Nationalist Themes in the Preaching of Jupiter Hammon

Author(s): Phillip M. Richards

Source: *Early American Literature*, 1990, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1990), pp. 123-138

Published by: University of North Carolina Press

Stable URL: http://www.jstor.com/stable/25056808

NATIONALIST THEMES IN THE PREACHING OF JUPITER HAMMON

PHILLIP M. RICHARDS
Colgate University

Born a slave on October 17, 1711, Jupiter Hammon is best known as the first published Afro-American poet by virtue of his 1760 poem, "An Evening Thought." Hammon served the family of Henry Lloyd, owner of Queens Village, a manor on Long Island (Osann 20, 24). The Lloyds were paternalistic masters who rewarded obedient slaves with affection and trust.[1] Clearly, Hammon was an exceptional slave. He, like few other bondsmen in the Huntington area, was a Christian.[2] During his adulthood, Hammon handled small financial matters for the family.[3] Most importantly, he was educated and given the leisure to read as well as to write. These biographical facts underlie the now accepted picture of Hammon as a black writer who uncritically assimilated the religious views of his master and contentedly accepted the role of pampered slave (Baker 3–6). However, this conventional view fails to assess the impact of the Revolutionary period upon Hammon as a preacher and spokesman.

The American Revolution, which interrupted the comfort and stability of the poet-preacher's life, was the central political event of Hammon's experience. By the time of the struggle, the Lloyd family had split into Loyalist and Whig factions. When the British occupied Long Island in 1776, the sixty-five-year-old Jupiter Hammon went to Connecticut with two Lloyd Whigs, his second master, Joseph Lloyd (Henry's son) and John Lloyd II, Joseph's nephew. They lived first in Stamford and later in Hartford. Joseph Lloyd committed suicide mistakenly believing that the British had captured Charleston and were about to win the war. After the end of the Revolution, Hammon returned to Queens Village with his third master, John Lloyd. The slave preacher apparently died at some time between 1790 and 1806 (Osann 30, 38). Hammon was therefore in a position to observe firsthand the political conflicts that rocked Long

Island during the war as well as to imbibe the religious rhetoric that legitimized the colonists' revolutionary efforts.

As his writings, which are usually addressed to blacks, indicate, Hammon absorbed the politicized Christian discourse of the war years. During the Revolution and post-Revolutionary periods, the poet wrote a number of evangelical works, drawing upon the conventions of Protestant rhetoric to promote black uplift. "An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatley," which appeared in 1778, celebrates the black poet as a Christian and moral exemplar. The 1782 "A Poem for Children with Thoughts on Death" is in the tradition of sermons encouraging the "rising generation" to piety. The two sermons "A Winter Piece" and "An Evening's Improvement" both seek to evangelize blacks during the late years of the war. In his final published piece, "An Address to the Negroes of the State of New-York," Hammon tried to instill piety and morality into an Afro-American audience during the postwar period. Employing Puritan rhetoric for often moralistic purposes during the 1770s and 1780s, Hammon was a black exponent of what Gordon Wood has described as the demand for moral reformation during the period (Wood 114–18). However, Hammon put his distinctive emphases upon the ministerial appeal for civic order.

Drawing upon the theology, religious rituals, and political rhetoric associated with the call for moral reformation, Hammon propounded a nationalist message to his black audience.[4] He urged his fellows to rise from their wretchedness and maintain a virtuous Afro-American nation. Secondly, he argued that through moral and spiritual reform, blacks could become autonomous, significant parts of American society. In sum, Hammon called upon Afro-Americans to assert themselves as a nation within a nation, retaining their African identity while continuing to exist within American society. Hammon's fusion of religious ideology and rhetoric into a nationalistic message anticipates the writing of early nineteenth-century black nationalists such as David Walker.

To see Hammon as a nationalist is to see the shortcomings of recent assessments of the preacher and his work. These readings argue that Hammon evaded his ethnic identity as well as the social realities faced by blacks of the period. Houston Baker claims that Hammon showed little awareness of his African past and "turn[ed] his face away from the miseries of oppression and [thought] only of a divine realm" (Baker 3). Bernard Bell, in another interpretation of Hammon's work, suggests that the slave preacher transcended the duality of his African and American identities by escaping into a spiritual realm (Bell 176). To the contrary, Hammon made his and his audience's shared ethnic identity into the basis of a national identity. And in calling for moral reform, Hammon

advocated a means of responding to the social and political predicament of Afro-Americans.

