

# ANGLICAN SLAVERY IN NEW JERSEY: A FOCUS ON CHRIST CHURCH SHREWSBURY

## Introduction

The searchability of the Parish Register of Christ Episcopal Church in Shrewsbury in the colonial era has provided a hyper-local glimpse into slaveholdings among parishioners of this then-Anglican Church.

Church Historian Bob Kelly and Shrewsbury Historical Society Trustee Rick Geffken analyzed the data and wrote six separate articles about some parish families and their enslaved “servants.” One article analyzed the data; two articles illuminated the lives of two of the slaveholding families; and three studied the views on slavery by clergy at the church, perspectives of the Anglican leadership in Great Britain, and a comparison to contemporary Quaker slaveholder views. The six articles appeared in 2018 as columns in the Christ Church monthly parish newsletter, *The Crown*.

The following articles are reproduced here with slight modifications based on new data analysis:

ARTICLE 1: Slavery Evidenced in the Parish Register

ARTICLE 2: Samuel Cooke’s Slavery Problem

ARTICLE 3: The Role of the Reverend Thomas Thompson

ARTICLE 4: Pre-Revolutionary Christ Church Slaveholders

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ARTICLE 6: The Role of the Reverend George Keith

## **Slavery Evidenced in the Parish Register**

**by Robert M. Kelly, Jr.**

Slaveholding among Anglican congregants has been known for some time.<sup>1</sup> Due to the availability of a searchable database of the Christ Episcopal Church Shrewsbury Parish Register during the Colonial era. First, some background. The Parish Register contains the records of sacramental events, especially Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials. We hold records of these events continuously since 1733 and have the original Registers as completed by the clergy who performed the sacraments.<sup>2</sup> The oldest register recorded these events for over the first 100 years of the parish. As you will see, every space of paper in the Register was used. When Reverend Harry Finch (Rector 1830-1863) recognized that the first such Register was deteriorating, he took the important step to hand copy the register. In the 1990s parishioners Michael Badal and Bob Stewart acquired a grant to create a microfilm version of all the Registers to that date.<sup>3</sup> Shortly thereafter they arranged for the microfilms to be copied into CDs. So, now there was a digital version of the PR, but it was not searchable. Searchability is critical for any historical analysis and for assisting in genealogical inquiries.

In 2014 two students from the History and Anthropology Department at Monmouth University, Amanda Lopes and Caitlin Guenther, did an internship at the Church related to anthropological analysis of our colonial era parishioner families. This research required them to study the Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials of that era. Since this would have been impossible without having a searchable database, they created one (in Excel) covering the years from 1733 to 1775 – the Colonial era. This was mind-numbing data entry work, but they did it with outstanding quality. This enabled them to perform their study but even more importantly created a tool that enables future research.

I hope I did not wear you out with this lengthy preamble but an understanding of this will be useful in understanding the slavery research. Yes, I will now get to that.

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<sup>1</sup> Graham Russel Hodges, “Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North: African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665-1865” (1995).

<sup>2</sup> The original Parish Registers are in the Christ Church archives.

<sup>3</sup> Copies of these microfilms were provided to the National Episcopal Archives, the Monmouth County Historical Association and the Church of Latter-Day Saints.

The current insights into slavery and other related aspects of life in the colonial era among Anglicans here are derived from looking at the Baptisms from 1733 to 1775. Here is the information that *can* be recorded by the priest for each such Baptism.

<b>DATE</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>BAPTIZED LAST NAME</b>	<b>BAPTIZED FIRST NAME</b>	<b>FATHER</b>	<b>MOTHER</b>	<b>RESIDENCE</b>	<b>BAPTISMAL LOCATION</b>	<b>N</b>
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In the 1733-1775 time interval, there are about 1307 Baptisms recorded. Of these Baptisms, 89 have no entry in the Surname field. This suggests some irregularity but could have been a complete mystery except for the extremely helpful Notes field. Here is one excerpt from the original register that illustrates this with the same information from the searchable database.

22	Frederic	Son of				Ditto		
March 21	Sylvia	Daugh <sup>tr</sup>	of Timothy Halstead	by his wife		Ditto		
21	Ann	Son of	Sam <sup>l</sup> Leonard Esq <sup>r</sup>	by Mary his wife		P		
April 3	Samuel	Son of	John & Elizabeth Stevenson			Middle	P	
11	Robert	Son of	John & Elizabeth Stevenson			Middle	P	
12	Angelina	Daughter of	James Bey Jun <sup>r</sup>	by his wife		Cransy	P	
12	James	Son of	James Ferril	by his wife		Ditto	Dit	
29	Eleanor	Daugh <sup>tr</sup>	of David Bizzard	by his wife		Brins	Di	
May 6	Rachel	An Adult Negro	Servant belong <sup>g</sup>			Shrewsbury	Priv	
6	Mary	Children of the above Rachel.					Ditto	
6	Margaret	Children of the above Rachel.					Ditto	
6	Robert Johnson	Children of the above Rachel.					Ditto	
6	Bella	Children of the above Rachel.					Ditto	
5 16	Lewis	Son of	Joseph & Audrey West			Ditto	Public	
16	Elizabeth	Daugh <sup>tr</sup>	of Christopher & Christeen Staakeser			Ditto	Ditto	
6 9	Joseph	Son of	Robert Wiles	by his wife		Allen	Public	
19 9	Catherine	Daugh <sup>tr</sup>	of John Hoar	by his wife		Allen	Public	
22 9	George	Son of	James Laurence	by his wife		Town		
22 9	Mary	Daugh <sup>tr</sup>	of James Keuel	by his wife				
22		That ...						

