The Death of Her Husband" for Thankful Leonard, Hubbard's daughter, in June of 1771, shortly before her own baptism and covenanting, when she would have needed the support of a deacon like Hubbard. Two years later, in January 1773, following the death of Leonard herself, Wheatley published "To the Hon'ble Thomas Hubbard, Esq; on the death of Mrs. Thankfull Leonard." Two months later, following the death of his wife Mary, Wheatley wrote for Andrew Oliver "To His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, on the Death of his Lady, March 24, 1773."[158] Within the span of less than three months, Wheatley composed poems to honor the deaths of patrons at OSMH who had signed her attestation and thus helped make possible the sale of her book later that year.

Some may object to drawing attention to what from a modern perspective seems like crass quid pro quo behavior on the part of Wheatley, but that would be to ignore the hierarchical social realities of the world she inhabited. Wheatley had first come to wide popular attention through her elegy for George Whitefield. She likely heard Whitefield when he preached at OSMH in August of 1770, a little over a month before his death. Her poem, no doubt, was inspired in large

[158] Carretta, 78-79, 91.

part by genuine admiration for Whitefield and her deep Christian faith. But she also used the poem as an opportunity to attract the attention of Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon, writing "Great Countess, we Americans revere/thy name and mingle in thy grief sincere." In 1773, Wheatley was preparing to travel to London to meet the Countess, who had agreed to help fund the publication of her book. Oliver and Hubbard were just two small parts of a web of patronage that Wheatley had to spin because as an enslaved woman she had no financial resources of her own on which she could call. Hubbard and Oliver, as pious Christians and products of the OSMH environment themselves, understood Wheatley's position and accepted her poems with grace.

Yet to consider the efforts to which Phillis Wheatley had to go to get her poems published in London is to be reminded of a central failure of the OSMH network of patronage. The communities of Boston and of the meetinghouse itself ultimately failed to fund the publication of Wheatley's book in Boston. Years before, the meetinghouse community had counted a number of publishers among its ranks, and had pooled their resources to fund a series of ambitious printing projects, most notably when OSMH member Daniel Henchman published Willard's *Compleat Body of Divinity* in 1725 with the enthusiastic assistance of many backers in the OSMH community.[159] The golden age of publishing at OSMH was over by 1773, but at least one family in the congregation, the Fleets, publishers of the *Boston Evening-Post*, were still in the business. Since almost all of Wheatley's poems were written on pious themes, publishing them could easily have been understood within the long congregational tradition of printing edifying tracts.

Wheatley failed to find sufficient subscribers for her project in Boston, thus forcing her to look abroad for support. Here the financial context provided in part three of this report helps to

[159] Peterson, *Price of Redemption*, 92.

explain her fortunes. OSMH was a fabulously wealthy institution populated by some of the richest people in New England, but they never could find it within themselves to voluntarily contribute to the financial wellbeing of the enslaved or formerly enslaved among them in a meaningful way. The ethic of Christian enslavement preached in the meetinghouse called on enslavers to give their enslaved people wide latitude to practice their religion, and to treat them respectfully. It never proposed that Christians ever owed their enslaved people material resources or financial restitution. Under those terms, to vouch for Wheatley's authorship of her poems would be to show "respect agreeable" to enslaved people, just as a good Christian master should. To contribute financially to her publishing project would have been to upend the proper relationship between enslaver and enslaved, where capital was meant to flow in one direction only.

Wheatley, for all of her talent and for all of her willingness to play the patronage game with wealthy white people at the meetinghouse, was treated with the same respect that was given to black widows in the congregation, which is to say with a courtesy that was never permitted to extend to financial compassion.

Conclusions

I return to the most oft-cited quotation about the experience of race at OSMH, briefly mentioned in the first section of this study, to introduce these concluding words. On August 5, 1730, just a few months after the new brick meetinghouse first opened, the members of the church voted to enforce a new discipline in the upper gallery:

> Voted, that the Deacons be desir'd to Procure some suitable Person to take the oversight of the children & servants in the Galleries, and take care that good order be maintain'd in time of divine worship; and, that a sufficient Reward be allow'd for the Encouragem't of such a Person.[160]

[160] *Church records, 1669-1767*, Old South Church in Boston, Mass., 49(77)

Nothing further was ever said on the matter, so presumably the deacons hired this person and they performed their new job so well that the issue never had to be raised at a church meeting again. Historians have an affectionate spot for this story because it is one of the few records from anywhere in colonial America that speak directly to conversations happening and community forming among black people in the galleries of a church. Yet there is extraordinary tension in these lines, for the white people of the church clearly did not want those conversations to be happening among black people. If they agreed with Pastor Sewall's interpretation of proper Christian slavery, then they would agree that enslaved people belonged in church on Sunday morning and should be there in the galleries. But just as in their enslavers' homes, in the meetinghouse they were likewise required to behave themselves in a way that was pleasing to the white enslaver class. The church was so adamant on this point that they were willing to pay someone to enforce it. As was typical of their financial praxis, they preferred to redistribute money to a white person than allow their enslaved laborers a moment of freedom.