The nationalist intentions behind Hammon's call for moral reformation were signaled by his manipulation of persona, audience, and diction in his orations. Significantly, each of Hammon's prose pieces introduces an African patriot-persona who declares his desire to promote the welfare of his African nation-audience. In his first sermon, "A Winter Piece," Hammon states "I shall endeavor by divine assistance to enlighten the minds of my brethren; for we are a poor despised nation" (69). Similarly, in "An Evening's Improvement," the persona remarks: "I have had an invitation to write something more to encourage my dear fellow servants and brethren, Africans, in the knowledge of the Christian religion" (91). And in "An Address to the Negroes of the State of New-York," Hammon writes: "I think you will be more likely to listen to what is said, when you know it comes from a negro, one of your own nation and colour, and [*sic*] therefore can have no interest in deceiving you, or in saying any thing to you, but what he really thinks is your interest, and duty to comply with" (107).

Similarly, the patriot-persona uses the term "African" to make his audience conscious of itself as a significant group that could act collectively. Hammon's references to the black nation implicitly allude to the substantial black presence in New York and Connecticut, a population that had grown significantly during the eighteenth century.[5] Hammon's use of the word "African" also suggested the distinct ethnic and cultural ties which bound his community despite its lack of geographical territory or formal political institutions. The implied strength of such unity counteracted the weaknesses implicit in what he refers to as his own and his audience's sense of being "poor" and "despised." In the face of an overwhelming white presence, the numbers and coherence of his black listeners, Hammon implied, made his moral nationalism plausible.

Hammon's first sermon, the 1782 "A Winter Piece," takes the form of an evangelical homily that seeks to convert its Afro-American audience. However, the subtext is the nationalist argument that through moral reformation, the Africans can rise from their plight, become a virtuous nation, and assert themselves as independent individuals within American society. Hammon's nationalist appeal for moral regeneration implicitly responds to the social and individual disorder experienced by blacks in late eighteenth-century New England.

The biblical text of the sermon is Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden." Following the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith, Hammon interprets the biblical text to argue that men ought not to be self-righteous. True saints instead humbly rely on

Christ's righteousness for redemption. The holy man is therefore a humble man. However, from this conventional interpretation of justification by faith, Hammon leaps to the argument that saints who meekly trust in Christ can provide godly order within their community. First, he observes "if the generality of men were more humble and more holy, we should not hear the little children in the street taking God's holy name in vain" (75). And, thus, he exhorts the community as a whole to humble godliness: "therefore my Brethren, we should endeavour to walk humble and holy, to avoid the appearance of evil; to live a life void of offence toward God and towards man" (75).

Hammon interprets humility as the civic virtue which is the basis of the godly community. As such a virtue, humility persists because it renders the individual impervious to immoral social pressures. Interpreting the text's exhortation to humility as an injunction "to avoid all bad company, to keep . . . [oneself] pure in heart" (68), Hammon implies that humility entails a rejection of sinful peer pressure and requires the autonomous pursuit of virtue. In expounding this conception of moral autonomy, Hammon quotes Psalm 1:1: "Hear what David saith. . . . Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly nor standeth in the way of sinners. Here we see how much it becomes us to live as christians, not in rioting and drunkenness, uncleanness, Sabbath breaking, swearing, taking God's holy name in vain; but our delight should be in the law of the Lord" (75). The autonomy of the saint created the possibility that the moral virtue of individual Afro-Americans would persist and lay the groundwork for a virtuous black society.

The spiritual and moral reformation that transformed the Afro-American community also permitted it to assert its identity as a distinct nation. This linkage between moral reformation and the assertion of national identity was made by the jeremiads preached by the ministers of the Revolution (Bercovitch 123). Hammon may well have read such a jeremiad from the Connecticut ministerial organization in the *Connecticut Courant and Weekly Intelligencer* of Tuesday, June 29, 1779. In this document, the ministers castigate the people for "intemperance, pride, luxury, uncleanness and other gross abominations which threaten, not only the destruction of religion, but even of all morality." The ministers offered their audience a chance to reform and therefore enjoy the peace that could be expected by "our Jerusalem," the covenant nation. In the context of the Revolution, the ministers' attribution of the identities of "Jerusalem," "Zion," and "Our bleeding country" to the new nation pointed to America's status as God's new Israel, an independent country, separate from England by virtue of a distinct providential history.[6]