DATE	YEAR	BAPTIZED LAST NAME	BAPTIZED FIRST NAME	FATHER	MOTHER	RESIDENCE	BAPTISMAL LOCATION
May 6	1756		Rachel			Shrewsbury	Publicly

<b>May 6</b>	<b>1756</b>	<b>Mary</b>	<b>Rachel</b>	<b>Shrewsbury</b>	<b>Publicly</b>
<b>May 6</b>	<b>1756</b>	<b>Margaret</b>	<b>Rachel</b>	<b>Shrewsbury</b>	<b>Publicly</b>
<b>May 6</b>	<b>1756</b>	<b>Robert Johnson</b>	<b>Rachel</b>	<b>Shrewsbury</b>	<b>Publicly</b>
<b>May 6</b>	<b>1756</b>	<b>Bella</b>	<b>Rachel</b>	<b>Shrewsbury</b>	<b>Publicly</b>

It is fair to interpret Negro servant as slave, a word that is never used in the PR. Note that no father is listed as is no surname. But the invaluable Notes field reveals the context of these Baptisms. Isabella Kearney was the sister of Graham Kearney Cooke, the wife of the Reverend Samuel Cooke, the then missionary priest at Christ Church.

There are other entries in the Notes field for other Baptisms that provide insights into the nature of these relationships with Baptized individuals with no surnames.

*a negro belonging to Mr. Joseph Throckmorton*

is another such Notes field entry in 1752. The phrase “belonging to” is clearer than “Negro servant of” in terms of relationship.

The surname-less entries also include notes that cover “bastard children” and mulattos. This latter also suggests inappropriate relationships between white male head of households and negro women/servants/slaves.

These 89 Baptisms can be categorized as follows:

Slaves	45
Mulattos	12
Free Negroes	9
Bastards	4
Uncertain	19

The Uncertain category covers all surname-less Baptisms with no explanation.

The earliest surname-less entry is in 1746. This is when the Reverend Thomas Thompson arrived to be missionary priest at Christ Church. Reverend Thompson clearly believed that servants should be “catechized” and thus given Christian education. He would leave in 5 years to establish a mission in Africa, the first such Anglican mission on that continent. Such Baptisms at Christ Church continued with Reverend Samuel Cooke in the years 1751 to 1775. Of the 89 surname-less Baptisms, 32 were performed by Reverend Thompson and 57 by Reverend Cooke.

There are additional insights to be gathered through further analysis of this PR data. In addition, complementary research can reveal more information about slavery outside that revealed by the sacramental events.

## The Rev. Samuel Cooke's Slavery Problem

By Rick Geffken

The initial article in this series, *Slavery Evidenced in the Parish Register* brought to light information about the early Anglican slaveholders among Christ Church parishioners. In it he examined Isabella Kearney, sister-in-law of the Rev. Samuel Cooke, who had five of her slaves baptized in Shrewsbury.<sup>4</sup> There is more to this story.

A prominent and influential defender of the Church of England during his time in the Colonies<sup>5</sup>, Samuel Cooke was thus intricately linked to the mother country. He was forced to leave Shrewsbury in the run up to the Revolutionary War.<sup>6</sup> Just before he fled to London, he gave a May 1775 farewell sermon in which he alludes to this: “My duty, my Interest, My Affection, all will strongly concur to induce me to return to you again as soon as the present unhappy Distractions of the Times will permit me to do it with any kind of Safety – In the meantime, My Prayers, etc.”<sup>7</sup> He left his eight children behind with relatives.

Cooke's wife Graham (nee Kearney) had died in September 1771. Their oldest daughter Mary was 16 at her mother's death, too young to take care of her seven siblings ranging in age from under one to eleven. It's likely that sister-in-law Isabella Kearney helped in those intervening four years. Recall that Isabella had four woman slaves<sup>8</sup> who would be ideal caretakers for the children. The never-married Isabella “supervised” the slaves working the farm she and her sister Graham co-owned.<sup>9</sup> The hundred-acre farm was located south of Shrewsburytown, in a remote and underpopulated area called Marshes Bog (today's Farmingdale where this author lives on part of their former property).

Some of the Cooke children may have gone to live with their aunt, at least temporarily. At Graham's death, the Rev. Cooke inherited half the farm property and, of course, the Kearney slaves. Just a few months before, in July 1771, a census of slaveholders in Shrewsbury<sup>10</sup> noted that Samuel Cook (sic) owned four “Neger slaves” (left column in insert, second from bottom). Maybe these four were the same slaves at the Marshes Bog farm, counted as Cooke's property. Or, maybe not.

When Samuel Cooke arrived in Shrewsbury on assignment for the Society for the Preservation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPGFP) he was given a minimal salary<sup>11</sup>. As a kind of sweetener,

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<sup>4</sup> Christ Church Shrewsbury Parish Register

<sup>5</sup> *Newspaper Abstracts 1762-1765, Vol. 5*, Cooke letter to William Franklin, New Jersey Archives

<sup>6</sup> *The Case of the Rev. Samuel Cooke: Loyalist*, Frederic J. Parris, Monmouth County Historical Association Newsletter, May 1975

<sup>7</sup> *The Duty of Mutual Love Enforced from Our Lord's Example*, Cooke's Farewell Sermon, May 14, 1775, Monmouth County Historical Association

<sup>8</sup> Christ Church Shrewsbury Parish Register

<sup>9</sup> Will of Isabella Graham Morris, August 9, 1746 in Collections, Volume 28, New York Historical Society, 1896

<sup>10</sup> New Jersey Archives

<sup>11</sup> *History of Christ Church, Shrewsbury, New Jersey, 1702-1903*, James Steen, 1903

he was granted the use of a glebe, a large farm property in Tinton Falls, known as the “Church farm property”<sup>12</sup> which would help generate more income.