The hiring of the overseer for the upper galleries is in many ways a metaphor for the experience of black people at OSMH in the eighteenth century. Their time in the meetinghouse was not unpleasant and it could lead to certain life improvements. Black congregants whose enslavers followed the rules laid down by Joseph Sewall and the theology outlined by his father and Cotton Mather would have learned how to read, were taught the elements of the faith, and each Sunday had an opportunity to enter a rich ceremonial space where they could meet friends in the galleries and observe a multicolored and textured social scene down on the floor. If they were so inclined, they could descend to the floor themselves to become baptized, and doing so allowed their children the same honor. A small elite who felt called became full members of the

church, and a few times a year were invited to drink from the same cups used by some of the most powerful people in Boston. For some, such as Phillis Wheatley, the experience was existentially important, and they became genuine converts to the Christian faith. Many others, such as Jethro Boston and Scipio Gunney, never revealed the extent of their faith, but they were able to leverage the respect that they had won in the church community and the relationships they had formed with powerful white men at critical moments when they needed help. For others, often those held by enslavers who did not take the call for Christian enslavement seriously, the OSMH experience meant little to them: Harry & Nancy were left destitute by the Cunninghams, while the enslaved members of the Fleet household never even bothered to get baptized.

Nonetheless, the ideal of the Christian enslaver held currency among white people at the meetinghouse and led to better outcomes for some enslaved people. This ethic of Christian enslavement is a morally reprehensible idea from our 21st century point of view, but it was one that many 18th century enslavers at OSMH took quite seriously and tried to practice. In the fullness of time, the fundamental contradictions embedded within this moral framework would give way, first in the abolition of slavery in Massachusetts and later in the United States as a whole. As the haunting words of Thomas Prince in Barbados remind us, the people who upheld this system were often quite well aware of its excessive cruelty, but they convinced themselves that slavery was an inevitable part of a divinely instituted plan for creation that could be mitigated by following Christian precepts dutifully. The story they told themselves was so effective that their descendants adopted the legend that New England slavery was paternalistic and bereft of Southern cruelty. Centuries later, those of us who labor in the field of public history continue to confront this undying myth with great frequency.

This study was conceived as a site-specific history. Despite its tight focus, it has some historiographical implications for the wider field. Through a broad study of just about every church in the New England and Middle Atlantic Colonies, Richard Boles has argued that historians should understand northern Protestant religious practice as multiracial, based in a Christianity that advocated for racial inclusion.[161] This case-study of OSMH conforms to that narrative. Joseph Sewall and Thomas Prince believed in evangelizing to black Bostonians and deliberately worked for and ultimately succeeded in building a multiracial community—albeit one in which the white race held all of the power.

In 2016, Jared Ross Hardesty published his monograph *Unfreedom*, in which he alleged that black Bostonians inhabited a spectrum of roles along a continuum of "unfree" states and that they understood this subtle system and exploited it in their best interests.[162] He particularly argued that "Protestant Christianity also offered opportunities for [black people] to challenge the boundaries of slavery" and that they used "what they learned in Boston's many churches to better themselves, their families, and their communities."[163] This study has frequently elided the categories of enslaved and free because they ultimately made little difference in how black people were treated by white authorities. Despised while they were in bondage, they did not seem to gain social status upon being manumitted, and in that sense this study bolsters Hardesty's concept of "unfreedom." It is a bit harder to argue based on the evidence of this report that black people were able to "challenge the boundaries of slavery" by making use of skills they learned while in church, although they did make useful white allies there.

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[161] Richard J. Boles, *Dividing the Faith: The Rise of Segregated Churches in the Early American North* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).
[162] Jared Ross Hardesty, *Unfreedom: Slavery and Dependence in Eighteenth-Century Boston* (New York: New York University Press, 2016): Introduction, 1-11.
[163] Ibid, 150.

Published in 2024, Gloria McCahon Whiting's *Belonging* argued that the family lives of black Bostonians, often negotiated in the context of church doctrine and in the physical spaces of meetinghouses, themselves constituted an argument for an end to enslavement, and that these embodied arguments proved so convincing to many enslavers that they began to usher out enslavement long before the institution's official legal termination in 1783.[164] I uncovered no evidence in this study that slavery was on the wane as an institution in the years before 1783, although between James Otis, Jeremy Belknap, and John Bacon it is clear that new intellectual currents were circulating in the meetinghouse by the 1760s. White congregants at OSMH certainly understood that their enslaved people cared for their families, and they would at times act to mitigate their suffering, but they still upheld that system to the bitter end. As has been emphasized on a number of occasions throughout this report, while members of the congregation at OSMH occasionally manumitted their enslaved people, they never did much of anything, as individuals or as a congregation, to compensate their formerly enslaved people for the work that they did or to set them up on a firm financial footing.

[164] Gloria McCahon Whiting, *Belong: An Intimate History of Slavery and Family in Early New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2024: Introduction, 1-16.

Appendix A
Black and Indigenous Members of OSMH

Source: *Admissions, 1669-1855, Old South Church in Boston, Mass*., Congregational Library

1. 1696 March 2nd Lydia; a negro. dead

2. 1711 December 16th Margaret a negro

3.1718/19 February 1st Thomas a negro-man

4. 1720/21 February 26th Jane a negro woman

5. 1726 December 25th Robert Due, Negro Servant of Capt. Thomas Smith

6.1728 June 19th Lucy Manoel a ~~free~~ negro woman, who dwells with Mr. Prince

7.1728 July 7th Maria, a negro-woman (free)

8.1728/29 March 16th Elizabeth, Negro Servant of John May

9. 1738 August 29th James, Negro Servant to Mr. Oxenbridge Thatcher

10.1739 September 16th Rose, Negro Servant to (Rev?) Joseph Sewall

11. 1740/41 March 1st Scipio, Negro Servant to Mrs. Hannah Fayerweather

12. 1740/41 March 1st 1740 Ann, Free Negro.

