"Through the Eye of a Needle": The Role of Pietistic and Mystical Thought Among the
Anglican Elite in the Eighteenth Century Lowcountry South

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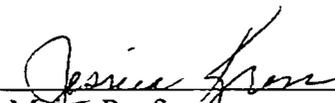
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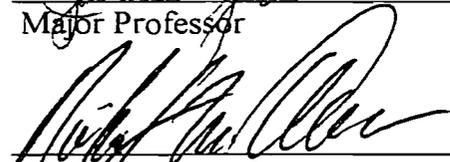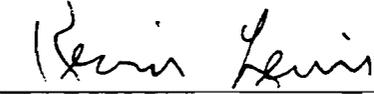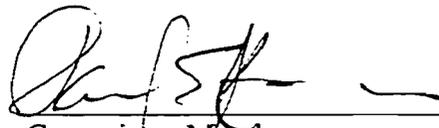
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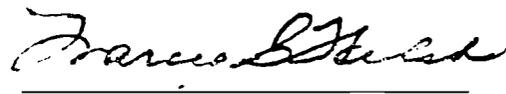
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For Becky, Kendra, Logan, and Kayla

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Introduction

This dissertation examines the transmission and eventual manifestation of Christian pietistic and mystical thought into the Colonial and Revolutionary lowcountry South. The facilitators of this transmission include the Continental Pietists, who were themselves heavily influenced by the mystics, and British Evangelicals such as John Wesley and George Whitefield, who, even in their public denials of mysticism, nevertheless demonstrated its strong influence in their ministries. Mystical and pietistic expressions impacted the religious, social, and political life of the lowcountry more than has been previously recognized. Evangelical Pietism's mid-eighteenth century infusion prompted some to correctly recognize its subjective (i.e. inwardly focused and feelings oriented) roots in medieval Catholic mysticism. Such association led them to wrongly conclude, however, that Evangelicals were secret emissaries of Rome sent to disrupt social and religious stability in the region. "Enthusiastic" religion did not play the disruptive role that many feared it would. Granted, misguided notions led to early concerns in the lowcountry, but in the end, Evangelical Pietism's transcendent and flexible qualities contributed to the formation of political and social consensus, provided a new means to obtain significance in the larger British world, helped transform the image of slavery into a uniquely Christian institution, and supplied impulse for unified action during the Revolutionary Era.

Historians have paid little attention to subjective religion's overall impact in the Colonial South. One reason may be that, in comparison to colonies such as Pennsylvania, where various continental pietistic sects settled in large numbers, the South did not have as dominating a presence from such groups. There were pockets of influence to be sure, such as in the North Carolina Moravian communities and the Georgia Salzburger settlements along the Savannah River basin. Individual studies of these and other groups have added much to our understanding their important influence.[1] As valuable as these studies are, however, they do not deal with the often overlooked transmission of pietistic and mystical spirituality through Anglicanism itself, and naturally they do not address the manifest influence that such religious principles could have in and through influential Anglican elites.

A brief excursus is in order to explain what this dissertation's focus will *not* be. Although there were more obvious practitioners of inwardly oriented religion in the eighteenth century lowcountry, their tendency for religious seclusion (whether volitional or otherwise) and their consequent lack of mainstream political leadership, exclude them from in-depth examination in this dissertation. The Quakers in Charleston, for example, though comparatively small in number, had a felt presence in the city. There was a sizable number of Quaker treatises in the Charleston library which no doubt caught the eye of

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[1] For two excellent studies see Daniel Thorp, *The Moravian Community in Colonial North Carolina: Pluralism on the Southern Frontier* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989); George Fenwick Jones, *The Salzburger Saga: Religious Exiles and Other Germans along the Savannah* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1984).

more than a few readers.[2] Yet Quaker "inner light" principles, though in some ways

similar to those held by Pietists, did not have as comparable an influence on lowcountry

culture as the subjective forms that came through the 1740s Great Awakening under

Anglican evangelist George Whitefield or through later Anglican Pietists, such as St.

Philip's rector Richard Clarke. The Lutheran Salzburgers played a vital role in the

settlement of Georgia. Notwithstanding their sometimes amiable relationship with

Whitefield and their vital role in the economic life of Georgia, they, for much the same

reason as given for the Quakers, will play a peripheral status in this study. Other more

radical mystical sects such as the Dutartres in the "Orange-quarter" and the Weberites in

Saxe Goth will receive no treatment due to their lack of dominant cultural influence.[3]

These deserve their own treatment elsewhere, but this dissertation is more a story about

the evolution of the religious and political establishment's response to the invasion of a

more "respectable" subjective religious movement within Anglicanism itself.

The mainline dissenter denominations (especially French Huguenot, Presbyterian,

and Baptist) play a slightly different role in this study since they were a powerful religious

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[2] George C. Rogers, Jr., *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969; University of South Carolina Press, 1980), 93. More attention will be give to Moravians due to their impact on a principal subject in this study, Henry Laurens.

[3] The primary response the Dutartres and Weberites generated was disdain and fear due to their overtly countercultural radicalism. For an account of the Weber heresy see G. D. Bernheim, *History of the German Settlements and the Lutheran Church in North and South Carolina, from the Earliest Period of the Colonization of the Dutch, German and Swiss Settlers to the Close of the First Half of the Present Century* (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Book Store, 1872), 195-205. For an account of the Dutartre heresy see Alexander Hewatt, *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for Alexander Donaldson, 1779; reprint, Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1971), 1: 301-308.

and political force, especially in South Carolina. That notwithstanding, no matter how prominent a place dissenters held in the eighteenth century lowcountry, the established Anglican Church made up the legal and political infrastructure of the colony, and the people understood for the most part that individual or corporate prerogatives had to ultimately pass the Anglican shibboleth before they could influence public policy. Thus, as important as such dissenters were to the make up of the lowcountry's religious, social, and political life, they also were in many ways peripheral to the more central influence of Anglican establishment. That is not to say, however, that their role was unimportant or static. In fact, due to the ever growing presence and popularity of dissent by the mid-eighteenth century--which came in part as a result of Whitefield's ministry and from the growing number of backcountry Protestants--pietistically transcendent religion became more appealing to some Anglican elites who sensed that religious concessions from establishment's side were necessary for their own elevated status to continue and for the maintenance of political consensus.

Chapter one of this study examines the relationship between Catholic mysticism and Continental Pietism, as well as the transmission and intermixture of those and other subjective forms into early eighteenth century Anglican circles. Philipp Jacob Spener and August Herman Francke, the two leading proponents of Halle Pietism, as well as Nicholas Count von Zinzendorf, founder of the renewed Moravian movement, were all heavily influenced by Catholic mysticism. This chapter shows clear elements of classic mystical forms permeating the subsequent ministries of these three leading Pietists. Their followers, with an array of other mystically oriented groups, such as the Philadelphian sect

and the French Prophets, along with a vast amount of mystical and pietistic literature, all converged on London in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries creating a hodgepodge of subjective spiritual associations. These groups often intermixed in dialogue and fellowship in conventicles such as Aldersgate and Fetter Lane. The Oxford Holy Club was one such group in the mix. Two Anglican clerics from that Methodist conventicle would serve as transmitters of some of those same mystical forms to the southern American lowcountry: John Wesley and George Whitefield.

Chapter two examines the accusations made in the lowcountry that John Wesley and George Whitefield were papists in disguise. I argue that there was more than common Jacobite fear driving these accusations. The local fear of Spanish invasion from Florida and the broader and ongoing fear of a Stuart conspiracy certainly added to much of the misguided accusations of popery. But exclusive small group conventicle activity, claims of immediate illumination and communication from God, as well as sometimes highly charged emotional worship, led some to correctly recognize the Catholic mystical origin of Wesley's and Whitefield's religious activities.

Chapter three is an exploration of the surprising compatibility of subjective spirituality with popular political philosophies of the day. The innate flexibility of Evangelical Pietism contributed to the strong tendency for political and social consensus, especially in mid-eighteenth century South Carolina, a role that demonstrates revivalistic religion's ability to adjust itself to influential philosophies such as country ideology. Robert Weir in his article "The Harmony We Were Famous for'" has correctly given credit to John Locke, Anthony Ashley (Earl of Shaftesbury), John Trenchard, and Thomas Gordon for helping to shape the mid-eighteenth century ideological culture that led to

South Carolina's famed social and political harmony.[4] This chapter builds on that premise with a significant addition. Evidence suggests that rather than acting as an overall disruption, revivalistic religion not only fit well into this harmonious structure, it may have contributed more to its actual creation than previously realized.