Hammon similarly drew upon the jeremiad to exhort his community

to legitimize itself as an autonomous nation through moral and spiritual regeneration. Hammon asserts that the African saints in disobeying God and returning to Him, can also assume the role of God's new Israel. Early in the sermon, he attacks his Afro-American audience, claiming that they are "too much the servants of sin," "Sabbath breakers," "hedonists," and merely nominal Christians (68–69). This criticism was intended to provoke the black audience to a spiritual awakening that would lead it to moral reformation. However, in the course of the essay, the author makes it plain that such reformation is a means of affirming a national relationship with God, a relationship which the Deity Himself acknowledges. Thus, later in the homily, Hammon exhorts his audience:

> Come my dear fellow servants and brothers, Africans by nation, we are all invited to come, Acts x, 34. Then Peter opened his mouth and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, verse 35, But in every nation he that feareth him is accepted of him. My Brethren, many of us are seeking a temporal freedom, and I wish you may obtain it; remember that all power in heaven and on earth belongs to God; if we are slaves it is by the permission of God, if we are free it must be by the power of the most high God. Stand still and see the salvation of God, cannot that same power that divided the waters from the waters for the children of Israel to pass through, make way for your freedom, and I pray that God would grant your desire, and that he may give you grace to seek that freedom which tendeth to eternal life, John viii, 32, And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. Verse 36, If the Son shall make you free you shall be free indeed. (73)

The slave preacher invites his audience to interpret the Israelites' salvation as a promise and foreshadowing of its own national deliverance.[7] In this typological context, moral reformation offers a way in which Afro-Americans can assert their status as a nation by affirming their covenant relation with God and, Hammon suggests, preparing themselves for a future deliverance (temporal and spiritual) that parallels the freeing of the Israelites.[8]

The spiritual and moral reform that defined Africans as an independent national community also set forth their role as autonomous members of American society. Through virtue, Hammon asserts, blacks can assert their independence in late eighteenth-century America. In an important interlude in the sermon, Hammon defends his professional status as a minister as he anticipates the criticisms of whites who wonder whether he is qualified to preach. He responds that he is not teaching "those who I know are able to teach me" but his "brethren" who "are a

poor despised nation" (69). The slave minister goes on to suggest that whites themselves fail to evangelize their slaves. Thus, the black nation's religious needs vindicate Hammon's usurpation of the role of religious teacher from the master or learned minister, the traditional spiritual leader of the New England slave. And Hammon's fulfillment of these needs legitimizes him as a minister.

In the same vein, Hammon suggests that blacks who would follow the gospel can maintain a moral autonomy comparable to his professional independence. The preacher exhorts his audience not to follow their "superiors" (their masters) but the authority of divine law, asserting "let our superiors act as they shall think best, we must resolve to walk in the steps our Saviour hath set before us, which was a holy life, a humble submission to the will of God" (77–78). Hammon, moreover, grasps the egalitarian implications of such independence. Thus, quoting from Acts, he argues that the African saint who obeys the commandments is an equal to a white in the eyes of God (73).

Hammon's nationalism responds to the social experience of blacks in the Revolutionary period. The preacher's references to black drunkenness, immorality, and disorder corroborate the reports of both his contemporaries and modern social historians. The eighteenth-century reformer Samuel Hopkins noted the moral degradation of the slaves (Hopkins 581). And in studies of blacks in colonial New England and New York, Edgar McManus, Lorenzo Greene, and Robert Twombly suggest the prevalence of drunkenness, sexual crime, theft, and violence among eighteenth-century New England blacks (McManus *Black Bondage*, 77, 78, 99; Greene 150, 154, 156, 157; Twombly 14, 16, 18, 19). Hammon's complaints about the impiety of many Afro-Americans anticipate the observations of McManus and Greene who note the failure of many masters to Christianize blacks and the relatively few blacks who converted (McManus *Black Bondage*, 106; Greene 285). Within this world of social disorder, Hammon's preaching performed the socializing function of black churches and mutual aid societies during the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary periods.[9] And, on a political level, Hammon's nationalism encouraged blacks to impose order upon themselves in a society where they controlled few institutions for maintaining social norms and controls.