13. 1741 April 26th Cornwall, Negro Servant to Mr. John Ellery

14. 1742 July 18th Thomas, Negro Servant to Mr. Nicholas Salisbury

15. 1744 September 9th Simon, Negro Servant to Mr. John Savell

16. 1745 May 19th Dinah, Negro Servant to Mr. Henry Newell

17. 1747 November 29th Julia, Negro Servant to Coll. Edward Winslow

18. 1754 June 16th Flora, Negro Servant to Mr. Isaac Winslow

19. 1756 April 18th Bristol, Negro Servant to Mr. Samuel Sewall

20. 1756 August 8th Deborah, Negro Servant to Mr. Thomas Green

21. 1760 October 26th Newton, Negro Servant to Mr. John Gould Jr.

22. 1771 August 18th Phillis, Servant to Mr. Wheatley

23. 1772 April Scipio Gunney, a free negro

24. 1772 David, Servant to the Reverend Mr. Bacon

25. 1773 September 12th Moses, Servant to Josiah Waters

26. 1774 January 22nd Peter, Servant of Thomas Hubbard, esq.

Appendix B
Black and Indigenous People who were Baptized and Covenanted OSMH
Source: *Admissions, 1669-1855, Old South Church in Boston, Mass*., Congregational Library

1. 1718 December 7th Toby, a Negro-man who lives with Mr. Cord-Wing

2. 1718 December 7th Ebenezer, a Negro-man who belongs to Mr. John Mallit

3. 1718/19 January 25th 1718 Jane, an Indian woman who belongs to ~~my Family~~ Joseph Sewell's

4. 1721/22 December 24th Mingo, a Negro-man

5. 1721/22 March 18th Pompey a Negro-man servant to Mr. Brame

6. 1723 May 19th Worcester a Negro-man servt of John Green

7. 1724/25 February 28th Elizabeth Negro-Servant of John Flag

8. 1725 November 21st Towerhill, Negro-Man Servt. to Mr. William Smith

9. 1725 December 5th John Myat, Negro Servant to Coll. Fitch

10. 1725/26 January 23rd Robert, a Negro Servant to Capt. Smith

11. 1726 June 5th Cornwall Negro man Servt. to Capt. Ellery

12. 1726 July 24th Deborah, Negro-Servant to Mrs. Mary Saltonstall

13. 1726 July 24th Philisia, Negro-Servant to Mrs. Mary Saltonstall

14. 1726/27 March 12th Argalus Negro Servant to Mrs. Katharine Noyes

15. 1727 May 7th Maria a free-Negro

16. 1727 September 3rd Brill, Negro-Servt. of Mr. Brattle Oliver

17. 1728/29 January 12th Sarah, a free-Negro

18. 1735 May 11th Richard, Negro-Servant to the Revd. Mr. Nathaniel Williams

19. 1736 August 8th Scipio, Negro Servant to Mrs. Hannah Fayrweather

20. 1739/40 March 9th Phillis, Negro Servant to Mrs. Abiel Fitch

21. 1740 December 7th Simon, Negro Servant to Mr. John Savel

22. 1740/41 February 22nd Ann, free Negro

23. 1741 April 12th Maria, Negro Servant to Mrs. Hannah Fayrweather

24. 1741 May 24th Julia, Negro Servant to Coll. Edward Winslow

25. 1741 October 11th Scipio Negro Servant to the Hon. John Osborne

26. 1741/42 January 24th Thomas Negro Servant to Mr. Nicholas Salisbury
27. 1741/42 January 31st Pompey, Negro Servant to the Hon. William Troye
28. 1741/42 January 31st Flora, Negro Servant to the Mr. William Bodman
29. 1741/42 March 14th Dinah, Negro Servant to Mr. Thomas Cushing
30. 1742 May 16th Lucy, Negro Servant to Mr. Daniel Henchman
31. 1742 May 16th Katharine, Negro Servant to Mrs. Mary Oliver
32. 1742 September 12th Dinah, Negro Servant to Mr. John Frail
33. 1742 September 12th Dinah, Negro Servant to Mr. Henry Newell
34. 1743 June 12th Cato, Negro Servant to Mr. Joseph Jackson
35. 1744 October 7th Baker, Negro Servant to Mr. Joseph Jackson
36. 1745 June 15th Scipio, Negro Servant to Mr. John Hunt
37. 1751 November 17th Katherine, free Negro
38. 1751 December 15th Flora, Negro Servant to Mr. Isaac Winslow
39. 1752 June 7th Patience, Negro Servant to Mrs. Mary Bethune
40. 1753 September 9th Bristol, Negro Servant to Mr. Samuel Sewall
41. 1753 October 21st Venus, Negro Servant to Mr. John Winslow
42. 1756 January 18th Lucas, Negro Servant to Mr. William Taylor
43. 1756 January 25th Juba, Negro Servant to the Hon. Secretary Willard
44. 1756 April 18th Dinah, Negro Servant to the Hon. Thomas Hubbard
45. 1756 October 3rd Hagar, free Negro
46. 1764 January 24th Fidelia, Negro Servant to Mr. Samuel Pemberton
47. 1766 June 1st Peter, Negro Servant to the Honorable Thomas Hubbard

Appendix C
Black and Indigenous People who were Baptized at OSMH
(Includes both Adults who Covenanted and Children and Infants)
Source: *Baptismal records, 1669-1875, Old South Church in Boston Mass.,* Congregational Library