Chapter four argues that Evangelical Pietism's ability to transcend the guarded norms of denominations and political factions caused some influential lowcountry Anglicans to recognize its usefulness as a tool of anglicization and as an attractive alternative to the strict enforcement of religious establishment. Although George Whitefield's early ministry initially caused controversy, once Anglican elites no longer saw him as a threat to social stability and once some of them saw his message as a new wave of respectable anglicization as well as an impetus for consensus, they involved themselves more and more in religious associations that reflected that perception. An excellent example of this pietistically driven ecumenical posture was evident in the mid and late 1750s by the formation in Charleston of an interdenominational religious club, one attended by some of the most influential men of the lowcountry.

Chapter five is an examination of how Pietism informed the way Christian slaveholders saw their spiritual role within the emerging evangelical world and how it helped to advance in their minds the idea that slavery was an ordained means by which they could effectively propagate the Christian gospel. Whitefield, though an outspoken critic of the cruel treatment of slaves, was a principal force behind Georgia's legalization

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[4] Robert M. Weir, "'The Harmony We Were Famous for': An Interpretation of Prerevolutionary South Carolina Politics," in Weir, *"The Last of American Freemen": Studies in the Political Culture of the Colonial and Revolutionary South* (Macon,

of the institution. He went far in propagating the view that slavery posed a unique opportunity to fulfill Christian obligations to the unconverted. Examination of the pietistic principles held by other evangelical slaveholders such as James Habersham, William Knox, and Henry Laurens, especially as those principles were applied to slavery, reveals similar notions of the institution's perceived sanctification.

Chapter six demonstrates how subjective elements present in Evangelical Pietism played an important role in lowcountry revolutionary thinking. Much has been written on religion's role in shaping revolutionary thought. Most of these studies have concentrated, however, on New England as the centerpiece of an emerging civil millennialism in America. This chapter suggests that some influential lowcountry Anglicans were driven by similar impulses. Scholars have recognized that due to its dominant emphasis on inward authentication, Pietism innately attached itself to rational objectives "in order to give direction and meaning to life."[5] This self secularization combined with a tendency for consensus helped to create a powerful and unified impulse toward independence and nationhood and allowed the execution of that impulse to be seen as a uniquely spiritual action.

Pre-nineteenth century Evangelicalism is commonly seen as of little importance to the South due in part to the comparatively weak results of the First Great Awakening there. Most see southern Evangelicalism as a child of the early nineteenth century's Second Great Awakening, especially as it emerged in the less-Anglican controlled

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Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986); this article by the same title first appeared in the *William and Mary Quarterly* 26 (October 1969): 473-507.

[5] Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 93.

backcountry. But this study questions the common view that revivalistic religion had little impact in the lowcountry. It accordingly suggests the need for a re-evaluation of the assumption that the "secular" and "materialistic" southern colonial lowcountry lacked any measurable evangelical dominance. Historians, as Gordon Wood has recently suggested, sometimes "look for religion in the wrong places."[6] This observation is especially true concerning inward religion in the lowcountry South. In a similar vein Allen Guelzo recently called attention to a large historiographic gap in our understanding of religion in eighteenth century America. His call gives direction on where the focus should be in re-evaluating lowcountry religious life. Even with all that has been done on the subject of Evangelicalism, he wrote, "above all, we are desperately impoverished in our understanding of the *spirituality* of the Awakening. . . ." The hindrance to this understanding is not in a lack of primary sources but in "persuading historians . . . to take spirituality with any seriousness. . . ."[7] The following dissertation attempts a partial answer to this timely call.

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[6] Gordon S. Wood, "Religion and the American Revolution," in *New Directions in American Religious History*, ed. Harry S. Stout and D. G. Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 177.

[7] Allen Guelzo, "God's Designs: The Literature of the Colonial Revivals of Religion, 1735-1760," in Ibid., 163 (emphasis mine).

Chapter One

The Origin and Transmission of Pietistic Forms

It is essential in any historical study to define terms, especially those that play a dominant role in cognate or outside disciplines. The lack of careful treatment in this area has resulted in a very loose and generic usage of many concepts, otherwise precise within their own disciplines. This is especially true of religious and theological terminology as used by historians. Terms which carry specific historical and theological meaning have often been employed with too much latitude creating over time a linguistic laxness resulting in historical inaccuracies. For example, American historical subjects who demonstrate sternness of religious resolve are often labeled as Puritan, even when no historical connection is made between them and Puritan influences.[1] The term Calvinist is also frequently misused, attributing that precise system of Christian thought to those who would never have claimed adherence to it.[2] A similar problem exists with the usage of two of the primary terms used in this study: Evangelical and Pietist.

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[1] Henry Laurens, who will be dealt with extensively in this study, is a good example of one inappropriately labeled as a Puritan. Edmund Morgan, for example, portrayed Laurens as representative of a strict "Puritan Ethic" in contrast to William Drayton's enlightened republicanism. Although Morgan admittedly used the term "Puritan" as a "short hand" expression, the idea that Laurens was a recipient and representative of a pervasive New England religious ideal is not lost in the argument. Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 24 (October 1967): 28-32.

[2] Henry Laurens has also been called a Calvinist, primarily due to his often stated resignations to God's sovereignty in the everyday affairs of life and to his Huguenot ancestry, neither of which validate such a claim. See Laura P. Frech, "The Republicanism

The term Evangelical has come to represent, especially in colonial and early national studies, the emotionally charged manifestation of Christian adherence as opposed to, for example, mainline Protestantism or some form of accepted religious institutional establishment.[3] Within this purview, Evangelicalism and Enthusiasm have become synonymous in the minds of many. Although it is clear that many Evangelicals were enthusiasts, they were not necessarily one in the same.

In its proper historical context Evangelicalism simply refers to the core movement within Christianity which, especially following but also pre-dating the Protestant Reformation (with particular attention to conversion in the context of *sola fide*), placed emphasis on the *evangel*, or proclamation of the Christian gospel. This scope would include any (even mainline orthodox establishments) whose Christian expression fell within that definition. Assuming for the sake of argument that such is the common denominator of Evangelicalism proper, one can readily see that the term has suffered from a too narrow definition (i.e. enthusiasm), the opposite fate of terms such as Calvinist and Puritan, which have more often been over generalized.

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of Henry Laurens," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 76 (April 1975): 71. Frech placed Laurens within a "Calvinist heritage" (78).

[3] Donald Mathews in his *Religion in the Old South* justifies this definitive laxness. His statement that "the terms *Evangelicals* and *Evangelicalism* . . . have a frequently imprecise and abstract quality to them" is understandable in so far as one recognizes the sometimes overarching quality Evangelicalism has had, especially in its transcendence of various denominations. Yet, Mathews goes too far, in my view, by necessarily setting theological definition in contradistinction to historical context. "Evangelicalism," he wrote, "was a social process as well as a religious perception, and as such can be understood only in historical, as opposed to definitional, terms." I maintain that to divorce the theological definition from the "social process" automatically skews historical context. See Donald Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), xvii.

The term Pietist is helpful as a transition between the discrepancies of the terms Evangelical and Enthusiast. Evangelical Pietist is the term I have chosen for this study, one, which in my view, best represents the tradition of enthusiasts in the Colonial and Revolutionary South who were *also* evangelical in their belief system.

Pietism has historically been used, and I believe correctly (at the threat of violating my own call for precise definitions), in a twofold manner.[4] First, Pietism should be seen within its Continental European context. Pietism's initial formation in Germany, especially Halle Pietism initiated by Philipp Jacob Spener (1635-1705) and later institutionalized by August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), came on the heels of social devastation from the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). The spiritual void left by the moral degradation from this tragedy prompted some to seek a more vibrant, inward oriented faith than Lutheran Orthodoxy could deliver. Largely initiated by the Formula of Concord in 1580, Scholasticism had rendered Lutheranism, in the minds of many, virtually irrelevant to the problems at hand. Historical Pietism, therefore, must be viewed, to some degree, as a reaction to social and religious problems then existent in Europe.[5]

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[4] F. Ernest Stoeffler has shown the validity of this twofold understanding. He argues that Pietism was on the one hand a specific movement within the Lutheran and Reformed churches (especially but not altogether limited to Germany) and on the other hand, due to its inherent transcendent qualities, should equally be understood as an overarching phenomenon permeating many traditions both prior and subsequent to its more historical formation within denominational structures. See F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 2nd ed. Studies in the History of Religions IX (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 1-23, 180-246; see also Stoeffler's in-depth treatment of Pietism's multifaceted manifestation in Germany in Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, Studies in the History of Religions XXIV (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973).

[5] Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 21-25.

