Much has been written about the paradox surrounding the Europeans of both Catholic and Protestant faiths who, through religious beliefs supported directly or indirectly by imperialistic and economic motives, justified forced labor and slavery on people of color in the Eastern and New World territories they occupied. In addition, there is a considerable body of literature pertaining to Early Modern Europeans and their vision of the Other—those they encountered in their travels and in their positions as conquerors and settlers in the East, parts of Africa, and again in the New World. This elite centered mainly on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—the eras that postcolonial theorists have revisited as cultural representations in colonial settings.

In this article I single out a small group of Protestant refugees who, because of increasing persecution in their respective homelands, including threats of enforced conversion to Catholicism, fled in increasingly large numbers from 1681 and through 1687. The period embraces Louis XIV focusing the dreaded *dragonnades* on the Huguenots, the Revocation of the Treaty of Nantes in 1685, and the further repression of the Protestants in the Spanish Netherlands. The emphases here is primarily on the dislocation of a religious minority whose cultural disintegration led them to a state of partial hybridity as they fled to other European states, and some in turn, sailed to distant shores, where they were forced to adopt to new customs, occupations, and even new languages.

Among the thousands who poured out of France at this time were families that were splintered. Many eventually settled in the British Isles or British colonies, while others took refuge in the Protestant German provinces and the New Netherlands. Our interest is on the band of Huguenots who mainly were dispersed in the New Netherlands and then were sent to the Cape of Good Hope by the Directors (Heren XVII) of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC). The surviving group who reached the Cape numbered over 190 and included men, women, and children. Some were married couples. A few were
widows who accompanied grown children, a small number were spin- sters, but the majority were single men. The Company sent them pas- sage free to farm and to lend what was presumed to be their expertise to the developing wine industry. It was at the Cape where the refugees came into contact with the Khoi/San and slaves from the east as well as Africa. These were the first “planted” colonists at the Cape.

The Huguenots were devoutly committed to their religious faith— lukewarm Protestants could, and did, recant. As followers of John Calvin, his theology was influential not only in sustaining the refugees as they made their disparate ways into exile, but served as a safe harbor as they were battered by the storms of hardship in exile. Thus Calvin’s thought and how they interpreted it, is of importance to us as we move with the Huguenots to their new life at the Cape. We must not make the mistake of placing this early band of Huguenots in the more con- temporary theoretical constructs regarding colonizers as the implementers of power over subordinate people, although as we shall see, they came to exercise a modicum of power over the Khoi as well as the slaves they acquired. In fact, the Huguenots were themselves subordinated to the power exercised by the VOC.

In terms of theology no one of the Huguenots was as learned as Calvin, although their religious leader, Pierre Simond, was sufficiently well versed in Scripture and Latin to (later) create a new translation of the Psalms. The Company employed parish clerk and teacher, Paul Roux was regarded as knowledgeable and competent in both Dutch and French. And one of the Walloons, Jacques de Savoye, had been a successful merchant before his fortunes changed and he fell on the beneficence of the Company for passage to the Cape. De Savoye was variously regarded as a radical or rascal. His commitment to his faith was never in question, although there were questions regarding his interpretations of Calvinism. One member of the group was a sur- geon, although it is unclear if he had medical school training or had moved up from barbering. Perhaps he was well instructed in Calvinism, probably not.

The majority of the Huguenots were literate but again, few records remain as to the extent of their education. Jacques Theron, like Francois Viljoen, had been a company soldier who stayed on to farm. Soldiers ranked very low in the VOC hierarchy although both men later assumed the title of burgher. Andre Gaucher and Daniel Hugo were blacksmiths and Isaac Taillefert had been a hat maker. The Nortier brothers arrived at the Cape as domestic servants to Jacques de Savoye—one of the three worked as a farm laborer while a second took up carpentry.