1. 1696/97 March 21st Lydia a negro

2. 1717/18 February 2nd Thomas a Negro-man belonging to Mr. Edward Oakes

3. 1717/18 March 2nd Essex, a negro-child belonging to Mrs. Katharine Winthrop

4. 1718 OS December 7th Ebenezer, a Negro-man who belongs to Mr. John Mallit

5-6. 1718/19 January 25th Jane, an Indian woman who belongs to ~~my Family~~ Joseph Sewall and Rose her child

7. 1719 April 26th Juno a Negro-woman who belongs to Mrs. Katharine Winthrop

8. 1719 June 28th Toby of Juno a negro-woman who belongs to Mrs. Katharine Winthrop

9. 1719 July 19th Grace, of Toby and Patience, Negroes

10.1721 April 16th Essex of Toby and Patience, Negroes

11. 1721/22 December 24th Mingo a negro-man

12. 1721/22 February 25th Arminna (and) Ezer of Ezer & Dinah, Negroes

13. 1721/22 March 18th Pompey a Negro-man, servant to Mr. Benjamin Brame

14. 1723 April 28th Ruth of Toby & Patience, Negroes

15-16. 1724/25 February 28th Elizabeth & Pompey her son, Negro-servants of John Flagg

17. 1725 May 16th Abigail, of Lisbon & Elizabeth Negroes

18. 1725 November 21st Towerhill, a Negro-man Servt. to Mr. William Smith

19. 1725 December 5th John Myat a Negro man, Servant to Coll. Fitch

20. 1725/26 January 23rd Robert, Negro Servant to Capt. Smith

21. 1726 June 5th Cornwell, negro man Servant to Capt. Ellery

22-23. 1726 July 24th Deborah Philisia Negro-Servants of Madm. Saltonstall

24. 1726 July 24th Maria of Worcester & Maria Negroes

25. 1726/27 March 12th Argalus, a negro man, Servt. to Mrs. Katherine Noyes

26. 1727 April 23rd William of Onesimus & Jane free Negroes

27. 1727 May 7th Maria, a Free-Negro

28. 1727 September 3rd Brill, Negro-man, Servant of Mr. Brattle Oliver

29. 1727/28 March 17th Ebenezer, of Ebenezer & Jane Way, a Negro & Indian

30. 1729 September 14th Jacob of Ebenezer & Jane Way, a Negro & Indian

31.1731 August 29th Jacob of Ebenezer & Jane Way, a Negro & Indian

32. 1733 May 13th Titus a Negro Servant about 10 years of age belonging to Joseph Sew(all)

33. 1735 May 11th George of Richard & Maria, Negroes

34.1736 August 8th Scipio, Negro servant to Mrs. Hannah Fayrweather

35. 1738 May 14th Margaret, a negro belonging to Mr. Jonathan Loring who engageth for her Edu(cation)

36. 1739/40 March 9th Phillis Negro Servant to Mrs. Abiel Fitch, Jane & Ann her Children

37. 1740 December 7th Simon, Negro Servant to Mr. John Savel

38. 1740/41 February 22nd Ann, free Negro

39. 1741 April 12th Maria, Negro Servant to Mrs. Hannah Fairweather

40-41. 1741 April 26th Phillis, Indian Servant to Mr. Timothy Prout & Peter, her Son

42. 1741 May 24th Julia, Negro Servant to Coll. Edward Winslow

43-44. 1741 October 11th Scipio, Negro Servant to the Hon. John Osborne. Charles, of Scipio

45.1741/42 January 24th Thomas, Negro-Servant to Mr. Nicholas Salisbury

46. 1741/42 January 31st Pompey, Negro Servant to the Hon. William Froye

47. 1741/42 January 31st Flora, Negro Servant to Mr. William Bodman

48. 1741/42 March 14th Dinah, Negro Servant to Mr. Thomas Cushing

49. 1742 May 16th Lucy, Negro Servant to Mr. Daniel Henchman

50. 1742 May 16th Katharine, Negro Servant to Mrs. Mary Oliver

51. 1742 June 6th Ann, of James & Ann, Negroes

52. 1742 August 22nd Katharine of Cornwall & Katherine, Negroes

53. 1742 September 12th Dinah, Negro Servant to Mr. John Frail

54. 1742 September 12th Dinah, Negro Servant to Mr. Henry Newell

55.1742/43 January 2nd Joseph, of Scipio & Sylvia, Negroes

56.1743 April 24th Lucy, Negro Servant to Mrs. Martha Salisbury who Engageth to see to her edu(cation)

57. 1743 May 22nd James, of James & Ann, Negroes

58. 1743 June 5th Dora, of Edward & Julia, Negroes

59. 1743 June 12th Cato, Negro Servant to Mr. Joseph Jackson

60. 1743 July 31st Samuel, of Robert & Margaret, Negroes

61. 1744 April 15th Isaac, of Scipio & Sylvia, Negroes

62. 1744 June 10th Ann, of James & Ann, Negroes

63. 1744 October 7th Baker, Negro Servant of Mr. Joseph Jackson
64.1745 June 16th Prince, of Cornwall & Kate, Free-Negroes

65.1745 October 20th Nancy, of Scipio & Sylvia, Negroes

66.1746 June 15th Scipio, Negro Servant to Mr. John Hunt

67.1747 August 9th Joseph, of Cornwall & Kate, free Negroes

68. 1747/48 January 17th Eunice, of Scipio & Sylvia, Negroes

69. 1748 May 1st Katherine of Cato John & Lucy, Negroes

70. 1748 May 22nd Phillis, Negro Servant to Mrs. Elizabeth & Martha Bridges who engage for her Edu(cation).