In the more general sense, a Pietist is one who focuses on the inner, subjective elements of spiritual reality. Although external doctrine can play a foundational role (depending on the individual), the internal experience of the soul dictates the extent of conformity to doctrinal concerns. In this context, eighteenth century Pietism was "a reaction against the lack of religious fervor, the moral laxity, the tendency toward cultural accommodation and the inter-confessional bickering of the representatives of orthodoxy within the established Protestant communions."[6] However, due to the allowances made for allegiance to varying external denominational forms (as long as the internal realities regulate), a Pietist might be found worshipping in any given denomination. In fact, Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf, eighteenth century founder of the Moravian pietistic sect, who will be discussed below, discouraged his followers in Europe and America from becoming a separate denomination. Their express purpose, in Zinzendorf's mind, was to become an over-arching entity between denominations in order to facilitate Christian unity.[7] Therefore, Moravians were often members of various denominations.

In sum, Pietism did not conform to any one particular external form. "It had no one system of theology, no one integrating doctrine, no particular type of polity, no one liturgy, no geographical homogeneity. Yet . . . it presented a discernible historical unity."[8] Like Calvinism or Puritanism, Pietism is a "discernible" movement in Christian history.

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[6] Daniel G. Reid et al., eds., *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1990), s.v. "Pietism," by F. E. Stoeffler, 903.

[7] See A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer : A Study in the Moravian Contribution to Christian Mission and Unity* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1962), 53, 101-102.

[8] Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 13.

Once Pietism's historical basis within institutional structures is understood, its more general and transcendent characteristics become identifiable within movements outside Lutheran and Reformed circles. It is this more general usage as manifested in the lower Colonial and Revolutionary South with which we are primarily concerned in this study. But in order to understand the dynamics of this more general transcendent influence, it is necessary to first examine the specific origins of Continental Pietism itself. Once the primary influences upon Pietism proper are established, an exploration into the same influences and their manifestations on Christians, especially Anglicans in the Carolina and Georgia lowcountry, can be better understood.

In the following examination I argue that mysticism, especially Roman Catholic mysticism, heavily influenced Pietism. The fact of this influence is important to later inquiries in this study that will show the same influences, both directly (from mystics themselves) and indirectly (through Pietists), upon Evangelicals active in the Colonial South. First, it will be helpful to briefly define mysticism as used in the following development.

Christian mysticism, both Catholic and Protestant, has several common components. It is generally understood as a *third* form of spiritual knowledge after written and natural revelation. Its simplest expression is a three staged progression aimed at ultimate union (often to the point of identical essence) with God. The stages are first "purgative" (spiritual awakening followed by degrees of fleshly struggle), then

"illuminative" (alternate flashes of spiritual light and darkness), and finally "unitive"

(process of being one with God).[9]

One of the primary characteristics of mystical manifestation is the strong emphasis

placed on sentiment. This is not to say that all religious experiential notions are mystical

in nature. But whenever there is a pervasive emphasis in addition or even

contradistinction to revelational objectivity, derivations from that objective emphasis can

often be traced to mysticism. Early nineteenth century Princeton theologian Benjamin

Warfield defined mysticism as identifiable by this emphasis on internal feelings.

> It is characteristic of mysticism that it makes its appeal to the feelings as the sole, or
> at least as the normative, source of knowledge of divine things. That is to say, it is
> the religious sentiment which constitutes for it the source of religious knowledge.
> Of course mystics differ with one another in the consistency with which they apply
> their principle. And of course they differ with one another in the account they give
> of this religious sentiment to which they make their appeal. There are, therefore,
> many varieties of mystics, pure and impure, consistent and inconsistent, naturalistic
> and supernaturalistic, pantheistic and theistic--even Christian. What is common to
> them all, and what makes them all mystics, is that they all rest on the religious
> sentiment as the source of knowledge of divine things.[10]

Thus, mysticism consists of a staged progression toward individual union with God

and has inward sentiment as the principal basis of authority for direction in that journey.

As will be seen below, this does not suggest an all-out dismissal, especially on the

Evangelical Pietist's part, of objective revelation. It does, as mentioned above, suggest

that experience is the normative regulator of spiritual activity and belief.

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[9] David Knowles, *The English Mystical Tradition* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 2; Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press, 1989), 24-25.

[10] Benjamin B. Warfield, "Mysticism and Christianity," chap. in *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1968), 447.

The early historiographic issues surrounding German Pietism generally centered on questions of origin.[11] In *Die Geschichte und Pietismus* (1863) Heinrich Schmid argued that Pietism was simply an evangelical awakening within the parameters of confessional Lutheranism. Schmid recognized awakenings outside of the Lutheran Church but did not consider them as compatible in origin and purpose since Pietism to him had its foundation in Lutheranism itself. In *Geschichte des Pietismus und der Mystik in der Reformirten Kirche* (1879), Heinrich Heppe, who focused on Pietism's influence in the Reformed Church, agreed with Schmid that Pietism was a positive awakening, but he did not, of course, see its foundation, as did Schmid, in Lutheran confessions. Heppe argued that English Puritanism influenced the awakenings in Germany through the intense circulation of tracts and books during the seventeenth century. Ernst Troeltsch has more recently expanded on this view by arguing in his *Gesammelte Schriften* (1965) that Puritanism had long cradled Anabaptist ideas of spirituality and passed them on to Germany by way of the Netherlands.[12]

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[11] I have excluded Radical Pietism in the following examination since there is no debate as to the mystical influences upon those splinter groups. The principal propagators of Continental Pietism proper were from Halle, or in Count Zinzendorf's case, heavily influenced by Halle. It should be noted, however, that like Halle Pietists, some of the more radical and mystical Pietists did have a direct influence on southern colonial religion. One reason for showing the extensive role of mysticism in Halle and Herrnhut (Zinzendorf's Moravians) Pietism is to demonstrate the extent to which Catholic mystical forms could impact otherwise accepted Evangelical Protestant movements that found a place in the lower Colonial South.

[12] Horst Weigelt, "Interpretations of Pietism in the Research of Contemporary German Church Historians," *Church History* 39 (June 1970): 238-239; also see Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, vol. 2, trans. Olive Wyon (N. Y.: The Macmillan Company, 1931).

Albrecht Ritschl, nineteenth century Bonn and Gottingen theologian, in his three volume *Geschichte des Pietismus* (1880-86), asserted an opposite view to all of the above. German Pietism, though it eventually developed primarily within Lutheranism, and received peripheral influences from other Protestant groups, had its foundational roots in Roman Catholic mysticism.[13] Since according to Ritschl, Pietism had its primary origins in Catholic mystical thought, he saw the movement as, in Horst Weigelt's words, a "theological regression." Consequently he rejected it since it ran contrary to his own notions of a non-supernatural, Christian progressivism.[14]

Scholars such as Kurt Aland, Martin Schmidt, Erich Beyreuther, F. Ernest Stoeffler, and Martin Brecht have carried the debate further, sometimes accommodating, but usually rejecting Ritschl's central thesis. Aland argued in *Spener-Studien. Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Pietismus* (1943) that Halle Pietism received its primary structure from Lutheranism, but he also acknowledged mysticism's significant role.[15] He has more

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[13] Weigelt, "Interpretations of Pietism in the Research of Contemporary German Church Historians," 237; I use the general term "Catholic Mysticism" even though Ritschl focused on the more specific "Franciscan Mysticism" as a primary informer of Pietism. He did not mean, however, that Pietism was influenced only by the Franciscans. He included the Dominicans as a sub-group within the reforms started by the Franciscan Order. Ritschl wrote that "the impulse of St. Francis has been efficacious in the Catholic church throughout the epoch that followed his own life. As far as the Middle Ages is concerned, however, the Franciscan and Dominican preaching proved its reforming intentions in the spreading of an asceticism which accommodated itself to the conditions of living among those who were married and active in civil pursuits and thus it narrowed, at least, the gulf between monastic and laity." He also argued that fifteenth century Anabaptists were key transmitters of Franciscan mysticism to the Pietists. Albrecht Ritschl, "'Prolegomena' to *The History of Pietism*," in *Three Essays*, trans. Philip Hefner (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 65, 80.

[14] Weigelt, "Interpretations of Pietism in the Research of Contemporary German Church Historians," 237.

[15] Ibid., 240.

recently and confusingly written in his *A History of Christianity* (1986) that early Pietist

progenitors Philipp Jacob Spener and August Hermann Francke read mystics and utilized

mystical terminology but misunderstood and rejected the central themes of mystical

thought. One wonders what Spener and Francke actually rejected if they did not

understand it to begin with. Nevertheless, Aland sees a mystical influence, even if less

dominant, but discounts Ritschl's thesis of an "un-Lutheran Catholicizing tendency" in the

formulation of pietistic thought.[16]

Erich Beyreuther and Martin Schmidt accept a strong mystical influence on

Pietism, yet reject Ritschl's overall thesis of regression. Beyreuther has asserted in his

Geschichte des Pietismus (1978) that Lutheran Orthodoxy was the initial basis of German

Pietism upon which mystical and Puritan ideals acted as an awakening force. Schmidt, in

his *Der Pietismus als Theologische Erscheinug* (1984) acknowledged a strong

spiritualistic and mystical influence on Pietist leaders such as Spener and Zinzendorf,

especially from the works of Jacob Boehme and Johann Arndt, but far from accepting

Ritschl's theological regression thesis, Schmidt argued that mysticism was the movement's

intellectual redemption.[17]

F. Ernest Stoeffler, in *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (1965), down played the

impact of mysticism on Spener. He argued, for example, that Johann Arndt (1555-1621),

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[16] Kurt Aland, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 2, *From the Reformation to the Present* , trans. James L. Schaff (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 238.