Cooke was a peripatetic preacher, constantly on his rounds to parishioners in Freehold, Middletown, Cranbury, and New Brunswick.<sup>13</sup> He would not have had the time, nor the skills to work a farm of almost 500 acres located along “the Road from Tinton Falls to Shrewsbury Town.” Cooke would have needed slaves to work on the glebe. Thus, the four slaves in the census list may be different people from the four slaves Cooke co-owned with his sister-in-law in Marshes Bog.

We know about this farm glebe from a March 1779 deed of sale<sup>14</sup> of the Tinton Falls property from the “Commissioners of Monmouth” to the minister’s daughter, Mary Cooke, then twenty-four years. Although Samuel Cooke had returned to New York as a Chaplain for the British Army during the Revolution<sup>15</sup>, there is no evidence he was able to visit his children in Shrewsbury. New Jersey considered him a fugitive, subject to arrest by the Patriot authorities.<sup>16</sup> Further, the New Jersey Legislature had passed laws confiscating Loyalist properties.<sup>17</sup> Cooke had lost his half the Marshes Bog property and the entire Tinton Falls glebe.<sup>18</sup>

There is no mention of any slaves in the deed of sale to Mary Cooke, or any records showing they were manumitted. If the other Cooke children (nineteen to six years in 1779) were reunited with Mary on the glebe, the Cooke slaves would have insured their survival.

After the Revolutionary War ended in 1783, Samuel Cooke returned yet again to England<sup>19</sup> with his Guards unit. The SPGFP reassigned him to missionary duties in New Brunswick, Canada.<sup>20</sup> With the exception of two grown and married daughters remaining in the new United States, Mary and the other surviving Cooke children migrated to Canada with their father in 1785.<sup>21</sup> There, the indomitable Cooke would take on a new mission - ministering to hundreds of defeated and demoralized Loyalists who had also left the Thirteen Colonies.<sup>22</sup> During the next

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<sup>12</sup> *William Leeds Jr. Last Will & Testament* of June 20, 1735

<sup>13</sup> Notes in Cooke Sermons, Monmouth County Historical Association

<sup>14</sup> *Commissioners of Monmouth to Mary Cook (sic)*, Deed Book AM, 239-241, March 29, 1779, Monmouth County Archives

<sup>15</sup> *Origin and Services of the Coldstream Guards*, Daniel MacKinnon, 1833

<sup>16</sup> Cooke Indictment, May 15, 1779, Monmouth County Archives

<sup>17</sup> *An Act for Forfeiting to ... the State of New-Jersey, the Real Estates of Certain Offenders & Fugitives*, December 11, 1778

<sup>18</sup> Confiscation of Tory Property, Executions, Box 1, Monmouth County Archives

<sup>19</sup> *The Anglican Church of New Jersey*, Nelson Rollin Burr, 1954

<sup>20</sup> *An Historical Sketch of the First Fifty Years of the Church of England in the Province of New Brunswick (1783-1833)*, George Herbert Lee, 1880

<sup>21</sup> *New Brunswick Loyalist Journeys, Reverend Samuel Cooke (ca. 1723 - 1795)*, University of New Brunswick Libraries

<sup>22</sup> *Our History*, Christ Church (Fredericton NB) Parish website

decade, Cooke started at least two new Anglican parishes<sup>23</sup> before his tragic 1795 death by drowning with his son Michael in a Fredericton River.<sup>24</sup>

Samuel Cooke filed for compensation to the British government after the war claiming he “lost a Negro man worth £100 and a Negro wench worth £56,”<sup>25</sup> described as runaways. It is unclear whether these were the slaves working the glebe, or on the Kearney sisters’ Marshes Bog farm.

In a future article, we’ll look at another Christ Church slaveholder, Thomas Morford, whose name appears just below Cooke’s on the 1771 list.

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<sup>23</sup> *A History of the Anglican Church in the Parish of Springfield (Diocese of Fredericton)*, Ernest G. C. Graham, 1983

<sup>24</sup> *The Anglican Church*, Burr

<sup>25</sup> *Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North, African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665-1865*, Graham Russell Hodges, 1997

# The Role of the Reverend Thomas Thompson

by Robert M. Kelly, Jr.

In this article I will explore other aspects of these "servants" especially tied to Christ Church and the views of the Reverend Thomas Thompson, in particular.

One very pertinent source about slavery here in Monmouth County is a book by Graham Russel Hodges.<sup>26</sup> This text does touch on some religious related aspects of slavery and here are some of its points.

1. The 1771 census had 536 slaves in the County and 77 in Shrewsbury.
2. Anglicans did not proselytize slaves. (Though this was not completely true as noted below.)
3. In some cases, a condition of Baptism was not to have Sunday parties! (Apparently slaves had some wild parties on their day off and that offended religious sensibilities of some Christians regarding the Sabbath.)
4. There was a general notion that a Christian could not be enslaved.

This last point became an issue since it implied that once a slave was Baptized, and thus a Christian, he or she should be freed. In fact, there was a bill considered in the New Jersey colonial legislature to require that. The Anglican Church opposed it and it was never enacted. But in cases in which manumission was invoked, there were conditions of delay or money until the individual was free.

The first Baptisms of slaves at Christ Church were performed by Reverend Thomas Thompson who was our missionary priest from 1746 to 1751. Clearly, he

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<sup>26</sup> Graham Russel Hodges, "Slavery and Freedom in the Rural North: African Americans in Monmouth County, New Jersey, 1665-1865" (1995).

encouraged the slaves' owners to bring them in for Baptism. Thompson had a clear evangelical objective in his desire to Baptize. He saw a "captive" audience to bring into the Christian fold. There is no indication if he did any further catechization of these individuals though possibly they did attend Sunday services with their owners.