71. 1749/50 February 12th Lucy of Cornwall & Kate, Negroes

72.1750 September 16th Boston, Negro-Servant to Mr. Joseph Belknap, who Engageth for his Education.

73. 1750 December 20th December 9th Tabitha, of Scipio & Sylvia, Negroes

74. 1751 November 17th Katharine free-Negro

75. 1751 December 15th Flora Negro Servant to Mr. Isaac Winslow

76. 1752 June 7th Patience Negro, Servant to Mrs. Mary Bethune

77. 1753 February 4th Judith, Negro Servant to Mrs. Grace Perkins who Engageth for her Education

78. 1753 September 9th Bristol, Negro Servant to Mr. Samuel Sewall

79. 1753 October 21st Venus, Negro Servant to Mr. John Winslow

80. 1754 August 4th James, of Bristol & Chloe, Negroes

81. 1755 July 20th Peter, of Scipio & Katharine, Negroes

82. 1755 August 17th Dinah, of Cole & Venus, Negroes

83. 1755 December 14th Nancy, of Jamaica & Flora, Negroes

84. 1756 January 18th Lucas, Negro Servant to Mr. William Taylor

85. 1756 January 25th Juba, Negro Servant to Mr. Secretary Willard

86. 1756 April 18th Dinah, Negro Servant to Mr. Thomas Hubbard

87. 1756 October 3rd Haggar, free-Negro

88.1757 February 27th Jane, of Jamaica & Flora, Negroes

89. 1757 November 27th John-William Negro, Scipio & Katharine Negroes take ye child and Engage for his Education [Ye Woman Free]

90. 1758 November 12th Peter, of Cole & Venus, Negroes

91. 1759 February 4th Katharine, of Scipio & Sylvia, Negroes

92. 1759 June 10th Patience, of Pompey & Patience, Negroes

93. 1760 January 11th Peter, of Cole & Venus, Negroes

94. 1760 July 26th Patience, of Pompey & Patience, Negroes

95. 1764 January 1st Fidelia, Negro Servt. to Mr. Samuel Pemberton

96. 1767 June 14th Scipio, of Peter & Rose Negroes

97. 1769 November 13th Margaret of Peter & Rose Negroes

98. 1770 January (??) Katherine of Peter & Rose Negroes

99. 1771 October 13th Cato of Cato Servant of Robt Pierpont

100. 1772 September 27th Jenny, of David & Jenny, Negroes

101. 1772 November 22nd James, Grandson of Scipio, a free Negro

102. 1772 December 13th Clarissa of Cato servt. to Robert Pierpont

103. 1773 September 12th Moses an African Servt to Josiah Waters

104-105. 1773 September 19th Moses & Juda Children of Moses Servt to J. Waters

106. 1774 April 9th Paul of Moses & _____ Negro Servants

Appendix D
Black & Indigenous People who were Married by OSMH Clergy
Sources:
1. Twenty-Eighth Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston: Boston Marriages, 1700–1751.
2. A Volume of Records Relating to the Early History of Boston, Containing Boston Marriages from 1752 to 1809.

Date	People	Pastor
1. 8 April 1703	Negro-Caesar & Phillis	Pemberton
2. 2 November 1704	Caesar Negro & Jean Negro	Pemberton
3. 14 February 1705/06	Robin Negro & Kate	Willard
4. 19 June 1706	Toby Negro & Nan	Willard
5. 23 July 1706	Titus Negro & Nell Negro	Willard
6. 4 September 1712	Coffee Negro & Jane Negro	Pemberton
7. 31 May 1716	Tobey Negro of Mrs. Dinelyes & Patience Negro	Sewall
8. 8 September 1720	(Jeffrey) Sampson Negro & Jane Negro	Prince
9. 8 December 1720	Caesar Negro & Dinah Negro	Prince
10. 7 November 1723	Lisborn Negro & Bess Negro Servt. to John Flagg	Sewall
11. 3 June 1725	Onesimus Negro & Jane Negro	Sewall
12. 9 February 1724/25	Ebenezr. Way Negro & Jane Indian	Sewall
13. 16 December 1725	Custy (Covey) Negro & Barnaby Negro	Sewall
14. 10 September 1731	Jethro Boston negro & Hager negro servants to Capt. John Giles	Sewall
15. 3 January 1732/33	Prince Negro man & Nancy negro woman	Prince
16. 4 January 1733/34	Richard Negro Servt. to Mr. Williams & Maria Servt. to Mr. Fairweather	Sewall
17. 18 January 1733/34	Negro Ralph Servant to the Honble. William Dumer & Flora, Servt. to Samuel Sewall Esqr.	Sewall