[17] Weigelt, "Interpretations of Pietism in the Research of Contemporary German Church Historians," 240; it should be noted that Ritschl did not believe that Protestant mystics such as Jacob Boehme played a significant role in Pietism's spiritual formation. See Ritschl, "'Prolegomena' to *The History of Pietism*," 137-138.

whose *Wahres Christentum* (1609) profoundly impacted Spener and many other Pietists in Europe and America, has been wrongly labeled a mystic. Stoeffler defended this position by arguing that Arndt's central theme in *Wahres Christentum* is not mystical union.[18] Even if mystical union is not the central theme in the work, it is clearly present, as will be shown later in this chapter. In *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (1973), probably the most comprehensive survey of German Pietism in English, Stoeffler presented Francke as an Arndtian Lutheran bearing no significant marks of Catholic mysticism. In sum, Stoeffler, as a Pietist sympathizer, rejected Ritschl's argument, at least in part, because it was an "attempt to discredit Pietism by associating it with medieval piety...."[19]

Possibly the most representative position in modern pietistic studies is in the recent work initiated by the Historischen Komission zur Erforschung des Pietismus. In 1993 the Commission produced *Der Pietismus vom siebzehnten bis zum frühen achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, the first volume in the series *Geschichte des Pietismus*. Editor Martin Brecht set forth the working philosophy of the project as decidedly anti-Ritschlian. Pietism, in his view, was primarily an international evangelical awakening that occurred simultaneously within various countries and denominations. Catholic mysticism, though it may have played some role, was not foundational to Pietism's formation.[20]

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[18] Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 209.

[19] Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, 8-9.

[20] See Andreas Lindt and Klaus Deppermann, eds., *Pietismus und Neuzeit*, Jahrbucher zer Geschichte des Pietismus (Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1974-); John D. Roth, review of *Geschichte des Pietismus*, vol. 1, *Der Pietismus vom siebzehnten bis zum frühen achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, ed. Martin Brecht, In *Journal of Modern History* 67 (December 1995): 964-966.

Thus, a common thread has emerged in modern pietistic historiography which acknowledges mysticism's role but rejects it as a core informant of the movement. This has occurred, in my view, in part due to the pejorative nature in which Ritschl presented his case and because of his focus on Catholic mysticism in particular as the major influence. In so far as scholars wish to reveal the multifaceted influences that impacted Pietism's eventual formation, I am in full agreement. But the emphasis on Ritschl's anti-pietistic attitude has created an unfounded dismissal of his argument.

Modern historical scholarship of Christian mysticism does not so readily dismiss mysticism's impact on pietistic thought. A work that aptly demonstrates the connections between mysticism and German Pietism is Andrew Week's *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwig Wittgenstein* (1993). Weeks' major premise is that German mysticism itself possessed a strong if less perceptible point of objectivity in Christian Scriptures and confessions. In fact, according to Weeks, Pietism's supposed non-doctrinal bent has led some to erroneously conclude the same for mysticism.[21] On this point, in my view, the opposite is true; that is, Pietism's subjective nature is largely due to mysticism's non-dogmatic tendencies. Nevertheless, Weeks convincingly explains in this study the almost natural ideological blend of mystical and pietistic structures. Weeks argues that this resulted in German Pietism's appearance of a "nonmystical

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[21] Andrew Weeks, *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 3, 11.

devotion," all the while "perceptibly nourished by mystical currents."[22] An examination

of principal seventeenth and eighteenth pietistic works bears out this transfer of mystically

oriented forms.

Pietism's official structural formulation began with Philipp Jacob Spener's *Pia

Desideria* (1675).[23] Spener, a Lutheran pastor first at Frankfurt am Main and later Berlin,

initially produced the work as an introduction to a collection of sermons by Johann Arndt.

Spener outlined the various corrupt conditions in seventeenth century Lutheran

Orthodoxy. Spiritual apathy among civil authorities, clergy, and commoners stemmed

from a polemically oriented scholasticism controlling the Lutheran churches and

universities. Ignorance of inner spiritual realities caused ministers and parishioners alike

to completely miss the core truth of Christianity. True religion, Spener insisted, goes

beyond mental assent to creeds and confessions; it must penetrate the heart of man. Many

ministers "are still stuck fast in the old birth and do not actually possess the true marks of

a new birth." They have learned "the letter of the Scriptures, have comprehended and

assented to true doctrine . . . , but they are altogether unacquainted with the true, heavenly

light and the life of faith."[24] The balance of *Pia Desideria* is given to Spener's six point

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[22] Weeks, *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 6; it should be noted that Andrew Weeks focuses both on Catholic and Protestant mysticism in his study.

[23] Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964); quotations are from this edition. For an analysis of *Pia Desideria* see Manfred Waldemar Kohl, "Spener's *Pia Desideria*: The Programmschrift of Pietism," *The Covenant Quarterly* 34 (1976): 61-78; for a bibliographic listing of Spener's works see K. James Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener: Pietist Patriarch* (Chicago: The Covenant Press, 1986), 340-342; for a selection from Spener's works translated into English see Peter C. Erb, ed., *Pietists: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983).

[24] Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 46.

reform proposal aimed at instilling into Lutheran Orthodoxy an inward focused faith.[25] In

his final point on the need for spiritual edification in preaching he wrote, "our whole

Christian religion consists of the inner man . . . , and all sermons should be aimed at this."

The objective "Word" must be allowed to "penetrate to out heart, so that we may hear the

Holy Spirit speak there, that is, with vibrant emotion and comfort feel the sealing of the

Spirit."[26]

To shore up theological support for this mission, one which he saw as a second

Reformation, Spener employed various sources including Scripture, Martin Luther, Johann

Arndt, Johannes Tauler (Dominican mystic), and the popular anonymous mystical tract

Theologia Germanica. The use of Scripture and Luther was a given for a seventeenth

century Lutheran minister; the use of mystical sources such as Arndt, Tauler, and

Theologia Germanica was also more of a given than modern Evangelicals might expect.

The employment of Johann Arndt into Spener's proposals is of special importance.

Arndt's spirituality is so closely akin to Pietism, some scholars consider him the true father

of the movement.[27] If that be the case, the mystical origins of Pietism would be difficult to

dismiss. His most famous work, *Wahres Christentum* (1609), had already enjoyed a wide

readership in German circles by the time of Spener's birth.[28] Of all the extra-biblical

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[25] See Ibid., 87-122.

[26] Ibid., 116, 117.

[27] See Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 202-203.

[28] W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 48; quotations from Johann Arndt's *Whares Christentum* are from the English translation *True Christianity: A Treatise on Sincere Repentance, True Faith, the Holy Walk of the True Christian, etc.*, trans. A. W. Boehm, ed. Charles F. Schaeffer

influences that came to bear on Spener and his followers, the greatest was likely from

Johann Arndt.[29] In *Pia Desideria* Spener called Arndt a "glorious example" of the true

Christian minister.[30] Elsewhere Spener wrote, "Arndt's *True Christianity* [*Wahres*

Christentum] surpasses by far most other human writings."[31] Kurt Aland contended that

"the entire *Pia desideria* breathes the spirit of Arndt."[32]

    As previously noted, not everyone has considered Johann Arndt a mystic per se.

K. James Stein has argued for example, along with Martin Brecht, that Spener's doctrine

of regeneration, though clearly Arndtian, was decidedly non-mystical in that he, in

contradistinction to that which is intrinsic in the mystical journey toward union with God,

did not propose an active role of internal individual effort as a necessary precedent to the

new birth.[33] True enough, Spener's emphasis that regeneration came passively and at a

given point in time (which was Arndt's view) does indicate that on this point he was not

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(Philadelphia: The Lutheran Book Store, 1868). This English translation by A. W.
Boehm, who was one of the principal Halle transmitters of Pietism to English readers, was
widely distributed throughout England and the American colonies in the early eighteenth
century. Boehm stated that Arndt "*imbibed chiefly his practical way of Teaching from
this Author's* [Johannas Tauler] *Writings, as competent Judges may see in his large Work
of* True Christianity. . . ." Quoted in August Francke, *Nicodemus: or, A Treatise Against
the Fear of Man*, 3rd. ed., trans. [A. W. Boehm] (Boston: Printed by Rogers and Fowle,
for N. Procter, 1744), 38n. See Daniel Brunner, "The Role of Halle Pietists in England
(c.1700-c.1740), with Special Reference to the S.P.C.K." (D. Phil. diss., Oxford
University, 1988), 33.