There is no indication of Thompson's position on the manumission of Baptized slaves but there are clear indications that he did not oppose slavery in general. Thompson was driven by the opportunity to increase the number of Christians through these Baptisms. It seems he then sought a rationale for the defense of slavery and he subsequently wrote a paper articulating his theories with scriptural underpinnings.<sup>27</sup>

In summary Thompson made the following arguments.

From a humanitarian perspective Thompson states that in ancient conflicts, the victor's enslavement of the losers was superior to their slaughter. Thus, slavery is a principle of humanity!

Thompson also posits that those enslaved in Africa face a worse condition than that of the new slavery (in the British colonies). In addition, he argues that slavery is simply another element of the cross Atlantic trade, effectively endorsing the notion of slaves as property. Thus, we must accept slavery in the colonies and do the best we can. For Thompson that of course meant catechization.

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<sup>27</sup> "The African Trade for Negro Slaves Consistent with Humanity and Revealed Religion". London (1772)

From a Jewish law perspective (Leviticus), he concludes that slavery was permitted as long as the slaves were heathen. He further says that the buying and selling of slaves is not contrary to the law of nature.

From a New Testament perspective (Corinthians), he concludes that in the sacred/Christian context, there is "*... no difference betwixt bond and free*" It is their life in Christ that makes them formally free through Baptism. So, it is incumbent upon him to evangelize slaves.

Thompson also states that while freedom is a law of nature, it is not unlimited. This qualification of course opens the door to validating all sorts of arbitrary exceptions as Thompson does.

Thompson's positions also had the effect of providing a rationale for the Anglican owners of slaves in his congregation for their ownership of (some) humans, thus easing their conscience. Thompson does distinguish between proper and improper treatment of slaves by owners, though without specifics.

This is an excerpt from his treatise:

the words is this ; whoever is called by divine grace to the profession of the gospel, if being a bond-servant, let him content himself to remain in that state, his new and sacred relation by no means releasing him from it. For thou,

The new and sacred relation means becoming a Christian through Baptism.

This tortuous logic in Thompson's essay gives insight into the manner in which views of slavery were communicated to a congregation by its priest.

All missionary priests did not uniformly hold Thompson's views. Thompson's successor, the Reverend Samuel Cooke did continue Baptizing slaves but his views on slavery were not documented as Thompson's were. As Rick Geffken's article in this series revealed, Cooke certainly tolerated the holding of slaves. Reverend George Keith, a former Quaker, on the other hand was an abolitionist.

Reverend Thompson left Christ Church to establish a mission in Guyana, the first such African mission authorized by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. There he had a huge evangelical opportunity.

# Examining Pre-Revolutionary Christ Church Slaveholders

by Rick Geffken

Anglicans were the largest group of slaveholders in pre-Revolutionary Shrewsbury? That jarring statement is not meant to castigate these original Christ Church congregants. Like their prominent and successful peers, they adhered to the then common belief in slavery's place in their colonial society.

While Church of England parishioners represented the largest group on a 1771 list of slaveholders,<sup>28</sup> the next most numerous were (surprise!) Quakers, followed by Presbyterians, and Dutch Reformed. Among the fifty-seven Shrewsbury slaveholders on the list, at least twenty-five can be positively identified as Anglicans worshipping at Christ Church. They included the Reverend Samuel Cooke, as well as members of the Leonard, Morris, Wardell, and West families.

By definition, slaveholders were well-off with large land holdings. They needed "servants" to work their farms and to take care of their large families. Examining the connections between these slaveholders, we get a fascinating look at 18<sup>th</sup> century society in Shrewsbury. Shrewsbury's population was relatively small then - marriages and other social alliances necessarily came from a finite pool of people. Just as today, people most often married within their class.

We'll look at one extended Anglican family to understand how deeply entrenched slavery was in Shrewsbury. Thomas Morford's name appears just below that of the Rev. Cooke (Morford owned one slave, Cooke four). This placement was appropriate, if coincidental, since Morford was a Christ Church Vestryman<sup>29</sup> during the years Cooke ministered to his Shrewsbury parish, and years after Cooke left as well. Morford was involved in many of the decisions leading up to the construction of the Christ Church building which was completed in 1769. James

July 18th 1771 on Account of all the Negroes & Natives in Shrewsbury

W. Taylor	2	Joseph Flewman	1
Rebecca West	2	Ritchard Cole	3
Nicholas Vanbunt	1	Mary Martin	0
Nicholas Vanbunt Juner	1	James Corbis	1
Ritchard Loranee	1	William Parker son of Joseph	1
Stephen Tolleran Juner	2	Samuel Breyf	3
John Wardill	3	John Corbis	4
Joseph Spica	1	John Hartson	2
Josiah Haffler	2	Morris Schant	2
James Smith	2	Josiah Parker	2
Margal Brinsley	1	Joseph Wendell son of Jacob	1
Joseph Wendell son of Sam	1	George Taylor	1
John Willoughby son of Saml	1	Lucey Eton	1
Joseph Leonard	2	Haack Harber	2
Chouper Wardell Juner	2	Paul Wacoff	2
John Wardill Juner	1	Benjamin Wainwright	4
John Solaram	1	Amiel Hawney	4
Peter Parker	1	John Hehemons	2
Jacob Wardill	2	Cornelius Vandervear	3
John Morris	3	Levy Hoot	1
Samuel Tucker	1	Joseph Throsmaster	2
Robert Henry	1	Oliver Taylor	1
Samuel Cook	4	Thomas Harrison	1
Thomas Morford	1	Abraham Trebesho	1
James West	1	Joseph Gonsen	1
David Lovett	3	John Gamage	1
John Little	2	Samuel Leonard	2
Samuel Tullman	1	John Mairs	1
Elisha Williams	1	Abraham Con Hobel	51
James Bozge	1	Joseph Leonard given in trust	53
			97

<sup>28</sup> Monmouth County Archives

<sup>29</sup> Christ Church Shrewsbury Vestry Records

Steen<sup>30</sup> notes that Morford was “appointed (to) a committee to carry on the work” of overseeing the construction.