18. 4 October 1737	Sam & Kate both Negro Servants to Capt. Nicho. Davis	Prince
19. 18 July 1738	James Basset & Lucy Manwill, both free Negroes	Sewall
20. 15 November 1739	Harry Negro Servt. to Capt. Nathaniel Cunningham & Nancy, Negro Servt. to Josiah Willard Esq.	Prince
21. 5 March 1740/41	Cornwall Negro Servt. to Mr. John Ellery & Kate Negro Servt. to Joshua Winslow Esq.	Sewall
22. 6 April 1741	James Johnson (Negro) & Sarah Bristow (Indian, both free	Sewall
23 27 August 1741	Scipio Negro Servt. to Mr. Robert Rand & Sylvia Negro Servt. to Mr. Edmund Quincy	Sewall
24. 3 June 1742	Robin Negro Servt. to Mr. William Wheeler & Phillis (Free Negro)	Sewall
25. 23 September1742	Caesar Negro Servt. to Timo. Winship & Mehetable Codner (Free Negro)	Sewall
26. 11 May 1743	Boston Negro Servt. to Mr. Edward Bromfield & Hannah Negro Servt. to Capt. John Wendell	Prince
27. 4 March 1742/43	Boston Negro Servt. to Mr. Thomas Jackson & Dinah Negro Servt. to the Hon. Thomas Cushing	Sewall
28. 4 October 1744	Sambo Negro Servt. to Mr. James Addison & Julia Negro Servt. to Edward Winslow Esqr.	Sewall
29. 5 August 1745	Scipio Negro Servt. to Mr. Isaac Cazneau & Hannah (an Indian free) Int. [Neg. svt. to Mr. John Savel Jr.]	Sewall
30. 5 December 1745	Caesar Negro & Venus both Srvts. to Mr. John Henderson	Sewall
31 30 October	1746 Dick Negro Servt. to Mr. Ephraim Hunt & Dinah Negro Servt. to Mr. John Perkins	Sewall
32. 28 September 1747	Boston Negro Servt. to Mr. Thomas Jackson & Zilpah Negro Servt. Abiel Walley Esqr.	Sewall
33. 7 January 1748	Thomas Negro Servt. to Mr. Nicholas Salisbury &	Sewall

	Flora Negro Servt. to Mr. Stephen Hall	
34. 15 February 1749	Sambo Negro Servt. Mr. William Powell & Jenny Negro Servt. to Mr. Seth Foster	Sewall
35. 28 June 1750	Peter Negro Servt. to Mr. John Kneeland & Rose Negro Servt. to Mr. Jotham Maverick	Sewall

Marriage Intentions Only:

36. 25 January 1753	Caesar, neg. s'v't Wm. Winter & Dinah, neg. s'v't Thos. Cushing
37. 5 June 1763	Bristol, neg. sv't Mr. Sam. Sewall & Chloe, neg. svt. Jno. Gould
38. 6 February 1754	Cole, neg. s'v't. to Mr. Henry Laughton & Venus,neg. s'v't to Mr. John Winslow
39. 28 August 1754	Scipio neg. s'v't to Charles Apthorp Esq. and Katharine Cornwell—free negro.

Marriages:

40. 31 December 1761	Charlestown, Negro Servant to the Hon. Thomas Flucker Esq. & Violet, Servant to Mr. Samuel Whitwell	Sewall
41. 5 October 1764	Negro, Cato, Servant to John Jeffries Esq. & Amenia Millro, Free Negro [Int. Arminia]	Sewall
42. 3 June 1762	Negro James, Servant to Mr. Jonathan Simpson & Rose, Servant to Joseph Sewall D.D.	Sewall
43. 3 January 1765	Nebo, Negro Servant to Mr. William Fairfield & Phillis Whitney Free Negro	Sewall
44. 7 February 1765	Peter, Negro Servant to the Hon. Thomas Hubbard & Rose, Negro Servant to Mr. John Winnet	Sewall
45. 5 December 1765	Cato, Negro Servant to Col. Jackson & Susannah Primus, Free Negro	Sewall
46. 26 March 1767	Newton Prince & Phillis Binn, Free Negroes	Sewall
43. 30 June 1767	Fortune Russel & Ann Dunham, Free Negroes	Sewall
44. 11 November 1767	Crispin Negro-Servant to Mrs. John Scot & Hannah Servant to Mr. Moses Gill	Sewall

Appendix E
Pew-Holders at OSMH in 1752 and 1767

Sources:
1. *Standing Committee Records 1735-1819*, Old South Meeting House in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library, 56-59
2. *Treasurer's Accounts 1747-1827*, Old South Meeting House in Boston, Mass., Congregational Library, 14, 16

Pew Number	Owner in 1752	Owner in 1767
1.	Minister's Pew	(blank)
2.	Abiah Holbrook	A. Holbrook
3.	Seth Foster	G. Thayer
4.	H. Vans	S. Fitch Esq.
5.	Jas. Hatch & Sam. Tufts	(blank)
6.	Tho. Clark	(blank)
7.	J. Osborne Esq.	J. Osborne Esq.
8.	J. Deming	(blank)
9.	Jn. Hunt etc.	(blank)
10.	D. Henchman Esq.	(blank)
11.	Jn. Blake & son Dawse	T. Dawes Esq.
12.	Ja. Goold	S. Holbrook
13.	Jos. Prince	B. Webb
14.	T. Binney	M. Carey
15.	Wm. Taylor & Jn. Spooner	(blank)
16.	Alex. Hunt	J. Lucus, E. Dorr
17.	Jno. Kneeland etc.	J. Kneeland
18.	Step. Hall	S. Salisbury