[29] Eric Lund, "Johann Arndt and the Development of a Lutheran Spiritual Tradition"
(Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1979), 289.

[30] Spener, *Pia Desideria*, 117.

[31] Quoted in Kohl, "Spener's *Pia Desideria*: The Programmschrift of Pietism," 62.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Stein, *Philipp Jakob Spener: Pietist Patriarch*, 203, 321n.

squarely within a mystical strain.[34] This one point does not warrant, however, a wholesale

dismissal of Arndt's mystical influence on Spener. On the contrary, it is completely

consistent, as Andrew Weeks has asserted, with the notion that German mystics rarely

divorced themselves from their surrounding religious and traditional mores.[35]

Eric Lund, in his Ph.D. dissertation "Johann Arndt and the Development of a

Lutheran Spiritual Tradition" (1979), also de-emphasized the mystical elements in Arndt's

theology. In answer to the argument set forth by Wilhelm Koepp and Albrecht Ritschl

that, in Lund's words, *True Christianity*'s "mystical portion . . . constitutes the

culmination of Arndt's piety," and the statement by Lucas Osiander (early Arndt critic)

that *Wahres Christentum* should be retitled *Wahres Taulertum*, Lund wrote that Arndt

made sufficient "small revisions" to Tauler's works in order to "neutralize some of the

dangerous connotations of the medieval terms he borrows." Nevertheless, Lund conceded

that, even if watered down, "Arndt seems to accept the central presuppositions of Tauler's

theology even though he claims to follow Luther who rejected the synergistic, pantheistic,

and spiritualistic tendencies of medieval mysticism."[36]

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[34] Ibid., 202; it should be noted that Pietism's emphasis on *infused* righteousness in regeneration and justification rather than *imputed* righteousness is a key mark of distinction between it and Lutheran Orthodoxy. In fact, the pietistic acceptance of infusion rather than imputation places that movement, at least on this point, on the side of Roman Catholic doctrine. It is possible, in my view, that this soteriological perspective has roots in Catholic mysticism as well.

[35] Weeks, *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 10.

[36] Lund, "Johann Arndt and the Development of a Lutheran Spiritual Tradition," 119, 200, 203.

Johann Arndt was a consistent mystic in many respects. Sections of his *True Christianity* are virtually based on the mystical writings of Angela da Foligno, Valentine Wiegel, and Johannes Tauler, a fact in itself that supports a strong Catholic mystical presence.[37] Arndt offered, for example, in contrast to what Stoeffler has argued, an overt mystical paradigm in his teaching on the soul's union with God. Arndt wrote of God that "it is as if his divinity itself could not consist without us; as if he should himself cease to be, unless he could discover the abyss of his divinity in us, and transfuse the overflowing fullness of his essence into us."[38]

No one, of course, disputes the authentic mysticism of Johannes Tauler (1300-1361), a German Dominican friar whose written sermons had saturated Germany, Italy, Spain, and France by the eighteenth century.[39] The similarities between Tauler and Arndt are evident. Concerning mystical union, Tauler wrote that when a man comes out of "intolerable trials" to assurance and peace, God "raises him from a human to a divine mode of being, . . . in which [that] man becomes so divinized that everything which he is and does, God is and does in him." And Tauler added, "such a person is raised so far above any natural mode that he truly becomes by grace what God is essentially by

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[37] Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 204.

[38] Arndt, *True Christianity*, 382; for a similar mystical construct see Jacob Boehme, *The Way to Christ*, trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 94, 167; for a good explanation of this mystical element see Weeks, *German Mysticism from Hildegard of Bingen to Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 10.

[39] Alois Hass, preface to *Johannes Tauler: Sermons* by Johannes Tauler, trans. Maria Shrady (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), xiii-xiv.

nature."[40] It is important to note that Tauler was not simply referring to the evangelical doctrine of the Christian's new nature obtained by virtue of being "in Christ." He explained in another sermon that the experience of mystical union "sheds light and bears witness that man was everlasting in God, before his creation in time." Moreover, when man in eternity past "was in Him, he was God in God."[41] Tauler, like Arndt, saw man's potential union with God as so complete that the two could become one. Eric Lund is probably correct that Arndt, unlike Tauler, drew a distinction between the human and divine essence at the point of union.[42] After all, Arndt did use, as noted above, the words "*it is as if* his [God's] divinity itself could not consist without us. . . ." Nevertheless, even if neutralized to a degree, the mystical Tauler is so forcefully present in Arndt's system that he cannot be so easily dismissed.

Neither should one discount both men's strong mystical influences on Philipp Spener. In Spener's sermon "On Hindrances to Theological Studies" (1680), he spoke of his appreciation for mystical, even Catholic mystical, thought forms. His accommodation of both the objective (dogmatic) and subjective (mystical) is evident. "I find the significant distinction between scholastic dogmatics and that of the mystics only in the fact that they deal with the same material but in different ways." The former, Spener added, "is directed to designate what is true and correct," while the latter "is not satisfied with mere knowledge." Moreover, he wrote, mysticism "takes the whole mind and all the powers of

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[40] Johannes Tauler, "Sermon 40 [Fifth Sunday After Trinity]," in *Johannes Tauler: Sermons*, 143.

[41] Tauler, "Sermon 44 [Feast of the Nativity of John the Baptist II]," in Ibid., 148.

[42] Lund, "Johann Arndt and the Development of a Lutheran Spiritual Tradition," 208.

the soul into its realm and, in these, wishes to establish once again the divine image. It stresses practical purification, illumination, and union with God."[43] Spener saw, therefore, the mystical approach as necessary to accomplish his desired reforms. In other words, Protestantism needed mysticism in order to become true Christianity.

If Jacob Spener was the impetus for historic Pietism, August Hermann Francke institutionalized it.[44] Although Francke scholars have, as with Spener, sought to downplay the mystical elements in his work, recent studies suggest that Francke too was heavily influenced by Catholic mysticism. Gary Sattler's study "August Hermann Francke and Mysticism" (1980), although not Ritschlian in tone or focus, does reevaluate the Protestant and Catholic mystical influences on Francke. Sattler pointed out that even though Francke's mystical inclinations may not be as evident as in Arndt and Tauler, they nevertheless loom large. Like Spener, Francke's spirituality developed from many of the same writings, particularly Arndt, Tauler, and *Theologia Germanica*. Francke's childhood hometown of Gotha became, possibly more than any other city, the center of Arndtian thought within the Lutheran Church. In addition, and in some measure because of his Arndtian background, Francke, while a student in Leipzig, came under the influence of

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[43] Spener, "On Hindrances to Theological Studies," in Erb, ed., *Pietists: Selected Writings*, 68.

[44] For collections of Francke's printed works in German see Erhard Peschke, ed., *August Hermann Francke: Werke in Auswahl* (Berlin: Luther-Verlag, 1969); Erhard Peschke, ed., *August Hermann Francke: Schriften und Predigten*, vol. 1, *Streitschriften* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1981); for selections translated into English see Gary R. Sattler, *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good: A Brief Introduction to the Life and Writings of August Hermann Francke* (Chicago: Covenant Press, 1982), and Erb, ed., *Pietists: Selected Writings*.

Catholic mystic Miguel de Molinos. Impressed by Molinos' *Guida spirituale*, Francke

translated it from Italian to Latin in 1687.[45]

Francke's common pietistic preoccupation with the objective revelation in

Scripture has caused some not to recognize the complementary role of his mystical side.[46]

In one respect the very term "mysticism" presupposes a mystery hidden by an objective

cover. As A. Keith Walker wrote concerning English mystic divine William Law's dual

relationship with the mystical and objective, "mysticism is that which penetrates the

mystery. The concrete and particular are necessary, not offensive." Thus, Walker added,

"the mystic is led . . . to the Bible and liturgy."[47] Thus, it is a mistake to assume that

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[45] Gary Sattler, "August Hermann Francke and Mysticism," *The Covenant Quarterly* 38 (November 1980): 3-4; Erhard Peschke wrote the following of Arndt's influence on Francke: "Of mystical origin and transmitted especially by Arndt is the *Urbild-Abbild* idea and the emphasis upon the identification of man's will with that of God--. Francke speaks of humility, of following Christ under the cross, of Christ dwelling in us, and of searching for the Ground. Furthermore, Arndt's influence becomes apparent in the doctrine of order, the times and hours of God, in the emblematic understanding of the process of salvation as developing upon different levels, in the high estimate of prayer, trials and the temporary withdrawal of grace, in the insistence upon self-analysis, the negative judgment upon one's relation to the sensuous, material reality, with reference especially to the so called *adiaphora*, and finally in the criticism of a merely theoretical knowledge of the truths of faith, as well as in the emphasis upon experiencing and feeling." Quoted in Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, 9n. The stages common in the mystical approach to God are strikingly evident in Molinos' *Guida spirituale*. "The inward way," Molinos wrote, "is a centering of the whole being in a loving manner in the Divine Presence." Once centered before God "miseries, weaknesses, and imperfections" are accompanied "by an illumination light" in the atmosphere of a "loving fear." Here "there is contempt and mistrust of self, but there is hope in God." If this "withdraw[al] . . . into God" becomes a "continual exercise," one will eventually find union "at the center of *His* habitation." Michael Molinos, *The Spiritual Guide*, ed. Gene Edwards (Gardiner, Maine: Christian books, 1982), 64-65.