Hammon's second wartime sermon, like its predecessor, is both an evangelical homily and a nationalist document (87). In "An Evening's Improvement" and its appended poem, moral regeneration is presented as a means of establishing the African community as a kingdom of God and elevating individual slaves to the status of millennial harbingers.

This sermon and its accompanying verse show how the African nation can participate in the moral transformation of America and of the rest of the world. Hammon's second sermon thus develops the providential consequences of African nationalism.

The text of the sermon is taken from John 1:20: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." Amplifying this text, Hammon exhorts Afro-Americans to grasp a salvation immediately at hand. Commanding his black audience to submit to God as king, the poet-preacher implies that its conversion will bring about the kingdom of God. His use of the imperatives "must" and "necessary" in the following passage suggests the availability of the coming kingdom and urges his audience to seize it. "My brethren we must behold the Lamb of God as taking away the sin of the world, as in our text, and it is necessary that we behold the Lamb of God as our King: ah! as the King immortal, eternal, invisible, as the only Son of God" (88).

Furthermore, Hammon shows how the Africans' embrace of Christianity will purchase the salvation and security of the black nation as well as promote the kingdom of God throughout the world. Hammon evokes the rhetoric of the revolutionary jeremiad a number of times throughout the sermon. However, in the most significant passage of this sort, Hammon directly refers to the Revolutionary War to exhort his community to immediate conversion. Implying that the war and death of many Africans are God's punishment of the African failure to maintain a godly social order, Hammon observes:

> it hath pleased the most high God, in his wise providence, to permit a cruel and unnatural war to be commenced; let us examine ourselves whether we have not been the cause of his heavy judgement; have we been truly thankful for mercies bestowed? And have we been humbled by afflictions? . . . Let us now cast an eye back for a few years and consider how many hundreds of our nation and how many thousands of other nations have been sent out of time into a never-ending eternity, by the force of the cannon and by the point of the sword. Have we not great cause to think this is the just deserving of our sins; for this is the word of God. (96)

Following the jeremiad's form, Hammon holds out the possibility that the judgments of the war are intended to drive the African nation to a collective conversion. Speaking of the hardships of the war he notes: "neither mercies nor afflictions proceed from the dust, but they are the works of our heavenly Father; for it may be that when the tender mercies of God will not allure us, afflictions may drive us to the divine fountain"

(96). And, by implication, Hammon suggests that conversion is a means by which the African nation can avoid divine destruction, which is to say, survive:

> And now my dear brethren have we not great reason to be thankful that God in the time of his judgments hath remembered mercy, so that we have the preaching of the Gospel and the use of our bibles, which is the greatest of all mercies; and if after all these advantages we continue in our sins, have we not the greatest reason to fear the judgments of God will be fulfilled on us. He that being often reproved hardneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. (97)

The survival of the black nation will thus result from a redemptive African response to the "advantages" proffered by divine providence.

In the same jeremiadic interlude, Hammon takes the redemptive role of the African nation a step further, asserting that Afro-American prayers will help bring about a millennial age throughout the world. Drawing upon the millennial language of the Revolution, Hammon exhorts his black audience to pray for the coming of the kingdom of God when the terrors of the Revolutionary War will cease: "Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him. Here we see that we ought to pray, that God may hasten the time when the people shall beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning-hooks, and nations shall learn war no more" (96). Urging his audience to pray the kingdom of God into being, Hammon echoes the millennial rhetoric of a number of preachers in the 1770s.[10] Samuel Buell in a similar evangelical sermon made use of a millennial interlude that also followed the pattern of the recognition of distress, advocacy of prayer for relief, and a vision of the millennial outpouring of grace that would transform the world.[11] Hammon, like Buell, implied that through prayer and conversion, his audience could exalt itself by helping to bring about the kingdom of God on a worldwide basis.

Like "An Evening's Improvement," "A Winter Piece" sets forth the theme that moral reformation will augment the autonomy of individual Africans within the larger American society. In another interlude in which he imagines white critics challenging his credentials to preach, Hammon makes a display of piety and theological knowledge that legitimizes him as a minister in the face of the imagined white auditor's question: "what can we expect from an unlearned Ethiopian?" (94). And Hammon once again notes that blacks can gain a sense of individual self-worth as Christians despite their lowly status in America, saying, "if we

love God, black as we be, and despised as we are, God will love us" (99).