19.	Tidmarsh etc.	J. Greenleaf
20.	Josiah Waters	J. Waters
21.	Tho. Allen & m.	T. Marshall
22.	Ja. Fosdick	J. Fosdick
23.	H. Fayrweather	T. Fayerweather Esq.
24.	B. Pemberton	B. Pemberton
25.	A. Brackett	E. Brackett
26.	Sam. Deming	S. Deming
27.	Jn. Bonner, Cord Wing	(blank)
28.	Ab. Lowder & Jeffries	D. Jeffries
29.	Sam. Holyok, H. Inches	S. Holyoke, H. Inches
30.	R. Cunningham, Wm. Phillips	J. Otis, Esq.
31.	Saml. Rand	A. Raite, J. Belknap
32.	Wm. Foye Esq.	W. Phillips
33.	Eb. & Tim. Prout	J. Mason
34.	Tuckerman, Duncan, Dyas	J. Bumstead, E. Sumner
35.	M. Salisbury, H. Emerson	M. Salisbury, M. Proctor
36.	J. Walker & Daughter	T. Bumstead, N. Langdon
37.	Widow Loring & Prince	W. Homes
38.	Oliver Wiswall	(blank)
39.	J. Willard Esq.	J. Willard Hrs.
40.	F. Hubbard Esq.	S. Ballard
41.	Johnson & Cazneau	(blank)

42.	Mulbury & M. Salter	(blank)
43.	Ireland & Copeland	A. Staats
44.	Merit &	G. Rogers
45.	Isa. Walker	(blank)
46.	J. Camrin	(blank)
47.	Dea. Simpson	N. Glover
48.	J. Mason & Clarke	B. Clark, C. Clark
49.	Wyllis, Marshall, Peck	M. Peck, M. Willis
50.	Jn. Simpson	J. Simpson
51.	Jn. Winslow	J. Winslow
52.	Boutineau & Clarke	M. Boutineau
53.	Holmes, Andrew Oliver	D. Boyer, A. Oliver
54.	Jo. Jackson	J. Jackson
55.	Wm. Dawes	W. Dawes
56.	Wido. Belknap	Belknap
57.	Norton & Symmes	A. Norton
58.	J. Scollay	(blank)
59.	Jn. Symmes & Mrs. Noyce	F. Symmes
60.	Lewis	E. Lewis Esq.
61.	Bethune	N. Bethune
62.	Perkins, Allen, Clarke	H. Perkins, S. Allen
63.	Pierpoint, Greenwood	R. Pierpoint, N. Greenwood
64.	A. Belcher	T. Hubbard Esq.

65.	Bromfield	A. Bromfield
66.	Borland	B. Hyde Esq.
67.	Stoddard	B. Stoddard, A. Stoddard
68.	Sewall	S. Sewall, Esq.
69.	Dolbeare	(blank)
70.	Tyng	M. Tyng
71.	N. Davis etc.	B. Phillips
72.	Wido. Pemberton	J. Scollay
73.	T. Paine	E. Taylor
74.	Smibert & Noyce	J. Lowder, S. May
75.	Josh. Winslow	J. Winslow, Esq.
76.	Armitage	M. Gill
77.	Doct. Rand	S. Torry, S. Whitwell
78.	Frazier etc.	(blank)
79.	Fleet & Vergoose	J. Vergoose, Fleet
80.	Bonyat	J. Waters
81.	Wido. Frail	J. Gule
82.	Tho. Cushing	T. Cushing
83.	J. Belknap	J. Belknap
84.	Isa. Dupee & Bodman	S. Dupee, E. Coffin
85.	S. Welles Esq.	S. Welles
86.	(blank)	(blank)
87.	Col. Winslow	(blank)

88.	A. Oliver Esq. & son	A. Oliver Esq.
89.	A. Oliver Esq.	Ditto
90.	Wm. Whitwell	W. Whitwell
91.	Jn. Blowers	A. Blower, W. Homes
92.	Ox. Thacher	(blank)
93.	Minister's Pew	(blank)

Gallery Pews (1767 only)

Pew Number	**Owner**
1.	(blank)
2.	J. Torrey, H. Alden
3.	(blank)
4.	Saunders for Love
5.	(blank)
6.	E. Dinsdell
7.	A. Burger
8.	(blank)
9.	J. Crosley
10.	T. Cole, N. Kneeland
11.	S. Bass Hrs.
12.	S. Bass
13.	W. Fallas, M. Homer
14.	P. Cotta
15.	A. Boardman

16. (blank)

17. Clark & Saunders

18. J. Winslow

19. Searl & Feechum

20. W. Warland

21. (blank)

22. M. McIntire

23. (blank)

24. S. Hoskins

25. P. Roberts, J. Kent

26. T. Foot

27. S. Warden, M. Crowell

28. S. Hastings

29. (blank)

30. Loring & Dawes

31. J. Homer, B. Salisbury

32. J. Putnam

33. (blank)