[46] Sattler, "August Hermann Francke and Mysticism," 3-4.

[47] A. Keith Walker, *William Law: His Life and Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1973), 245.

mystics or those heavily influenced by them were necessarily dismissive of objective revelation.[48]

Francke possessed an undeniable allegiance to the objective written Word, but he often spoke of the need to go beyond the literal Word to the deeper meaning therein. In his private, spiritual regulations, that were later published, he wrote, "pay heed to the foundation and kernel of Scripture, 'Christ Jesus.'" Be careful, he admonished, not to "consider . . . only the literal meaning, . . . but rather see that through the working of the Holy Spirit you know even the mind of the apostles and prophets, . . . and . . . holy emotions which God worked in their hearts, and inscribe such deep in your own heart."[49]

This mystically dominated hermeneutical approach saturated Francke's soteriological sermons as well. In "The Mystery of the Cross" (1696) he stated that "historical knowledge [understanding and assent to Scripture] . . . is by far insufficient for salvation and may in no way be called the living, saving, and blessed knowledge of the crucified Jesus."[50] Though Francke verbally adhered to the Reformation principle of *sola fide*, he, if unwittingly, made salvation itself a rigorous task of "breaking through" the outward, objective Word to the inward mystery. The nominal Christian, he warned, "will gladly take comfort in the crucified Christ, yet will not himself 'crucify his flesh together with its lusts and desires.'" For the one who "hopes to attain to eternal life through the

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[48] Transmitters of pietistic and mystical forms into the Colonial South such as John Wesley and George Whitefield, who will be examined later in this study, also exemplified a similar dual subjective/objective approach.

[49] August H. Francke, "Scriptural Rules of Life," in *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good*, trans. Gary Sattler, 223, 224.

[50] Francke, "The Mystery of the Cross," in Ibid., 125.

death of Christ, yet will himself 'not die to sin nor mortify the matters of the flesh,'" to

him "'the message is hidden . . . and he knows not what is said.'"[51] Likewise, he wrote

elsewhere, "the mind of a carnal, unregenerate person is far from adequately penetrating

even into the sense of the letter. . . ."[52]

Francke's mystical tendencies are often overlooked due in part to his impressive

institutional accomplishments in Halle. Mystics are more commonly associated with

solitude and contemplation than with institution building. Yet, Francke's tireless efforts in

Halle aptly illustrate the parallel he saw between work and a mystical approach to

spirituality.

At Spener's bidding, Francke came to Halle in 1691 as professor of Greek and

Oriental languages and as pastor of a nearby Lutheran parish in Gloucha. Francke's

eventual leadership and accomplishments made Halle the capital of eighteenth century

Pietism. In addition to his academic and pastoral duties he established an orphanage

(1695), a school (1696), another school for pre-university language training (1697), a

widow's home (1698), and a seminary (1702).[53] Even though the schools were largely

established for the poor, their reputation for excellence, in the face of considerable

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[51] Ibid., 125-126.

[52] Francke, *A Guide to the Reading and Study of the Holy Scriptures*, trans. William Jaques (Philadelphia: David Hogan, 1823), 134.

[53] For an overview of Francke's institutional accomplishments see Sattler, *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good*, 47-69; for Francke's account of these efforts see Francke, *The Footsteps of Divine Providence; or, the Bountiful Hand of Heaven Defraying the Expenses of Faith Wonderfully displayed in erecting and managing the Hospital at Glaucha without Hall, in the Prussian Dominions, for the Education of Students in Divinity; and for the Reception, Cloathing [sic], Feeding, and Educating of Poor Children*, trans. [A. W. Boehm] (London: Printed and Sold by W. Justins, 1787). This work was originally titled *Pietas Hallensis*. Boehm translated it in 1705.

Orthodox opposition, drew many from Germany's noble class. Francke's orphanage became the model for many others in Europe and America, including George Whitefield's Bethesda home in Savannah, Georgia.

Not content with local works of benevolence, Francke established a printing press (1697) and a Bible Institute for the distribution of Scripture (1710)--the first of its kind. By 1800 the Bible Institute in Halle had printed and distributed almost three million Bibles or Bible selections in several languages.[54] In addition to other pietistic works, the institute published Arndt's *True Christianity* in Czech, Polish, and Ukrainian.[55]

Francke's efforts had a profound impact on the rise of literacy. Scholars have generally give Martin Luther blanket credit for this due to his emphasis on the common man's access to Scripture and other religious literature. Certainly Luther's efforts helped to initiate this trend, but Francke and other Pietists are deserving of credit as well. By 1525 Luther had become increasingly skeptical of the common man's profitable use of the vernacular Bible and thus stressed a more structured system of catechism instruction and memorization--with fewer literacy skills required. Conversely, the strong emphasis Pietists placed on basic education, Bible reading in conventicles, and literature distribution resulted directly in the impressive rise of eighteenth century literacy rates in Germany.[56]

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[54] Sattler, *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good*, 88; see also Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, 36.

[55] Richard L. Gawthrop, *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth-Century Prussia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 192.

[56] Richard L. Gawthrop and Gerald Strauss, "Protestantism and Literacy in Early Modern Germany," *Past and Present* 104 (August 1984): 34-37, 39-40, 43-55.

Many see mystical preoccupation as subjective to the point of being counter to social activity. A legitimate case of this sort may be made against certain mystical expressions such as Quietism. But Francke, though he admired quietistic works such as Molinos' *Guida spirituale*, exemplified a more Taulerian active mysticism. As Josef Schmidt has explained, "Tauler's main merit lies in elucidating and transforming mystical concepts of the *vita contemplativa* into the domain of the *vita activa* and *publica*."[57] Likewise, Francke saw his work in direct proportion to his inward spiritual state. In the benediction to his sermon "Duty to the Poor" (1697), Francke exemplified his view of the complementary nature between spiritual contemplation and social action. He prayed, cause your "Holy Word . . . to become right powerful in our hearts that we may not accept it as a mere outward exhortation, but rather that we consider, as you make clear to us, wherein true evidence of Christianity consists!" And, he continued, "truly awaken each and every one . . . , that they may know, taste, and feel something of your divine power. . . ." All this working "in our hearts." Francke added, will "prove our Christianity not with word nor with tongue, but with deed and in truth!" Such attainment in the Christian walk, he concluded, results in a greater union with deity, an "experience in our hearts" of the "divine mind" which teaches "to love our neighbor as ourself."[58]

In support of the view that institution building, especially as a benevolent social exercise, should not be seen as somehow antithetical to all forms of mystical spirituality, it is instructive to note that much of the impetus for Francke's activity came directly from the elements found in an Arndtian mystical perspective. Gary Sattler has argued that even

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[57] Josef Schmidt, introduction to *Johannes Tauler: Sermons*, 2.

[58] Francke, "Duty to the Poor," in Sattler, *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good*, 184-185.

though Johann Arndt "has frequently been assigned the label of escapist and antiworldly," he "like many western mystics . . . felt that the true mystical experience would bring forth fruit in terms of loving behavior."[59]

Mystical contemplation as an impetus to action (*vita activa*) calls for a certain reevaluation and adjustment of the Weber Thesis. Richard Gawthrop has shown that both Spener and Francke placed considerable emphasis on work as an inward spiritual endeavor. Max Weber, in his *Protestant Ethic and the Sprit of Capitalism*, wrongly dismissed Pietists' role in a Protestant work ethic since they were, in his view, too oriented toward the inner mystical world and because they generally rejected the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. Weber supported his claim by showing the lack of capitalistic activity in eighteenth century Germany in comparison to other Protestant experiments such as Puritan New England. The fundamental flaw here is the unwarranted limitation of a work-ethic to economic endeavors. Rather than toward a spirit of capitalism, since similar economic opportunities were not as readily available as in seventeenth and eighteenth century New England, Pietists influenced eighteenth century Germany toward "political absolutism," making them, at least as much as Calvinistic Puritans, champions of the Protestant work ethic in the political realm.[60] The interesting

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[59] Sattler, *God's Glory, Neighbor's Good*, 48.

