

# Race, Religion, and the Scottish Empire: St. Andrew's Kirk, Nassau, ca. 1810-1852

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<https://doi.org/10.15362/ijbs.v26i0.351>

## Abstract

This article examines the relationships between the Scottish diaspora community and the Afro-Caribbean and Anglican populations of New Providence Island during the first half of the 19th century. St. Andrew's Kirk in Nassau was founded by Scottish emigrants in 1809 to provide them with a Presbyterian place of worship. The original members were, in part, British Loyalists – formerly based in North America – who had accepted Royal land grants on the archipelago in 1783. Many brought enslaved people with them, expecting their fortunes to recover in a new plantation economy. In 1837 William Maclure, a native of Ayrshire in southwest Scotland, became the fifth minister appointed to the Kirk. Unlike the previous ministers, Maclure remained in his Bahamian pulpit for over 25 years. Sources from his tenure at the church provide a window into the social, racial, and theological dynamics of Victorian New Providence. For example, in a letter published in a Scottish newspaper in the late autumn of 1852, Maclure stated somewhat cryptically that “the remains of the curse of slavery are upon us.” This article will offer an answer to the following three questions: First, to what degree have recent studies of the Scottish diaspora communities in the British West Indies underappreciated the Bahamian situation? Second, how did the members and ministers of St. Andrew's Kirk, Nassau interact with issues of race and slavery from the founding of the church to the era in which Maclure's letter was published? Lastly, what exactly was William Maclure referring to regarding the “curse of slavery”?

## Introduction: The Bahamas Amongst British West Indian Scottish Diaspora Communities

The presence of Scots in the early modern and modern Atlantic world and their roles in the various inner-workings of the British Empire have gained increased scholarly attention over the past two decades. Particular emphasis has been placed on the role of national networks abroad and the consideration of Scotland's complicity in transatlantic slavery. Regarding networks, Douglas Hamilton (2005) and Tom Devine (2015) have both argued that Scottish men and women tended to form tight-knit social groupings in the Caribbean similar to those historically associated with Highland and

Lowland clanship. Yet such clan-like networks of and between Scots in the Caribbean and Scotland exceeded family ties. According to Hamilton (2005), “fluidity within social relationships enabled Scottish networks in the Caribbean to encompass within them notions of blood-kinship and local identification, alongside more practical considerations of fictive or imagined kinship” (p. 26).

This more flexible notion of clanship amongst Scots in the British West Indies has also been described as “fratritism” – the mixture of fraternal and patriotic connections that naturally developed between Scots abroad. According to Murray Pittock (as

cited in Morris, 2018), fratricidal relationships resulted in “the preservation of one’s submerged national identity in the public realm in foreign countries” (p. 20). As noted below, these bonds of fratricidalism found institutional expression in the Caribbean through social and religious organizations like St. Andrew’s Societies and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

As to the nation’s role in the wider phenomenon of transatlantic slavery, Devine (2015), Morris (2018), and others have lately dispelled long-held presumptions of innocence by analysing and describing the various ways that 18th and early 19th century Scotland gained massive amounts of wealth from the slave economies of the Atlantic world. While a comparatively small number of slave ships sailed from Scottish ports, Scottish merchants, traders, planters, and government officials benefited directly – and often handsomely – from the production and sale of sugar, tobacco, and cotton. As a result of increased scholarly attention, the people of Scotland have become more conscious of their nation’s darker past, leading most recently to a report from the University of Glasgow detailing the ways in which it participated institutionally in perpetuating slavery by accepting funds from wealthy Scottish slaveholders in the form of scholarship endowments and donations. As a result, *The Guardian* reported on September 17, 2018 that the university had committed itself to “reparative justice” and further study (Belam, 2018).

While the insights and groundwork of these and other scholars have proven invaluable in contextualizing the present study, they almost completely ignore The Bahamas. Hamilton’s (2005) pioneering work, for example, focuses primarily on Jamaica, Dominica, St. Vincent, Grenada, and Tobago. In the indices of many other recent works, “Bahamas” is simply not to be found. While the Bahamian archipelago played a

less central role in the British West Indian economy than larger sugar islands like Jamaica, the Scottish diaspora community in The Bahamas played a pivotal role in the government, trade, and society of that colony – and did so in ways that both conformed to and diverged from similar communities in other parts of the British Caribbean. This is particularly the case with regard to national networks and religious practice.

