

Jon F. Sensbach: *A Separate Canaan – The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840*. Chapel Hill – London: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, 1998. 342 p.

*A Separate Canaan* is a work which Moravians might well wish Jon Sensbach had not had to write. That is, it tells of the role slavery played in the establishment and development of the Moravian settlements in North Carolina. Today we would certainly wish that the church had had nothing to do with this oppressive institution, and that the church, far from condoning slavery, had openly opposed it. Still, facts are facts, and Dr. Sensbach has done a valuable service in researching and publishing this account.

In the early days of Wachovia the Moravians experienced a labor shortage and had to hire outside workers to assist in building projects and trades. Some of these workers were slaves which the Moravians rented from their masters. Within a few years the church itself bought slaves, though individual ownership of slaves was prohibited in the settlement congregation of Salem.

Some of these slaves eventually applied for and received membership in the congregations. At first they lived in the choir houses, worshipped in the church, and were buried in God's Acre with all other members. Following the American Revolution, however, the Moravians in North Carolina came to share more and more the attitudes of non-Moravians around them, and gradually the slaves, Moravian and non-Moravian alike, were more and more segregated into a separate society.

*A Separate Canaan* documents these developments and provides insights into the means these slaves of African descent used to maintain personal identity and relationships in the face of an innately hostile system. Jon Sensbach, speaking as a non-Moravian, has made copious and careful use of Moravian records (diaries, minutes, correspondence, account books, etc.) in writing this book, and his ample bibliography provides many sources for further research.

The story is not a pretty one, but it is one that needed telling, and Jon Sensbach has told it very well.

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