[60] Gawthrop, "Lutheran Pietism and the Weber Thesis," *German Studies Review* 12 (May 1989): 243-245; for an examination of this phenomenon in application to different types of Pietism and to Puritanism see Mary Fulbrook, *Piety and Politics: Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in England, Wurttemberg and Prussia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); for an alternate view see Koppel S. Pinson, *Pietism as a Factor in the Rise of German Nationalism* (New York: Octagon Books, 1968). Fulbrook explains why Pinson discounted the direct connection between Pietism and political absolutism in the following: "Pinson's work on Pietism and the rise of German nationalism simply points to

question to consider, especially in light of the influence Catholic mysticism had on pietistic social and political action, is just how much of the Protestant work ethic was actually Protestant?

In comparing Spener and Francke, a more intense development of a mystically driven work ethic appears in the ministry of the latter. Gawthrop has observed that Francke's more "emotional nature of . . . spirituality" accounted for his greater emphasis on work. Although Spener emphasized work, he "never formulated a consistent position" in its relationship to spirituality. But Francke's "characteristic radicalism . . . overcame this theological barrier" and helped him to find "divine meaning in the most mundane vocational activity." The important thing to Francke, in Gawthrop's words, was a Christian's "subjective sense of acting in conformity with God's will."[61] And, Gawthrop noted concerning Francke's motivation for action that "despite his public commitment to orthodox doctrine, a subtle form of illuminism or spiritualism" was directly related to his obedient service. In other words, spiritual activity was a vehicle of divine illumination. Spiritually motivated labor helped to produce such a degree of assurance that Francke and later Halle Pietists "view[ed] themselves as God's uniquely privileged agents," Gawthrop wrote, and that "riding on their ability to serve . . . their neighbors was nothing less than the fate of God's plan for the whole human race."[62] At the risk of presumption, I would

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affinities between the two clusters of orientation, suggesting that the latter is in some way a 'secularised' [sic] version of the former, but failing to specify any detailed historical links between the two." Fulbrook, *Piety and Politics*, 15. Fulbrook places English Puritans within the circle of Pietism proper. Although she may overstate the case, she does demonstrate clear similarities between the two movements.

[61] Gawthrop, *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth-Century Prussia*, 143-144.

[62] Ibid., 147-148.

go one step further and suggest that this radically subjective spiritual illuminism that

Gawthrop identified came from the strong mystical influences Francke had been associated

with his entire life, most of which were Catholic in origin. If this is the case, it is not too

far afield to suggest that mysticism found institutionalization, not in a medieval monastery,

but in the benevolent social structures of Halle and beyond.[63]

Perhaps the best example of Pietism's unique blend of Orthodoxy and mysticism is

found in Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), patronage founder of the

renewed Unitas Fratrum (Moravians).[64] Although most studies place him outside the

Halle circle, he had close connections with it.[65] Zinzendorf's father, George Ludwig, was

a very close friend and supporter of Philipp Spener. George died while Nicholas was still

an infant, whereupon Spener became the child's godfather. The grandmother, Baroness

Catherine von Gersdorf, a strong pietistic leader in her own right, sent him to Francke's

Halle *Paedagogiumin* in 1710, where he remained for six years. While in Halle,

Zinzendorf spent much time in Francke's home, often dining with the famed Pietist leader.

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[63] That Catholic mysticism (especially Franciscan and Dominican) was re-institutionalized from the monastery to pietistic institutions is an argument set forth by Albrecht Ritschl. As noted earlier, Ritschl saw the Franciscan and Dominican friars as having a transitional function since their "preaching proved its reforming intentions in the spreading of an asceticism which accommodated itself to the conditions of living among those who were married and active in civil pursuits and thus it narrowed, at least, the gulf between monastic and laity." Ritschl, "'Prolegomena' to *The History of Pietism*," 65.

[64] For collected works by Zinzendorf see his *Hauptschriften*, 6 vols., ed. Erich Beyreuther and Gerhard Meyer (Hildesheim: G. Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1962-63).

[65] Zinzendorf broke with the Halle Pietists after Francke's death in 1727 due to his belief that legalism pervaded the movement; see Mary B. Havens, "Zinzendorf and the Augsburg Confession: An Ecumenical Vision?" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1989), 167-181.

"I had chances every day to hear edifying reports about the spread of the Kingdom of God," he wrote, "and all this strengthened my zeal for the cause of Christ." Although Zinzendorf had from his earliest remembrances loved Jesus intimately, Halle helped to deepen his pietistic tendencies. At the behest of an anti-pietistic guardian, the 16 year old Zinzendorf left Halle for Wittenberg (center of Lutheran Orthodoxy) to study law. Upon his departure Francke said of him, "This youth will some day become a great light in the world."[66]

While in Wittenberg Zinzendorf, who always considered himself a Lutheran, developed a singular desire to unite Lutheran Orthodoxy (and later all other denominations) with a pietistic expression of faith. The institutional structure through which he would pursue this goal was the Unitas Fratrum, a fledgling band of Moravian Brethren, proclaimed spiritual descendants of John Huss, who had settled at Zinzendorf's Herrnhut village. As the undisputed spiritual head of the group by 1727, Zinzendorf would engineer one of the most remarkable endeavors of missionary activity ever witnessed in Christendom.[67] The scope of this investigation does not allow for a detailed account of the Moravian world mission thrust, but the fact of its success, especially in

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[66] Quoted in Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer*, 25, 26.

[67] For Zinzendorf's spiritual contract drawn up on the occasion of his leadership assumption at Herrnhut (1727) see Zinzendorf, "Brotherly Union and Agreement at Herrnhut," in Erb, ed., *Pietists: Selected Writings*, 325-330; for the historical context of his takeover see Valdis Mezezers, *The Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic* (North Quincy, Massachusetts: The Christopher Publishing House, 1975), 102-107; also see J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church: The Renewed Unitas Fratrum, 1722-1957* (Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education, Moravian Church in America, 1967), 23-33.

colonial America, makes the theological origins of Zinzendorf's brand of Pietism all the more important to our study.

Of the three German Pietists examined thus far, none, in my view, exemplify Ritschl's Catholic mysticism thesis, at least theologically, more than Zinzendorf. Scholars have, as with Spener and Francke, downplayed mysticism's role in Zinzendorf's thought.[68] F. Ernest Stoeffler, on the other hand, who as seen above, was generally reluctant to credit mysticism as a dominant informant of Pietism, saw Zinzendorf as more of an exception.[69] "Zinzendorf's conceptualization of the way to Christ," Stoeffler wrote, "gives evidence of thought forms which stem from both Lutheran Pietism and mysticism."[70]

Albrecht Ritschl's specific claim that Franciscan mysticism greatly informed Pietism appears credible in the case of Zinzendorf, especially concerning the Count's view of a salvific union through meditation on the suffering of Christ--sometimes referred to as the "blood-and-wounds cult."[71] The practice of St. Francis of Assisi in this area is well

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[68] See Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, 142.

[69] See Ibid., 140-159.

[70] Ibid., 150.

[71] Zinzendorf's *Hauptschriften* vols. 3 and 4 and his hymns written between 1743 and 1750 show the height of his "blood-and-wounds" thinking. See Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, 151n. Although Zinzendorf read Tauler (a Dominican friar) and Arndt, I have not found where he actually read St. Francis. It may be safest to stay with Stoeffler's assessment that Zinzendorf's contemplations are "reminiscent of St. Francis of Assisi." Ibid., 151. It is difficult to imagine that, given his wide reading in theology while at Halle and Wittenberg and throughout his life, he did not read St. Francis. We do know that he was drawn to the more radical Pietists such as Dippel, Oetinger, and Arnold, as well as to mystics, but by the 1730s he began to openly deny the validity of mysticism per se. It should be noted, however, that Zinzendorf based his denial primarily on mysticism's lack of a Christocentric meditation. See Havens, "Zinzendorf and the Augsburg Confession: An Ecumenical Vision?," 189-199. The point should not be lost that Franciscan mysticism, as far as inner meditation was concerned, was

known.[72] St. Francis believed that essential union with Christ occurred from such

contemplation. "The entire growth of Francis was towards the point at which," Evelyn

Underhill, citing a legendary phrase, wrote "he was 'transformed by the kindling of his

mind into the image of the Crucified. . . .'" While on the one hand St. Francis' spirituality

is more commonly associated with his intriguing communication with animals and nature,

and his joyous service and identification with the poor; one should not miss, Underhill

added, his central focus on "the tension, suffering, interior solitude which is the price of a

saving love: the Cross."[73]

St. Francis' desire for union and identification with Christ eventually resulted, so

the story goes, in the mystery of the "*stigmata*," where he received the five wounds of

Christ. The union with Christ's suffering came at Francis' request to, in his words, "feel in

. . . soul and in . . . body, . . . that pain which You, dear Jesus, sustained in the hour of

Your most bitter Passion." The thirteenth century author of *The Little Flowers of St.*

Francis, explained that Francis' "devotion increased so much within him that he utterly

transformed himself into Jesus through love and compassion." In the process of this

experience Francis "felt intense joy from the friendly look of Christ, who appeared to him

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Christocentric, and if any one mystical form would more naturally appeal to Zinzendorf, it
would likely be that set forth by St. Francis.