In his discussion of networks, Hamilton (2005) observed that Scots in other parts of the Atlantic world tended to form fratricidal connections through Scottish societies such as the Philadelphia St. Andrew’s Society, established in 1749. Yet, based on his data collected on the aforementioned islands, he concluded: “There were none in the British Caribbean” (p. 48). While likely true for Jamaica, Dominica, St. Vincent, Grenada, and Tobago, this was not at all the situation in The Bahamas. A St. Andrew’s Society was established at Nassau in 1798 by a group of Scottish colonists and Scottish-American Loyalists who had settled in the British domain after the American Revolution (*Rules of the Saint Andrew Society*, 1941).

Regarding religion, Hamilton (2005) claimed that “the Church of Scotland showed very little interest in the Caribbean...Not until 1819 was a kirk built in Jamaica” (p. 49). Both Michael Morris (2018) and Stephen Mullen (2016) have repeated this claim that the Scots Kirk in Kingston was the first of its kind in the British Caribbean. Yet again, while this was the case with regards to the data sample collected by Hamilton (2005), such claims must be reconsidered in light of The Bahamas. St. Andrew’s Kirk in Nassau was established in 1810, nearly a full decade prior to its sister congregation in Jamaica. It is to that island, that community, and that church that this article now turns.

**Colony, Community, and Kirk: Scots in The Bahamas and St. Andrew's, Nassau (1783-1837)**

Apart from small enclaves on New Providence and Eleuthera dating to the mid-17th century, British influence in The Bahamas was limited until it became an official colony of the United Kingdom in 1717. Much of the 18th century was fraught with colonial mismanagement and piracy and the islands were occupied by both the Americans and the Spanish during the 1770s and 1780s. Yet following the end of the American Revolution, Britain regained control. Between 1783 and 1785, the White and enslaved population of the colony expanded greatly due to an influx of around 1,600 North American Loyalists and 5,700 of their slaves (Craton & Saunders, 1992).

Many of the Loyalists emigrated from Southern plantation economies and hoped the Caribbean island chain would provide new opportunities for the cultivation and export of cash crops. In the short term, they were successful. In the five years between 1785 and 1790, Bahamian cotton production increased from 124 to 442 tons. Yet the boom was short-lived. Production from 1790 to 1810 was “slow and intermittent,” and soil exhaustion, insect infestation, and market competition soon drove the cotton industry of The Bahamas into decline. However, by that point, many of the erstwhile Loyalists had entrenched themselves within the White oligarchy of Nassau and found continued success in non-agricultural fields facilitated by a surge in trade around the turn of the 19th century (Craton & Saunders, 1992).

Despite the waning of the cotton industry, agriculture remained a lucrative business. The White oligarchy thus had a vested interest in maintaining the system of chattel slavery for as long as possible. Following the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, however, more and more pressure was placed on the government in London to ensure as fair

and humane a treatment of British slaves as possible. Such concerns for amelioration later evolved into calls for outright emancipation in the 1820s. The plantocracy and colonial Assembly of The Bahamas fought hard to resist such measures. Basing their appeals on the twin pillars of “rights to self-legislation and...property rights in their slaves,” the White elite resisted changes to the existing system of bondage and campaigned at Westminster for favourable terms when it became clear that emancipation was only a matter of time and negotiation (Craton & Saunders, 1992, p. 221). Indeed, when slavery was officially abolished in 1834, former slaveowners were handsomely compensated and a period of apprenticeship was imposed upon the Black population of the British West Indies for a variable number of years (Saunders, 2019). In The Bahamas, that number was four. The former African and Afro-Caribbean slaves finally gained full freedom with the end of apprenticeship in 1838.

Christian religious practice was a central part of Bahamian social and cultural life for all races and classes. The established church of the colony was the Church of England, which catered largely to the White ruling minority (Johnson, 2000). Yet, like other British colonies, “the religious diversity of the settlers migrating to the Caribbean short-circuited any kind of orthodoxy that the Anglicans wished to impose” (Edmonds & Gonzalez, 2010, p. 71). Methodist missionaries arrived in the 1790s and appealed to both free and enslaved portions of the Bahamian population. For the most part, however, the free and enslaved Afro-Caribbeans tended to worship in Black Baptist congregations with both indigenous and White missionary leadership. The increasing popularity of such nonconforming Christian groups alarmed the Anglican establishment whose primary constituents feared that the Christianization of the Black

and enslaved population might harbingers a loss of social control. Although the Anglicans had previously done “little or nothing to proselytize the Blacks,” the threat of religious pluralism catalysed new evangelistic efforts amongst the islands’ non-White majority (Craton & Saunders, 1992). Indeed, by Curry’s estimation, Bahamian “Christianity operated as a conservative force that allowed the ruling class to maintain a set social hierarchy” (2005, p. 4).