More significantly, however, within the poem appended to "A Winter Piece," Hammon dramatizes the way in which African individuals can transcend the constraints of their social status as slaves to play a prophetic role in the millennial transformation of American society (58). As the title of the poem "A Dialogue Entitled the Kind Master and Dutiful Servant" suggests, the work draws upon an idealized conception of the master-slave relationship that stresses the master's responsibility to educate the slave religiously as well as to socialize him (Morgan 132). But in the course of the work, these conventional roles are reversed. The poem's slave first subordinates himself to the master's religious guidance but by the end of the poem profits to the extent that he lectures the master on the stance that Christians should take during the Revolutionary War. In the poem's final section, the servant announces how he and the master will respond to the struggle.

Servant

16. Dear Master now it is a time,
A time of great distress;
We'll follow after things divine,
And pray for happiness.

Master

17. Then will the happy day appear.
That virtue shall increase;
Lay up the sword and drop the spear,
And Nations seek for peace.

Master

19. We pray that God would give us grace,
And make us humble too;
Let ev'ry Nation seek for peace,
And virtue make a show.

Servant

20. Then we shall see the happy day,
That virtue is in power;
Each holy act shall have its sway,
Extend from shore to shore. (Hammon 62–63)

Here the Christianized slave is, like Hammon himself, a prophetic figure who interprets and commands the proper response to the events of the

present. The slave speaks not only to a black audience but to all people, including his master. By the end of the poem, the relationship of the master and the slave is one of moral and spiritual equality.

In many ways, the millennial visions of Hammon's sermon and poem confront and overcome the constraints facing the slave in particular and the black nation in general. Hammon's poem implies that Christian virtue can be achieved within the context of slavery. Most importantly, blacks, as the passage above suggests, can help bring about the millennium through their moral and spiritual influence. Significantly, the millennium will be an age in which moral and spiritual virtue hold sway. And in helping to bring about such an age, blacks, like the prophetic slave of the poem, could wield important influence despite their absolute lack of political and military force. Both the poem and the sermon which precedes it suggest that Afro-Americans can transcend the limitation of their social status to exercise a transforming moral influence in the new nation.

Hammon's first two sermons, written near the end of the Revolutionary War, show that the politicized Puritanism of the period induced a deep optimism in the slave poet. These works assert that for blacks, moral reformation could yield national deliverance as well as the moral transformation of America and the world. It is, therefore, not surprising that the failure of a millennial society and black freedom to emerge after the Revolution created the same pessimism in Hammon that it did in his white ministerial counterparts.[12] In his final written piece, "An Address to the Negroes of the State of New-York," Hammon echoes the doubts of the ministers who in the late 1780s also expressed their anxieties over the ability of the new America to summon the civic virtue required by a republic. Adopting the stance of Paul reprimanding his Jewish countrymen for failing to adopt Christianity, Hammon laments the wickedness as well as the oppression of his African peers:

> When I am writing to you with a design to say something to you for your own good, and with a view to promote your happiness, I can with truth and sincerity join with the apostle Paul, when speaking of his own nation the Jews, and say: "*that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.*" Yes my dear brethren, when I think of you, which is very often, and of the poor, despised and miserable state you are in, as to the things of this world, and when I think of your ignorance and stupidity, and the great wickedness of the most of you, I am pained to the heart. (106)

Hammon's pessimism over the failure of a virtuous society to emerge among either blacks or whites led to his adoption of an intensely prophetic stance in which he castigated whites for their immorality and argued, as before, that blacks must exercise autonomous virtue. Furthermore, within the context of an increasingly prophetic stance, Hammon held out the hope of the transformation of American society.

Hammon criticized whites for refusing to give blacks their freedom, an act which should have naturally arisen from the moral reformation advocated by the Whigs. "That liberty is a great thing we may know from our own feelings, and we may likewise judge so from the conduct of the white people in the late war. How much money has been spent, and how many lives have been lost to defend their liberty! I must say that I have hoped that God would open their eyes, when they were so much engaged for liberty, to think of the state of the poor blacks, and to pity us" (112–13). Hammon's disapproval of whites carries over into a number of implicit criticisms of their morality as well as into explicit exhortations for blacks to act independently of their "superiors," their white masters. The slave preacher exhorts his black audience not to use profanity although the white masters may do so (111). Hammon counsels his people to read their Bibles although other literate individuals (by implication, whites) do not (113). And he asserts that blacks must not steal despite the fact that they own nothing—a deprivation which is largely the result of slavery (109). The upshot of this criticism is that blacks must strive for moral regeneration despite what may be the bad example of their white masters.