34. S. Robinson

35. Topliff

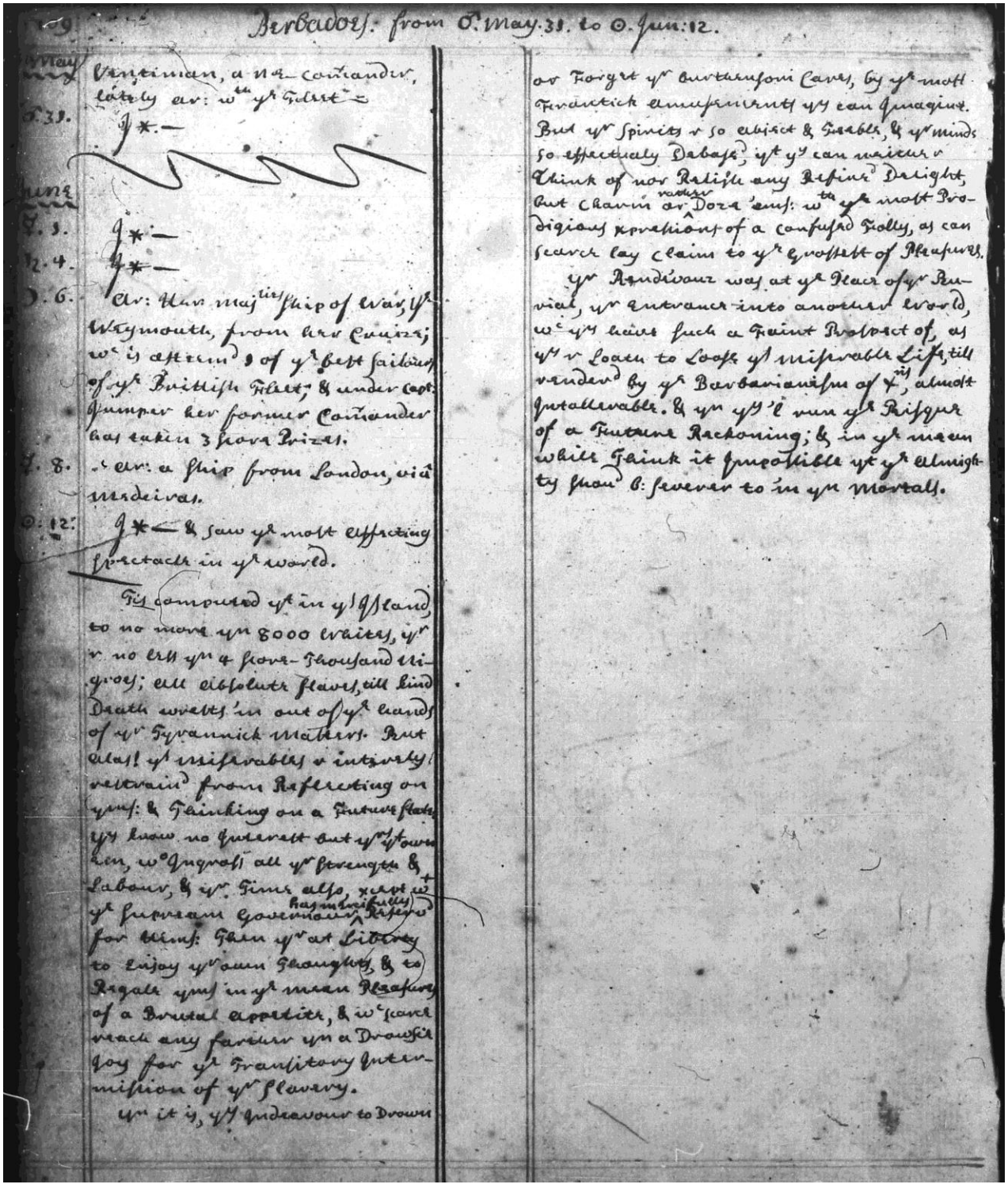
36. O. Low, Curtis

37. (blank)

38. S. Harris, J. Langley

39.	S. Torrey
40.	(blank)
41.	N. Foster, A. Foster
42.	J. Brewer
43.	J. Fenno
44.	L. Roberts
45-49	Five unoccupied pews noted as “not marked”

Appendix F
Reproduction of Thomas Prince's Description of Slavery in Barbados
Source: Thomas Prince, *Thomas Prince Journal, 1709–1711*,
P-110, 1 reel (microfilm), Massachusetts Historical Society



Barbados. from O. May. 31. to O. Jun: 12.

May

O. 31. Venetian, a Ma- Caribander, lately arr: w^th y^e Fleet — J*.—

June

O. 1. J*.—

O. 4. J*.—

O. 6. Arr: Hers majties Ship of War, y^e Weymouth, from her Cruize; w^ch is esteem'd one of y^e best Sailers of y^e British Fleet, & under Capt. Pumper her former Caribander has taken 3 Spanish Prizes.

O. 8. Arr: a Ship from London, via Madeiras.

O. 12. J*.— & saw y^e most affecting Spectacle in y^e world.

Tis computed y^t in y^s Island, to no more y^n 8000 Whites, y^r r no less y^n 4 Score-Thousand Negroes; all absolute Slaves, till kind Death wafts 'em out of y^e hands of y^r Tyrannick Masters. But alas! y^e miserables r intirely restrain'd from Reflecting on y^mselves & Thinking on a future State; y^y know no Interest but y^e y^r Owners, w^ch ingross all y^r Strength & Labour, & y^r Time also, except w^t y^e Supream Governour has mercifully Reserv'd for Himself. Then y^y are Liberty to Enjoy y^r own Thoughts, & to Regale y^mselves in y^e mean Pleasure of a Brutal Appetite, & w^t soever reach any further y^n a Drowsish Joy for y^e Transitory Intermission of y^r Slavery.

Yet it is, y^y endeavour to Drown or Forget y^e Unchristian Circumstances, by y^e most Fanatick Amusements y^y can Imagine. But y^r Spirits r so abject & Feeble, & y^r minds so effectually Debas'd, y^t y^y can neither Think of nor Relish any Refined Delight, but Chuse or rather Dote 'emselves w^th y^e most Prodigious Revelations of a confused Frolly, as can scarce lay Claim to y^e Name of Pleasures.

Yet Rendezvous way at y^e Place of y^r Burial, y^r Entrance into another World, w^ch y^y have such a Faint Prospect of, as y^y r Loath to Look y^e miserable Life, till rendered by y^e Barbarianisms of Th^ir, almost Intollerable. & yet y^y'l run y^e Risque of a Fortune Reckoning; & in y^e mean while Think it impossible y^t y^e Almighty shou'd Sever to 'em y^e Mortall.

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