Such was the social and religious context in which the Church of Scotland’s first permanent Caribbean congregation was founded. The origins of St. Andrew’s Kirk, Nassau lie squarely within the realm of Scottish and Scottish-American emigrant networks. While Scots were amongst those resident in the islands from the earlier period, the arrival of a significant number of Scottish Loyalists from North America between 1783 and 1785 increased their representation within the colony and its chief port.

The first fratrotic institution created by this diaspora community was the St. Andrew’s Society, chartered by 55 Bahamian Scots in 1798 (*Rules of the Saint Andrew Society*, 1941). Michael Malcolm, a member of the St. Andrew’s Society and a native of Kinross-shire, initiated the subscription calling for a Scottish minister and building a Presbyterian place of worship in December of 1808 (Rae, 1910). In a letter published in Nassau’s *Royal Gazette*, Malcolm wrote:

As we are attached to the religion and morals of our fore-fathers, we naturally wish to instil [sic] the same attachments into the minds of our children...I venture to lay herewith before you a list for subscribing towards the expense of passage, and for annual contribution towards raising an adequate salary for a minister. (as cited in Russell, n.d.)

His appeal was met with success. The first minister, Rev. John Rae, arrived in 1809 and

led worship from the courthouse until the completion of the new building. Malcolm himself donated £200 towards the construction of the Kirk, and the foundation stone was laid in August of 1810 on a plot of land purchased from yet another member of the St. Andrew’s Society, Alexander Begbie. The five original trustees of the Kirk were Malcolm, William Kerr, James Wood, Neil McQueen, and Walter Finlay – all five members of the society (Rae, 1910).

From 1809 to 1830, the Kirk had minimal success retaining the services of a Church of Scotland clergyman for longer than a few years. The first minister, John Rae, left the colony around 1815 and retired to Stirling. His successor, Rev. Hugh MacFarlane, arrived with his wife on June 4, 1817, but died within three months. A third minister, Rev. Simon Fraser, arrived in 1821 and died in 1823. In 1824, the church gained funding from the House of Assembly, raising it to a similar, though subordinate, level with the Church of England. Following a gap of four years, Rev. Thomas Dewar was ordained to St. Andrew’s Kirk in 1827, arrived in 1828, but also died in 1830. For the next seven years, the congregation was without a pastor, although one of the Church of England rectors sometimes led services at the Kirk (Rae, 1910).

The Church of Scotland congregation of St. Andrew’s interacted with and participated in issues of race and slavery during its first three decades in a number of ways. For the most part, the ministers and members of St. Andrew’s buttressed the power of the White slaveholding elite, a trait that they shared with other Presbyterians in the pre-emancipation British West Indies (Edmonds & Gonzalez, 2010). For comparison, the Scottish Missionary Society’s missionaries in Jamaica in the 1820s and 1830s took a “neutral” stance on slavery in order to evangelize the enslaved population without incurring the ire of the planters and

magistrates (Proctor, 2004). In The Bahamas it appears to have been much the same. While there were some slaves amongst the Kirk's worshippers, they were a tiny minority; and there is no evidence to suggest that the membership included any free people of colour by the 1820s or that the Scottish ministers preceding Maclure made any attempts to critique the institution of slavery (Johnson, 2000).

Further, there is evidence that many of the major founding figures were themselves slaveholders at one time or another. Michael Malcolm acquired 160 acres of cotton land on Crooked Island sometime after his arrival with the other Loyalists and almost certainly held slaves (Russell, n.d., p. 1). The *Register of Freed Slaves* at the Bahamas National Archives includes manumission entries for Neil McQueen and Walter Finlay from the 1820s, when slavery became less profitable. Alexander Begbie, the Scot who provided the land for the Kirk, freed a woman of mixed race in 1797 named Harriet by whom he had fathered four children (Parrish, 1958). Thus, however William Maclure may have felt in 1852, it is clear that the fathers of the Kirk were among those marked by "the curse of slavery."