Furthermore, Hammon argues that the blacks' very social inferiority to whites—in terms of ignorance and poverty—may make them better fitted for redemption and moral regeneration. "There are some things very encouraging in God's word for such ignorant creatures as we are; for God hath not chosen the rich of this world. Not many rich, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the weak things of this world, and things which are not, to confound the things that are" (116). Considering Hammon's accounts of black wretchedness and his exhortations for moral autonomy, his appropriation of biblical rhetoric is suggestive. It contains a hint that blacks will change their social reality—"confound things that are"—because of their moral and spiritual strengths. Hammon thereby implies that blacks can through these strengths persuade whites to abolish slavery. And this implication lies behind Hammon's sharp criticism of those free blacks who do not become useful members of society: "now all those of you who follow any bad courses, and who do not take care to get an honest living by your labour and industry, are doing more to prevent our being free than any-body else" (118).

Although the form of Hammon's final published essay is no longer homiletic, it nonetheless represents the logical extension of Hammon's moral nationalism into the post-Revolutionary period. In the context of the anxieties of the new nation, Hammon warns his black countrymen to secure their virtues despite earlier failures to do so. Black moral reformation, Hammon implies, will lead to freedom and the transformation of the American nation. In this essay, as in the two sermons, Hammon continues to exhort his countrymen to become a virtuous nation within a nation.

At the core of Hammon's call for moral reformation was the notion that as God's chosen people, blacks must uphold the covenant to preserve their status as a nation. As Harry S. Stout has recently shown, calls to uphold the covenant formed a staple of much Congregational preaching during the Revolutionary period. However, an important distinction exists between the white political preaching studied by Stout and Hammon's sermons. Whig Congregationalist preaching on the covenant was often infused with libertarian themes, themes which are conspicuously absent in Hammon's covenantal rhetoric. Ministers insisted that "in entering into his covenant with New England, God simultaneously provided a place of liberty, which had to be maintained or the covenant would be annulled" (Stout 274). For the rebelling colonists, liberty was maintained at present in order to keep covenant privileges. On the contrary, Hammon clearly looked ahead to the future, the end of the war, as a time of the fulfillment of covenant promises of freedom for blacks. And although he advocated manumission in his final oration, he did not propose either petitioning or revolution as a means of emancipation in the present. Instead, piety, a moral walk, and prayer were the chosen means of bringing about the completion of the covenant plan. There are reasons for Hammon's gradualist stance. He was a slave speaking to other slaves as well as free blacks. During the Revolutionary period, the open advocacy of immediate manumission would be inflammatory. Given his rhetorical context, he could not publicly rouse the black nation and attack slavery. More importantly, the concern of his rhetoric was with the preparation of his community for freedom. Hammon's calls for moral reformation and his use of the jeremiads were means of collective socialization that sought to prepare blacks (and whites) for life within American society.

Hammon's nationalism and his concern with preparation for a future social order are echoed in the writing of nineteenth-century nationalist Afro-Americans who did not share his gradualist approach to emancipation. For instance, Hammon's attempt to deliver his black nation from

moral wretchedness resembles the rhetorical purpose of David Walker's *Appeal.* Hammon's sermons aim at a spiritual and moral awakening that is tied to the Puritan conception of spiritual conversion underlying the language of moral reform (Walker 7–8). Furthermore, Hammon anticipates Walker's dual aims of saving both the African and American nation. Both writers, Walker implicitly, look ahead to a millennial world in which blacks and whites dwell in equality (Walker 18). And Hammon and Walker draw upon the jeremiad to impel their black and white audiences toward the moral reforms needed to create that social order (Walker 42–43, 76–78).