Thomas Drake Morford was born in 1743 to Jarrett and Rebecca (Taylor) Morford.<sup>31</sup> Jarrett’s father, also Thomas Morford, was among the men on King George II’s Letter of Patent allowing for the incorporation of Christ Church in 1738.<sup>32</sup> When he died in 1750, the elder Thomas bequeathed “a negro wench Beas” to his wife.<sup>33</sup> Beas appears again in Jarrett’s Last Will<sup>34</sup> ten year later. The Morford’s were multi-generational slaveholders.

As were the Taylors. Edward Taylor, Rebecca’s father, owned “negros (*worth*) £40,” according to the 1734 inventory taken after his death.<sup>35</sup> Yes, the often-unnamed slaves were simply line items along with household furniture, clothes, and farm implements. As was customary, the Taylor slaves were bequeathed to his wife, Catharine Morford,<sup>36</sup> then to their sons after her decease in 1742. Rebecca’s brother George Taylor and her Asher Taylor nephew (son of her brother John) each owned one slave on the list. Joseph Taylor of Upper Freehold, another of her brothers, advertised for the return of his escaped slave Robin in 1744.<sup>37</sup>

In the Christ Church Parish Register,<sup>38</sup> a slave named Elizabeth (“a negro woman of Mrs. Morford.”) was baptized in October 1751. Thomas was only eight at the time, so Elizabeth may have belonged to Thomas’s parents when his mother brought her to be baptized.

Thomas Drake Morford married his cousin Sarah Taylor in January 1765.<sup>39</sup> They were both great-grandchildren of yet another Thomas Morford (1650-1695), one of the first English settlers of Middletown. When Sarah died during a severe fever epidemic less than two years later, Thomas married Hester (Esther) Holmes.<sup>40</sup>

Curiously, Thomas Drake Morford, an active member of the Church of England, did not join with the British Loyalists during the Revolutionary War. He and his father-in-law, Josiah Holmes, were part of the Shrewsbury Committee of Observation in May 1775.<sup>41</sup> His allegiance to our emerging new country is one reason he survived the War of Independence and continued to live in Shrewsbury until his death at age 74. Many Loyalists, such as Samuel Cooke, had their

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<sup>30</sup> *History of Christ Church Shrewsbury New Jersey, 1702-1903*, James Steen, 1903

<sup>31</sup> *History of the Morford Family*, Curtis R. Morford, 1892

<sup>32</sup> Christ Church Shrewsbury archives

<sup>33</sup> *Historical and Genealogical Miscellany: Data Relating to the Settlement and Settlers of New York and New Jersey, Volume 4*, 1970,

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *New Jersey Abstract of Wills, Volume XXX, 1670-1817*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Pretends to Be Free, Runaway Slave Advertisements from Colonial and Revolutionary New York and New Jersey*, Hodges and Brown, Eds. 1994

<sup>38</sup> Christ Church Shrewsbury archives

<sup>39</sup> *Genealogies of New Jersey Families: Families A-Z*, from *Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey*, Vol. I, Joseph R. Klett, 1966

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Prologue to Independence: New Jersey in the Coming of the American Revolution*, Larry R. Gerlach, 1976

property confiscated during the war and moved to Canada when it was over.<sup>42</sup> (Many readers will recognize Josiah Holmes as an ardent opponent of Rev. Cooke's plans for the design of Christ Church.<sup>43</sup> Holmes also took over the Christ Church Glebe after Cooke forfeited it in 1779.<sup>44</sup>)