### **Education and Exposure: William Maclure in Scotland**

In order to critically consider Maclure's Bahamian ministry, it is first vital to understand the social, educational, and religious worlds of his formative years in Scotland. William Maclure was born around 1800 in the rural village of St. Quivox in Ayrshire, where his father – also named William – worked as the parish schoolmaster (Scott, 1928). Whether he was ever aware of it or not, his own childhood was intimately connected to the direct Scottish involvement in the Atlantic slave economy. The heritor – or local patron – of the parish church in St. Quivox during the late 18th century was none other than Richard Oswald (Sinclair, 1793).

A native of northeast Scotland, Oswald made his fortune as a part-owner of Bance Island, a notoriously brutal slaving station off the coast of modern-day Sierra Leone (Whyte, 2006).

After his parochial education, young William Maclure matriculated as a student at the University of Glasgow in 1815 (Innes, 1913). Upon the completion of his arts degree, he remained in Glasgow to study divinity from 1821 to 1825 (Scott, 1928). According to Rae, in Glasgow Maclure was "a pupil of Dr. Thomas Chalmers" (1910). The Chalmers to whom this refers is the Rev. Dr. Thomas Chalmers, the preacher, professor, social reformer, and leading figure within the evangelical movement of 19th century Scotland. The assertion that Maclure studied with Chalmers is almost certainly misguided, due to the fact that Chalmers' only professorship between 1815 and 1825 was at the University of St. Andrews on the other side of the country, starting in 1823. However, it is very likely that young William Maclure attended the Tron Kirk in Glasgow during his university days where Chalmers preached from 1815 to 1819 – and possible that he joined Chalmers in the urban St. John's parish between 1819 and 1823.

The records are frustratingly silent regarding where Maclure lived and what he was doing between his graduation in 1825 and ordination in 1836. What is certain is that the very same years saw the culmination of the British antislavery movement, with wide support across Scotland. Scottish involvement in abolitionism dated back to the first major campaign against the slave trade between 1788 and 1792 and continued when the emancipation campaigns began to gather support in the mid-1820s (Whyte, 2015). From 1788 up until the abolition of slavery, the Church of Scotland played a central role in the Scottish antislavery movement. Abolitionist societies were also started in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Paisley, and

Perth during the first wave and included the support and participation of church leaders from their inceptions (Whyte, 2006). While some Scots were complicit in slavery as merchants and planters, the majority gradually came out against the enslavement of human beings and lobbied hard to abolish the practice – both within and outside the British Empire.

The anti-slavery environment of Glasgow and the rest of Scotland between William Maclure's matriculation at university in 1815 and his ordination by the Presbytery of Glasgow in 1836 could not but have affected his own views on race and slavery. This seems all the more likely considering trends in Scottish abolitionism, Maclure's personal influences, and his eventual adoption of Christian abolitionist language. First, it was during this same era that, according to Duncan Rice (1981), "the enlightened critique of slavery" from the 18th century Scottish intelligentsia "came to be absorbed by men of acute religious sensibility" within the evangelical movement. Second, Maclure's networks in Glasgow included at least two evangelical antislavery figures. The first was Thomas Chalmers. Though he would later come to adopt a more conservative view than many of his peers in the 1840s with regard to American slavery, by the time Maclure met the churchman and professor, he had already motioned against slavery in 1814 and would write against it in 1826 at the behest of the English antislavery leader Thomas Clarkson (Whyte, 2016). The second antislavery figure in Maclure's ecclesiastical orbit was Professor Stevenson Macgill of Glasgow University. Macgill, formerly minister of the Tron Kirk, was appointed to the Chair of Divinity at Glasgow in 1814 and would have taught Maclure during his divinity course between 1821 and 1825. In 1814, Macgill played a leading role in Glasgow's antislavery campaign (Scott, 1928).

Finally, Maclure's reference to slavery from 1852 as a "curse" becomes less cryptic when viewed within the context of other Scottish Christian abolition language throughout the movement as a whole. According to Iain Whyte (2006), "In an age that took divine wrath for granted, this aspect found frequent mention" (p. 95). Phrases associated with the impending national and cosmic consequences of slavery from abolitionist sermons and petitions from the era included: "guilt upon our nation," "ripe for destruction," "guilt of the most atrocious nature," "avenger of the oppressed," "exposed to the judgment of heaven," and "gathering storm of divine retribution" (Whyte, 2006, pp. 72-73, 91, 95, 224). While these linguistic precedents do not explain what Maclure meant by the "curse of slavery" with regard to his particular experience of Bahamian society, they show that such language was by no means unusual for a Christian minister from Scotland during the antislavery era.