Hammon's transformation of the Puritan rhetoric of the Revolution, moreover, anticipates an early nineteenth-century tradition of black nationalism that has been described by Wilson Moses (Moses 38–39, 40). The poet-preacher sees African Americans as a particular people with a distinct history and destiny. He stresses that blacks were united by their degradation and his outlook tends toward cultural assimilation. What Moses says of figures such as Frederick Douglass and Martin R. Delaney is also true of Hammon: "despite their declamations about God-given mandates to develop a separate destiny, [they] were hardly eager to remove themselves from white society, and were reluctant to contemplate a future severed from the values of Anglo-American civilization" (Moses 45–46). Indeed, Hammon's conception of Afro-American identity was in many ways an echo of the notion of American identity preached by the Whig ministers.

In Hammon's thought we see the transformation of the Whig call for moral reformation into a gesture of black nationalist assertion. This transformation was made possible by the intra-racial social cohesiveness that Afro-American piety and obedience to social norms would provide. Furthermore, Hammon's moral nationalism drew upon the typological symbolism inherent in the language of covenant theology and the rhetoric of moral reformation. Through adherence to divine law blacks could identify their historical experience with the national experience of the Israelites. Thus, Afro-Americans could see themselves as a national antitype of Old Testament Israel. As such a moral black nation, often morally superior to white America, Afro-Americans could look ahead to their deliverance as a people. At the same time that blacks participated in an Afro-American covenant, they also participated implicitly in the national covenant of the emerging American nation. This dual participation explains Hammon's paradoxical but typical movement between separatism and assimilationism. In his writing we see the emergence of the nationalist tradition which was to flower in figures such as David

Walker. Hammon's example suggests that the roots of this tradition lie in the politicized Puritanism of the Revolution.

NOTES

1. For a sample of the paternalistic master-slave relationships in the Lloyd household, see *Papers* I, 275; II, 560, 568, 704, 721, 735, 746.

2. For the few Christian slaves in the Huntington area see *Records of Saint John's Episcopal Church* 2, 4, and passim, and *Records of the First Church in Huntington, Long Island, 1723–1779* 19, 20, 22, 68, 69, 96, and passim. On the failure of colonial masters in New England and New York to christianize slaves in general, see McManus *Black Bondage*, 99–107.

3. *Papers* I, 471.

4. On the emergence of black consciousness and nationalism in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America, see Bracey et al. xxxi–xxxiii; Moses 20–26; and Stuckey 3–7. Eugene Genovese, in particular, notes nationalist tendencies in slave religion (280–84). In many respects, his analysis parallels my interpretation of Hammon and suggests similarities between Hammon's piety and that of the southern slaves.

5. On the rapid growth of the eighteenth-century black population in areas where Hammon lived see Helen Wortis 42–43, for Queens County, New York and McManus *Black Bondage*, 205–6 for Connecticut. Living through most of the eighteenth century, Hammon would have been aware of the growing presence of blacks in these areas where he lived or where the Lloyds had many contacts.

6. The *Connecticut Courant* article makes specific references to the New England settlers which further dramatized the ministers' sense of the connection between the founding fathers' covenanted mission and the new nation's sense of autonomy: "We would, in particular, in this address, call up to your minds the designs of our fathers in the first settlement of this country. The grand object they had in view in leaving their delightful habitations in Europe, crossing the seas, and undergoing the various hardships and difficulties of a settlement in a howling wilderness, was the setting up, supporting and maintaining Gospel Churches, agreeable to the plan directed in the word of God."

7. In a recent article, Hortense Spillers analyzes the role of the Afro-American audience as "reader" and interpreter of spoken sermons. Her essay suggests Hammon's implicit expectations of his black audience and has important implications for our understanding of the way that blacks assimilated the conventional Puritan typological understanding of the Bible (84–85; 89–90; 91–93).

8. The jeremiad's use of a figural understanding of the history of Israel was an inherently nationalistic device in the context of Hammon's writing. Through its designation of Israel as a type of the Afro-American nation, the jeremiad automatically offered a paradigm in which blacks could immediately see themselves as a nation and their history as a repetition of the Israelite experience. On typology and the jeremiad, see Bercovitch 14–17.

9. On the function of black churches and mutual aid societies in fostering community, see Frazier 28; Berlin 371; Bracey et al. xxxi.