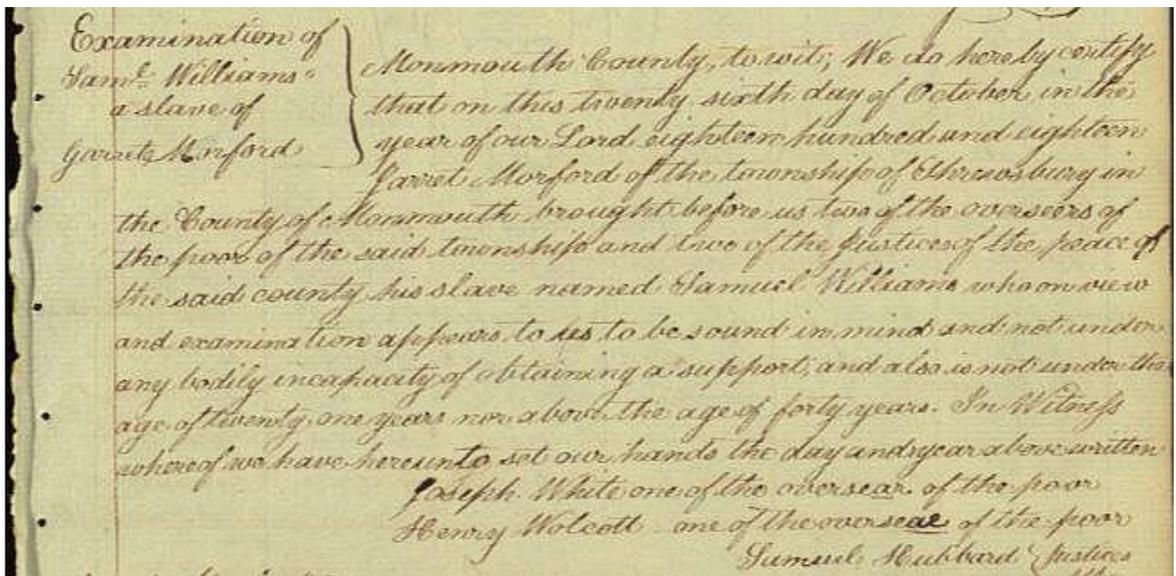


In 1785 the Vestry appointed Thomas Morford and Thomas Lloyd, a slaveholder on a contemporary Middletown list, to attend a general convention of the Churches of the United States in Philadelphia.<sup>45</sup>

Thomas Drake and Esther Morford's son, Thomas Morford Jr. married Rebecca West in 1801.<sup>46</sup> She was the granddaughter of two other slaveholders (with one slave each), James West and John Slocum.

Thomas Morford Sr. his wife Esther, and his sons George T., Thomas, and Garret, are all buried at Christ Church.<sup>47</sup>

After more than a century, this branch of the Morford family ceased holding fellow human beings in bondage. On October 26, 1818, Thomas Drake Morford's son Garrett Morford freed a slave named Samuel Williams.<sup>48</sup> Williams was "of the age of 32 years or thereabouts," which means Williams was born around 1786 when Garrett was only five. Samuel Williams was likely originally owned by Garrett's father who died in May 1818. Garrett freed Williams five months later. Samuel Williams was born after the 1771 slaveholder list was created, and although we have no proof, he may have been the offspring of the Thomas Morford slave.



<sup>42</sup> *New Brunswick Loyalist Journeys, Reverend Samuel Cooke (ca. 1723 - 1795)*, University of New Brunswick Libraries

<sup>43</sup> Christ Church Shrewsbury Vestry Records

<sup>44</sup> Christ Church Shrewsbury Vestry Records

<sup>45</sup> Christ Church Shrewsbury Vestry Records

<sup>46</sup> *Historical and Genealogical Miscellany*, 1970

<sup>47</sup> Christ Church Shrewsbury Parish Register

<sup>48</sup> *Slave Manumissions, 1787-1844*, Monmouth County Clerk Office

Other Shrewsbury families were reluctant to manumit their slaves. In 1866, New Jersey was the last state to ratify the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment<sup>49</sup> which abolished slavery in the United States once and for all. It would take another one hundred and forty-two years before the New Jersey apologized for the state's role in the history of slavery. In 2008, The Legislature of the State passed a Resolution in which New Jersey “expresses its profound regret for the State's role in slavery and apologizes for the wrongs inflicted by slavery and its after effects.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> New Jersey State Archives

<sup>50</sup> NJ Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 270, January 8, 2008

## Anglican Views of Slavery in the Colonial Era

by Robert M. Kelly, Jr.

This article focuses on the views of the broader Anglican Church toward slavery.

One aspect of Article 3 was the analysis of the views of the Reverend Thomas Thompson, the missionary priest here at Christ Church from 1746 to 1751. Thompson was the first priest here to Baptize slaves held by the church's Anglican parishioners. He sought to catechize this captive slave population he viewed as performing the evangelical work of Anglicanism. He then further justified slavery itself with this end in mind and published his views.<sup>51</sup> as outlined in the June Crown article.

One question though is whether he came to these views on his own or had been guided by the views within the Anglican hierarchy based in London. The latter seems quite likely.<sup>52</sup>

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in Foreign Parts was formed within the Anglican Church in 1701. The SPG had a royal charter and was thus firmly a part of the Anglican establishment. The head of the SPG was the Archbishop of Canterbury. The principal operational task of the SPG was to provide missionary priests to nascent Anglican parishes in the British North American colonies and the Caribbean. Later this expanded to its limited colonies in Africa. With extensive British involvement in the slave trade and the growing slave population among British settlers, the issue of slavery became an important one for the Anglican Church and the SPG in particular.

There was considerable debate about catechizing slaves and the institution of slavery itself. Views were expressed from the immediate freeing of slaves to defending slavery in order to provide for easy catechization of slaves belonging to Anglican masters. At the working level, missionary priests who opposed slavery were met with opposition from the Anglican slaveholders for economic reasons. Other missionary priests simply ignored the whole issue. Some as described by Rick Geffken in the case of the Reverend Samuel Cooke owned a few