### **Mission, Conflict, and Race: William Maclure in Nassau**

Maclure was ordained by the Presbytery of Glasgow in December of 1836 and departed soon thereafter for The Bahamas. He arrived in Nassau on April 5, 1837 with his wife and immediately set to work. A number of letters by or about Maclure and his congregation appeared in various religious periodicals between 1837 and 1852. It is these sources that provide the basis for the following section. What emerges is a complex picture of a ministry defined by evangelical distinctives, inter-denominational conflict, and ambivalence regarding issues of race.

The first communication from Maclure was in fact a poem he wrote, entitled "On Leaving Scotland for a Foreign Shore." Published in *The Scottish Christian Herald* in 1837, the poem highlights the author's affinity for his homeland whilst reckoning optimistically

that departure for the sake of the Gospel is worth the cost. In the early part of the poem he waxes on about the “lochs” and “heathery braes” of Scotland that he will soon miss. This reveals the degree to which his own “Scottishness” was central to his personal identity. The end of the poem shifts to religious themes. The final two stanzas read:

Favoured of heaven, my native land!  
Thou seem'st the golden source

Where Truth to many a heathen shore  
shall spend her glorious course;

Till light shall break from distant tribes,  
and great Messiah reign

From rock-bound Greenland's icy strand  
to India's sultry plain.

Away, to haste that promised time, to  
distant isles I go,

Where earth reveals a fairer fruit, and sky  
a brighter glow;

Oh! Soon with fruit,—with ray divine,  
good Lord, the nations bless,

The *fruits of holiness* be theirs,—the *Sun  
of Righteousness* (Maclure, 1837)

What becomes clear in this final section is that Maclure initially understood his role as a minister in The Bahamas in explicitly evangelical and eschatological terms.

The next notice from Maclure was an 1842 letter to Rev. R. S. Candlish, the editor of the *Home and Foreign Missionary Record for the Church of Scotland*. This second letter sheds light on the Scottish network of Nassau, the racial makeup of the Kirk, and the evangelical program established by Maclure following his arrival in 1837. Regarding the Scottish network, Maclure revealed that the Scottish contingent responsible for raising the Kirk had largely abandoned it. “All our principal merchants were Scotchmen at no distant period,” he wrote, “now not above one remains” (1842,

pp. 155-156). While the participation of Scots in the Kirk may have waned, the St. Andrew's Society continued to attract new members and maintain linkages with the Kirk. For example, due to local expectation, desire for fraternal community, or a mixture of both, Maclure himself became a member in 1841. When he decided to ordain four elders sometime between 1837 and 1842, at least half of the men he appointed were also all members of the society (*Rules of the Saint Andrew Society*, 1941). In this first case, then, Maclure provides an example of the perpetuation of Scottish diaspora networks amongst changing demographic environments.

Regarding the racial breakdown of the congregation, Craton and Saunders (1998) regarded it as “exclusively White.” According to Maclure's letter from 1842, this is perhaps an overstatement. By his counting there were at least a “few” Black congregants. Nevertheless, he was honest about the fact that “the bulk of the black and coloured population belongs, at least in name, to the Baptist persuasion” (Maclure, 1842, pp. 155-156). So while there may have been a small minority, those scholars are generally correct in asserting that “the Kirk took little interest in the black population” (Saunders, 2016, p. 27).

The 1842 letter also reveals that William Maclure was an evangelical and conducted his ministry along similar lines to his fellow evangelicals in Scotland. This is unsurprising for a number of reasons. First, he came of age and was ordained during the height of the evangelical movement in the Church of Scotland. Second, he had personal contact with two leaders of the movement: Chalmers and Macgill. Third, he was enthusiastic about foreign missions and shared his enthusiasm publicly in *The Scottish Christian Herald* – an evangelical periodical. Accordingly, he added a number of characteristically evangelical elements to the normal workings

of the Kirk in Nassau. He held a “monthly meeting for the reading of missionary intelligence,” supplemented his preaching with “occasional lectures” on topics like the conversion of the Jews, instituted a weekly prayer meeting, and started “a Sabbath school of lately captured Africans” (Maclure, 1842, p. 155-156). The last venture proved to be the most controversial. After mentioning his Sabbath school, Maclure tersely noted that “civil interference contrived to injure, almost to ruin that” (1842, p. 155-156).