10. On the millennialism of some Whig preachers of the 1770s, see Strout 68–69 and Bloch 84–86.

11. Buell's sermon, which was addressed to youth, encouraged them to see their eschatological importance in bringing about the millennium. "Never did our Nation stand more in

need of this Sum of all Blessings, the Divine Influences, than at present. It never was, perhaps, in a more corrupt and degenerate State than at this Day.—While we are labouring under awful national Calamities, believe it, the Cause of them will never be removed, nor our Danger be over, 'until the Spirit is poured out from on High.'—Pray much in behalf of the Protestant Churches, and a perishing World round about you.—That the whole Earth may be 'full of knowledge of the Lord.' That Jews and Gentiles may all know Him, 'from the least to the greatest,' that there may be, as it were, 'a new Heaven and a new Earth,'—a new World, a young world" (53). In many respects, Buell's sermon and its millennial interlude parallel Hammon's second sermon and its millennial passage.

12. On the pessimism of the Whig ministers in the postwar period, see Hatch 118–20 and Bloch 106–10.

WORKS CITED

Baker, Jr., Houston. *The Journey Back: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism.* Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980.

Bell, Bernard W. "African-American Writers." *American Literature, 1764–1789: The Revolutionary Years.* Ed. Everett Emerson. Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1977. 171–93.

Bercovitch, Sacvan. *The American Jeremiad.* Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1978.

Berlin, Ira. "The Revolution in Black Life." *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism.* Ed. Alfred F. Young. De Kalb: Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 1976. 349–82.

Bloch, Ruth. *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756–1800.* New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985.

Bracey, Jr., John H., August Meier, and Elliot Rudwick, eds. *Black Nationalism in America.* New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1970.

Buell, Samuel. *The Best New-Year's Gift for Young People.* New London: T. Green, 1775.

Connecticut Courant and Weekly Intelligencer. Tuesday, June 29, 1779.

Frazier, E. Franklin. "The Negro Church in America." *The Negro Church in America; The Black Church since Frazier.* Ed. C. Eric Lincoln. New York: Schocken Books, 1974. 7–98.

Genovese, Eugene D. *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made.* 1974. Reprint. New York: Random House, 1976.

Greene, Lorenzo Johnston. *The Negro in Colonial New England.* 1942. Reprint. New York: Atheneum, 1968.

Hammon, Jupiter. *America's First Negro Poet: The Complete Works of Jupiter Hammon of Long Island.* Ed. Stanley Austin Ransom, Jr. Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1970.

Hatch, Nathan O. *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England.* New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977.

Hopkins, Samuel. "A Dialogue Concerning the Slavery of the Africans." *Timely Articles on Slavery*. 1854. Reprint. New York: Arno Press and the *New York Times*, 1969. 547–88.

McManus, Edgar J. *Black Bondage in the North*. Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1973.

_____. *A History of Negro Slavery in New York*. Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1966.

Morgan, Edmund S. *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England*. 1944. Reprint. New York: Harper, 1967.

Moses, Wilson Jeremiah. *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850–1925*. 1978. Reprint. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988.

Osann, Jean. *Henry Lloyd's Salt Box Manor House*. 1978. Reprint. Huntington, N.Y.: Lloyd Harbor Historical Society, 1982.

Papers of the Lloyd Family of the Manor of Queens Village, Lloyd's Neck, Long Island, New York 1654–1826. Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1926. 2 vols. New York: Little and Ives, 1926–1927.

Prime, Ebenezer. *Records of the First Church in Huntington, Long Island, 1723–1779*. Huntington Historical Society. Huntington, N.Y.: Moses L. Scudder, 1898.

Records of Saint John's Episcopal Church, Huntington, Long Island, 1755–1887. Huntington Historical Society, Huntington, New York.

Spillers, Hortense J. "Moving on Down the Line." *American Quarterly* 40 (1988): 83–109.

Stout, Harry S. *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986.

Strout, Cushing. *The New Heavens and New Earth: Political Religion in America*. 1974. Reprint. New York: Harper, 1975.

Stuckey, Sterling. *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1972.

Twombly, Robert C. "Black Resistance to Slavery in Massachusetts." *Insights and Parallels: Problems and Issues of American Social History*. Ed. William L. O'Neill. Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Co., 1973. 11–55.

Walker, David. *David Walker's Appeal in Four Articles*. 1829. Reprint. New York: Hill and Wang, 1965.

Wood, Gordon. *The Creation of the American Republic: 1776–1787*. New York: Norton, 1969.

Wortis, Helen. "Blacks on Long Island: Population Growth in the Colonial Period." *Journal of Long Island History* 11 (1974): 35–46.