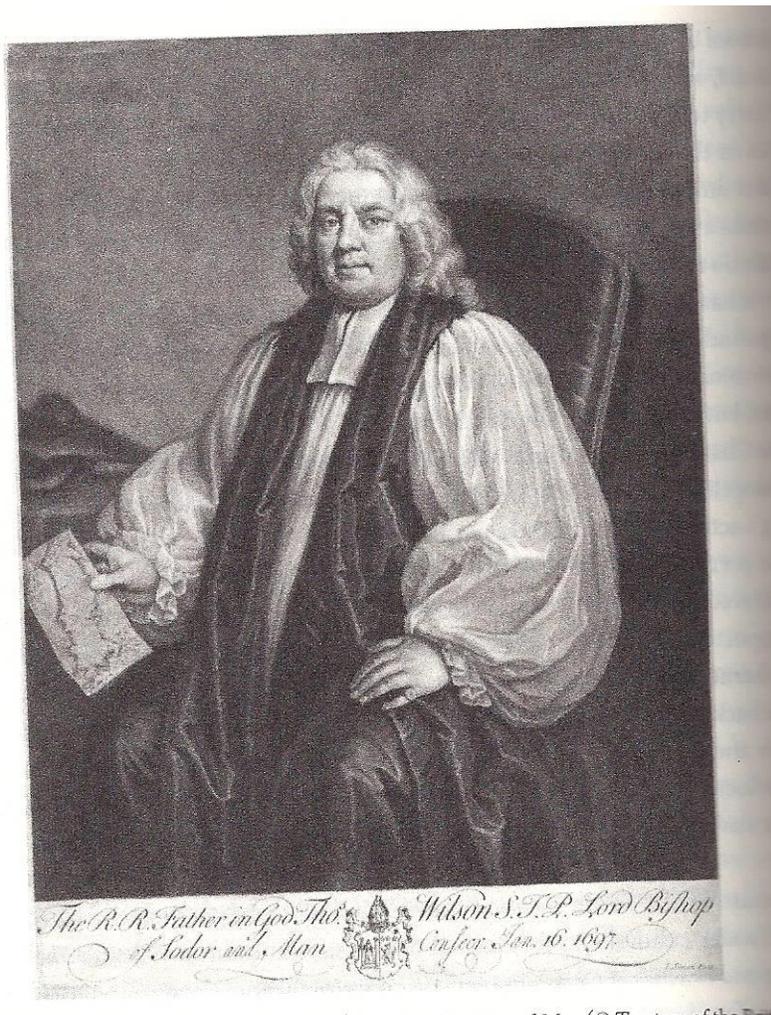
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<sup>51</sup> Thomas Thompson, "The African Trade for Negro Slaves Consistent with Humanity and Revealed Religion". London (1772)

<sup>52</sup> Travis Gleeson, "Mastering Christianity: Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World" (2012).

slaves themselves. There were some who took the position of “settlers first” emphasizing the priority of tending to the spiritual needs of British settlers. Others felt that the principal charter of the SPG was to bring the gospel to the “heathen”.

As the SPG and the broader Anglican leadership grappled with these issues, attempts were made to provide uniform guidance to missionary priests. This occurred in 1740 with the publication of a work by entitled, “The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity Made Easy”. The author was Thomas Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man.<sup>53</sup>



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<sup>53</sup> Thomas Wilson, “The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity Made Easy” (1740)

## BISHOP THOMAS WILSON

The title of the book suggests present day tomes that strive to make complex subjects easier to understand and operationalize. And indeed, Wilson had written many texts to make Christianity and Anglicanism more accessible. This text was a how-to book for missionaries in bringing heathens into Christianity. Over the years it became the “bible” in this regard for missionary priests. Furthermore, its influence suggested an acceptance of this view throughout the Anglican hierarchy. The text clearly was driven by the need to catechize heathens. And as such it accepted slavery as an extant means to a desirable end. Bondage as a source of salvation. It also noted the belief of all peoples’ spiritual equality in the eyes of God. Wilson did tie slavery to Old Testament texts that he interpreted as driving an acceptance of slavery, if not a defense of it.

It is hard to believe that this work did not influence Thompson who, prior to his missionary work, was an Oxford academic. So, Thompson’s views in his treatise were more of a further elucidation of the support of slavery through Biblical texts no matter how tortuous.

There was another remarkable aspect of Anglicanism and slavery in the colonies. This was the case of the Codrington Plantation. In 1710 Christopher Codrington, the former governor-general of the Leeward Islands, bequeathed a working Barbadian sugar plantation with all its slaves to the SPG. Codrington was a strong supporter of the SPG and envisioned the plantation as providing an ongoing source of revenue. The SPG operated this farm for over a century. In addition to operating the farm for a profit, it undertook the Christianizing of hundreds of slaves. So, here was a remarkable “test case” in which the SPG could demonstrate their approach to catechizing “heathens” while operating a profitable enterprise. This is a remarkably complex story even for a test case and I would urge readers to look at it in more depth. Simply stated though, while the SPG tried to manage the workers with some degree of dignity, when the plantation experienced difficult economic times this was taken out on the slaves. On the spiritual side the conversion of these slaves to Christianity did not go well. One reason was that the slave population was continually replenished with arrivals from Africa. These new slaves brought with them their local religious beliefs which were difficult to dislodge.

## The Role of the Reverend George Keith

by Robert M. Kelly, Jr.

In this final article we will look at early views that opposed slavery in some ways and the role of Reverend George Keith, our first missionary priest. In particular, Keith had been a Quaker and then converted to Anglicanism. Because of this and the large Friends population in the Jersey colony, looking at views from both sects is important.



MORGAN GODWYN

As noted in last month's article much of the received wisdom on slavery and the evangelization of slaves in the Anglican church was based on publications and activities in Great Britain that then informed the views of missionary priests like our Reverend Thomas Thompson. However, there were views contrary to this general Anglican orthodoxy that slaveholding was not a violation of moral or theological principles and that evangelizing slaves was a Christian responsibility. One principal contrarian voice was that of Morgan Godwyn.<sup>54</sup> Godwyn was the son of an Anglican clergyman and an Oxford graduate. He ministered in Virginia for several years before moving to Barbados. He was passionate about slaves and indigenous people and his views were captured in a 1680 treatise.<sup>55</sup> Like many he did not start by opposing slavery per se but claiming that Anglicans were not doing enough to Christianize them. This led then to the reason for that fueled by one underlying belief was that these groups were victims of Noah's curse which rendered them to be subhuman and thus not proper subjects for Christianization. (In his treatise, Godwyn quoted one woman as saying that she might as well baptize a puppy.) Godwyn believed this to be patently false. Thus, Genesis was the cover for slavery that Godwyn rejected. That may have been enough for his basic argument for the validity of Christianization, but it logically took matters further. If these groups were human two other facts emerged. One is that the brutal treatment of slaves was unchristian. Another is that they could not be held as slaves. Coming full circle, he then argues that successful evangelization can only occur when individuals are free. However, while those views were implied by his logic, he did back off in

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<sup>54</sup> Travis Gleeson, "Mastering Christianity: Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World" (2012).