Education in The Bahamas was slow to develop, and in the early- to mid-1800s schooling was largely left to the churches and parents willing and able to secure private education. According to Craton and Saunders (1998),

The Sunday schools attached to the churches in the last period of slavery provided the first vestiges of education for the black majority of Bahamians. The Anglican church entered the field only to sustain its primacy under competitive pressure from the nonconformist chapel (p. 26)

Indeed, the Anglicans began to institute a program of Sabbath schools in 1830 and attempted to establish one in the then-vacant St. Andrew’s Kirk. The local Presbyterian members rejected the notion and the sympathetic Nassau *Royal Gazette* printed reports from a Church of Scotland Sabbath school in Kingston, Jamaica, in an attempt to rally support within the Bahamian Kirk (Sands, 1998). While this initial attempt was to no avail, the reports from Jamaica doubtlessly showed the Presbyterians that such a program was possible in their own denominational context.

More educational infrastructure developed in the 1830s and 1840s that also impinged upon the religious atmosphere. As formal education became a priority of the colonial assembly, the Anglican clergy lobbied for

exclusive access to religious education in the schools despite continued protestations from the other denominations. As a result of these conflicts, ministers were disallowed from membership on the new Board of Education in 1841 (Craton & Saunders, 1998). It seems most likely that this decision to exclude ministers—and, in the view of non-Anglicans, continue to privilege the episcopal clergy—in 1841 was the event that Maclure alluded to with regard to “civil interference” (Lawlor, 2015).

While Maclure continued to minister to his Church of Scotland congregation in Nassau, the church at home prepared for potential crisis. Between 1834 and 1842, tensions between the two major parties in the Church of Scotland—the Evangelicals and the Moderates—led a group of leading evangelical ministers to walk out of the 1843 General Assembly to form their own church. Among this group was Thomas Chalmers and R. S. Candlish. In 1842, Maclure’s colonial Kirk session passed a motion in sympathy with the Evangelical Party and, in 1843, joined the Free Church of Scotland (Rae, 1910). The next letter published by Maclure included a note of solidarity with the Free Kirk alongside an editorial vote of thanks for a donation from the Bahamians of £30 (1844, p. 104).

The next sources relating activity within the Kirk were back-to-back items published in July of 1848 in an American Sunday School periodical called *The Well-Spring*. These short pieces are informative on three accounts. First, they indicate the leading role played by one of the Kirk elders, Timothy Darling. Darling was an American native and one-time U.S. Consul to The Bahamas, whose native connections likely occasioned to association with *The Well-Spring*, an organ of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society. Second, they show that a Sabbath school at St. Andrew’s was established around 1845 and by 1848 included 70

students. Lastly, according to the correspondence, the Sabbath school focused on the conversion of the pupils to vibrant evangelical faith and the support of foreign missions towards similar ends. The St. Andrew's class, along with a female sewing circle, financially supported a native catechist named Banka Behari Busu attached to Rev. Alexander Duff's Free Church mission in Calcutta, India ("Letter from a converted heathen youth", 1848).

The last source from this era is Maclure's 1852 update to the Free Church of Scotland that included the allusion to the "curse of slavery." While the bulk of the letter was good news regarding continued success with the Sabbath school and "proofs of the blessing of the Spirit" amongst the congregation, it is the negative reports from 1852 that relate directly to issues of conflict and race that occupied St. Andrew's, Nassau during the intervening years (Maclure, 1852, p. 103).

Both the editorial introduction and Maclure's attached letter provide information regarding issues of friction in The Bahamas. According to the editor,

The presence of an archdeacon and various clergy of the English Church, has, it may easily be understood, given Episcopacy a considerable predominance ... and no inconsiderable part of Mr Maclure's difficulties have arisen from the opposition to which High Church sectarianism has given rise (1852, p. 103).

Maclure's letter then began:

Outwardly, the Sabbath could not be better kept. But the remains of the curse of slavery are upon us, and the intense formality of the Episcopal Church, its undissembled Puseyism, and its ever eager efforts to proselytize, form sad drawbacks to the vitality and power of

true religion (1852, p. 103)

In summary, some form of religious competition with the Bahamian Church of England – or an Anglo-Catholic portion of it – between 1848 and 1852 caused trouble for Maclure in a way that somehow related to the effects of slavery on Bahamian society.