<sup>55</sup> Morgan Godwyn, "The Negros and Indians Advocate." (1680)

saying that “it was clear enough that Christianity doth not lessen any obligations of Servants to their lawful Masters”. So, he did not quite get there. In any case his perspectives did have a following and started a build-up to opposition to slavery in the Anglican church that would take a long time, mired in politics as much as theology.



GEORGE KEITH

This takes us to George Keith our founding missionary priest. But to consider Keith and slavery we must consider his views when he was a Quaker. Keith was a Quaker both in Great Britain and in the colonies. He had very strong opinions about many aspects of Quaker beliefs including the role of Christ in the Inner Light. He felt that Christ should have greater recognition in that concept. Keith could be strident in his views and had many enemies in the Society of Friends. His views extended to slavery and in 1693 he wrote an essay on the subject<sup>56</sup>. In this essay he was very clear that Negroes were a “Real part of Mankind” and “capable of Salvation”. He further argued that Friends to be true Christians, embodying the Fruits of the Spirit of Christ and to express these attributes of Love, Mercy, Goodness, and Compassion towards all in Misery, (should) relieve them of their hard bondage. He then further states that such bondage is actually a hindrance to Negroes in becoming Christians. He also noted that slavery transgressed the Golden Rule, *Do unto others as you would have others do unto you*. Keith further argues his point based on Scripture particularly in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

Keith’s views on slavery were not well received in the Quakers here. Like Anglicans many owned slaves and for economic reasons were loathe to free them. Keith was ahead of his time but his collection of disagreements with the Friends caused him to convert to Anglicanism which aligned better with his theological perspectives. On the slavery issue his views did not align with most majority Anglican perspectives. As an Anglican minister Keith seemed to rein in his stridency in general and did not continue any crusade against slavery.

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<sup>56</sup> George Keith, “An Exhortation and Caution to Friends Concerning Buying or Keeping of Negroes” (1693)

Keith's position on slavery in the Friends context was aligned in part with those of George Fox, founder of Quakerism. Fox regretted slavery but did not call for its abolition. In the mid 1700s a new voice emerged in the Quaker community in Great Britain that was strongly opposed to slavery. One prominent voice belonged to Benjamin Lay<sup>57</sup>, a four-foot tall gentleman who emigrated to Philadelphia and became a strong early abolitionist. In part his views were fueled by the treatment of slaves that he had seen while he was in Barbados. He also wrote a seminal treatise<sup>58</sup>



BENJAMIN LAY

The Anglican voices against slavery also strengthened as the 18<sup>th</sup> century progressed.

In summary over a period of almost a century there were ongoing theological disputes about how to Christianize slaves and the more fundamental underlying theological arguments for and against that institution. It seems that these would have been more rapidly resolved in favor of abolition, if there were not arguments of keeping slaves hostage to more readily evangelize them. However, this perspective seems to have been more strongly opposed and overwhelmed by the political and economic forces of slavery. Something as integral to the political and economic life of a society is very hard to change. The fact that many Anglican and Quaker adherents thought themselves dependent on slavery prevented many clerics from challenging them and losing them. Personal politics also entered the fray. Some thought that Keith's anti-slavery arguments were targeted at rich slaveholding Philadelphians who were Quakers. But while this may be true, it may also have been true that Keith was sincere in his views.

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<sup>57</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin\\_Lay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Lay)

<sup>58</sup> Benjamin Lay, "[All Slave-keepers that keep the Innocent in Bondage, Apostates](#)" (1737)

All told a terrible tragedy that well-meaning Christians could not easily undo, and it is evidenced in personal terms in our Parish Register for all to see.

## **Conclusions**

This study indicates that Christ Church parishioner slaveholders were usually from the upper, wealthy classes of 18<sup>th</sup> century Shrewsbury Town society. These slaveholders were also prominent citizens, involved in the political issues of their time - the majority, as Church of England parishioners, sided with the Revolutionary War Loyalists, though some supported the rebellious "Patriot" cause. Many of those who remained loyal to Britain lost their real estate and their enslaved "property" to legislative confiscations.

Perhaps surprising to modern readers, several clergymen were slaveholders, as abhorrent as "America's original sin" seems to us now. Yet men like the Rev. Samuel Cooke (1723-1795) were representative of the broad acceptance of slavery in colonial East Jersey.

In the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century the Anglican hierarchy were loath to challenge slavery. Theological leadership in London argued for its continuation based largely on evangelical opportunities among the enslaved. Missionary priests also recoiled from challenging slave-owning parishioners due to a possible loss of congregants for economic concerns. The Quaker establishment was not much different at the time.

Owners of large tracts of farmland justified slavery to support their families and to accumulate more wealth. This was compounded by eighteenth century attitudes which saw Africans as savages, less than human, and therefore exploitable as "farming machines."

Often families of the time were multi-generational slaveholders, passing their "chattel property" down to their heirs, as described in numerous Last Wills. A few freed their slaves before New Jersey finally abolished the abominable practice in January of 1866.

It is our belief that in order to understand the racial tensions remaining in America today, we must face the uncomfortable truths of our shared past. We trust these articles will help that understanding.