First, the archdeacon in question was an Anglican cleric named John McCammon Trew. In general, the archdeacon was one of the most vocal Anglicans on the island in support of privileging Anglican religious education in the schools. He was so ardent in this regard that he "insinuated himself" onto the Board of Education in the mid-1840s, even after members of the clergy were banned from joining (Craton & Saunders, 1998). Beyond this, two instances brought Maclure or his allies into conflict with the archdeacon. In 1849, Maclure was barred from officiating at the funeral of a Presbyterian child at one of the island's burial grounds. Eventually, Maclure and other ministers outside the Church of England successfully lobbied the colonial legislature to pass a compromise law allowing non-Anglican clergymen to officiate funerals in non-Anglican burial grounds. However, Trew was in favour of maintaining the restrictions, felt the new law conceded too much, and "resigned his seat in the Council" as a result (Sands, 1998). Then, in 1850, Trew published a speech that took aim at the United States for perpetuating a system of slavery that allowed masters to abuse their slaves at will. Maclure's American elder, Timothy Darling, took issue with this accusation and claimed that American slaveowners were not, in fact, above the law (Johnson, 2000). As the ranking Anglican clergyman on the island, Archdeacon Trew embodied the episcopal arrogance that Maclure despised, effectively ignored his education and lawful ordination, and offended his elder and Sunday school leader.

Second, the accusation of “undissembled Puseyism” was likely directed at another Anglican clergyman named W. J. Woodcock in relation to educational competition. Woodcock was consecrated by the Bishop of Jamaica in 1848, spent nearly three years in active religious and educational work among the poor Black residents of Grant’s Town, and died in 1851. During his time as curate of the new St. Agnes parish, Woodcock used his personal wealth to fund several schools designed to promote exclusive Anglican religious education. By 1853, the Woodcock schools had over 300 attendees. Despite a present lack of evidence that Woodcock was himself an avowed Anglo-Catholic, the fact that St. Agnes became the preeminent Black high church parish in New Providence suggests that he very well might have been (Craton & Saunders, 1998). What is certain is that Woodcock—whose new parish church was less than half a mile from St. Andrew’s Kirk—found much greater success in education than Maclure with a system that disenfranchised the Scotsman’s beliefs. In his positive report from the same letter, Maclure made sure to include that his own Sabbath school was “a nursery for the Church...the Shorter Catechism, with its proofs, forms, next to the Bible itself, the main groundwork of the instructions of all the teachers” (1852, p. 103).

Finally, what can be made of the assertion that “the remains of the curse of slavery are upon us”? After analysing the context in which that statement was made, the most plausible explanation is that William Maclure believed the system of slavery abolished in 1838 did not allow for the proper Christianisation of the Black population, leaving them susceptible to what he dismissively referred to as their “proselytization” by his denominational and political rivals. The dark irony is, of course, that his own church was complicit in the perpetuation of that system and did little to

include the Afro-Bahamian majority following emancipation.

In this, Maclure—like his ecclesiastical mentor Thomas Chalmers—fell prey to the tendency to dichotomise between individual and structural sin and salvation (Whyte, 2012). As his poem and evangelical agenda made clear, his primary concern was preaching to convert individuals. While he most certainly would have ascribed to abolitionist principles, he was comfortable associating himself with power structures and people linked to slavery. For instance, in 1848 he and Timothy Darling were passionate about the support of their Indian catechist in Calcutta. Yet Maclure did not respond with a public denunciation of his dignified elder when Darling effectively defended American slavery in his 1850 interchange with Archdeacon Trew. In sum, “the curse of slavery” for Maclure had more to do with immediate obstacles to his vision of mission, conversion, and Christian education than an uncompromising stance against the abuses and dislocations of transatlantic slavery.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has argued that the inclusion of The Bahamas in considerations of the Scottish diaspora communities of the British West Indies expands and enriches a strong—yet incomplete—body of scholarship. An example of this is the relationship between race, religion, and Scottish and Scottish-American settlers in Nassau attached to St. Andrew’s Kirk in the early- to mid-19th century. Regarding that specific community, this paper has contended that the members and ministers facilitated the continuation of White hegemony while simultaneously seeking to improve the spiritual and educational opportunities for the island’s Presbyterians.

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