[72] In his "'Prolegomena' to *The History of Pietism*," Ritschl focused primarily on the
spiritual reforming ethos that came from the Franciscan Order through what he called
"half-monastic association[s]" (65) such as small group conventicles and not on a specific
transfer of St. Francis' "*stigmata*" theology per se. I simply show this theological
similarity as a point of support for Ritschl's larger emphasis that Catholic mystical models
played a significant role in the pietistic experience.

[73] Evelyn Underhill, "St. Francis and Franciscan Spirituality," chap. in *Mixed Pasture:*
Twelve Essays and Addresses (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1933), 161-
162, 164.

in a very familiar way and gazed at him very kindly." Eventually, by "Divine Providence,"

he learned that the vision came to him to confirm that "he was to be utterly transformed

into the direct likeness of Christ Crucified, not by physical martyrdom, but by enkindling

of the mind."[74]

Although it cannot be said that Zinzendorf sought the literal wounds and identity

of Christ, his mystical "enkindling of the mind" was strikingly similar in both method and

result to the experience of St. Francis.[75] From August to September (1746) at Brethren's

Chapel in London, Zinzendorf delivered a series of nine lectures (sermons) that selectively

illustrate his Franciscan mystical form.[76] He stated that if in the "instant" of Christ's

bloody appearance one "goes over to Him with his heart, passes into Him, and loses

himself in His tormented form and suffering figure--he remains in Him eternally, without

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[74] [Ugolino di Monte Santa Maria], *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*, trans. Raphael Brown (Garden City, New York: Hanover House, 1958), 190-191.

[75] From Zinzendorf's example, Moravians have historically held to a strong emphasis on the suffering Lamb as a point of worship and meditation; see Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer*, 63-77. The following is a declaration from an October 1740 Synod (chaired by Zinzendorf) aimed to differentiate between Moravians and, in their view, those who were more mystically oriented. "The difference between those zealous servants of God, who, in Germany, by some were called Pietists, in England, Methodists, in France, Jansenists, in Italy and Spain, Quietists, in the Roman Church in general often known by the character of preachers of repentance and ascetics, but in the Protestant Church generally thought Mystics, on the one side, and our Oeconomy on the other, is this: the former strive either for an alteration of the behaviour, or the thoughts, or both; or for an alteration in the religious worship; or are for abolishing all the external Part: We preach nothing but the Crucified Christ for the heart; and we think that when any one gets hold of Him, all that is idle vanishes away from such a person, and all necessary good comes, together with the living and abiding impression of the loving and faithful Lamb of God, who was once a mortal man in reality." Quoted in Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer*, 71-72.

[76] Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures on Important Subjects in Religion*, trans. George W. Forell (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1973).

interruption. . . ." From one "look of the tortured Saviour," Christ "remains engraved in one's heart" to the point that he "is changed into the same image. . . ." And like St. Francis' vision of the "friendly look of Christ," Zinzendorf too determined God's disposition toward him by the bleeding Savior's ever present gaze. "For every loving look from the Saviour indicates our morality to us throughout our whole life," and conversely, "one dissatisfied, one sorrowful, one painful look from the Saviour embitters and Makes loathsome to us everything that is" evil.[77]

Zinzendorf's notion of a mystical union through meditation on the suffering Christ is evident in another sermon. He stated that anyone who wishes "to be blessedly happy must be able to say, 'When it pleased Him to reveal Himself to my heart, . . . we became one.'" This mystical union is the principal "goal of preaching." The preacher must work for a convergence of the "bleeding Redeemer" and the "heart" of man, and "in that very moment the bleeding Husband forms Himself in the innermost part of the soul." Once complete "the heart stands full of Jesus, full of the Merits of the Lamb." In the benediction to this address Zinzendorf asked Christ, on behalf of all Londoners, to "call to mind those souls" that they too might experience "that blessedly happy moment when you would pass into them and become one heart and soul with them."[78]

Ernest Stoeffler has pointed out that one should not see Zinzendorf as purely mystical. The Count exemplified, as did Spener and Francke, his debt to Luther in holding

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[77] Zinzendorf, "On the Essential Character and Circumstances of the Life of a Christian," in Ibid., 83-84.

[78] Zinzendorf, "Concerning the Blessed Happiness of Sincere and Upright Hearts," in Ibid., 90-91, 94.

that only in the death of Christ can man be reconciled to God. This, of course, distinguishes him from many mystical models. But Luther and Zinzendorf differed in the appropriation of that death. "To Luther," Stoeffler wrote, "salvation was the result of a firm trust in the sufficiency of the salvatory work of Christ on the cross." Likewise, Zinzendorf portrayed "the Lutheran understanding of the meaning of Christ's . . . death," but he, unlike Luther, "put the emphasis upon man's psychological identification with the suffering Christ."[79] This illustrates again the unique blend of Orthodox and mystical patterns so prevalent in Pietism. With Zinzendorf, however, a case can be made that the mystical significantly overshadowed the objective elements of his faith.

Pietistic and mystical expressions of faith were not foreign to early Anglicanism. As church historian Gordon Rupp has written, "experimental religion" has been "within the English Protestant tradition from its beginning."[80] English Puritan devotional literature translated into German indeed helped initiate the formations of the continental pietistic movement. Not only Puritans but also mainline sixteenth and seventeenth century leaders within the Church of England manifested a sentiment or even mystical approach in their sermons and other printed works.

Anglican theologian Richard Hooker (1554-1600), for example, whose *magnum opus* entitled *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* was a prominent polemic against the Puritan's disregard for Church order and law, emphasized in this work and others the

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[79] Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century*, 151.

[80] Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England, 1688-1791* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 325, 326.

Christian's participatory role in the actual being of God. This is not to suggest that Hooker held to a full blown mystically oriented system of human divination. In many ways his emphasis was in line with long held orthodox belief. After all, Christ spoke of followers abiding in him as he had his abode in the Father (St. John 15). The Apostle Paul's central theme in the Epistle to the Ephesians was the believer's positional standing "in Christ." However, the notion of actual likeness in essence with God, a tenet held by many Christian mystics, has never held a magisterial position in orthodox Christianity.

It is evident that Hooker tended to go beyond, even if tentatively, the accepted norm into a mystical notion of union.[81] Although he argued that for one to speak of an actual blending ("even as really materially and naturally as wax melted and blended . . . into one lump . . .") of man and God into one essence was wrong, he nevertheless teetered toward the brink of that very position. For example, he wrote that "God hath deified our nature, though not by turninge it into him selfe, yeat by makinge it his own inseparable habitation, wee cannot now conceive how God should without man either exercise divine power or receive the glorie of divine praise."[82] Hooker employed the Chalcedonian premise of both distinction (three persons) and sameness (one God) within the Trinity as an illustration of man's potential union with God. James Booty, a leading scholar on Hooker, explained that in his writings "participation . . . means both union and distinction

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[81] For a brief treatment of this tendency in Hooker see A. M. Allchin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (Wilton, Connecticut: Morehouse-Barlow Company, Inc., 1988), 7-14; see also John E. Booty, "Richard Hooker," in *The Spirit of Anglicanism: Hooker, Maurice, Temple*, ed. William J. Wolf (Wilton, Connecticut: Morehouse-Barlow Company, Inc., 1979), 17-45.

[82] Quoted in Booty, "Richard Hooker," 18, 19.

in the Godhead and between Christ and the Christian."[83] Hooker called this paradox a "harmonious dissimilitude."[84]

Another pertinent example of a mystical and pietistic approach in early Anglicanism is found in the ministry of Lancelot Andrewes (1556-1626). Among various positions held in the ministry of the church, Andrewes was a preacher for over two decades in King James I's court. Andrewes, who has been lauded as one of the most influential of all Anglican ministers, aptly illustrates how pietistic and mystical thought found its way into the higher echelons of the sixteenth and seventeenth century church establishment in England.[85] A key emphasis in his preaching, as with Hooker, was on the mystery of man's union with the divine. Like Hooker, Andrewes cannot be placed fully within a mystical mold. Yet, a similar tension between objective revelation and subjective mysticism is evident in his discourses.

This experientially participatory emphasis is especially noticeable in his famous Nativity sermons that were preached at Whitehall to the Court of James I on Christmas day (except three) from 1605 through 1624.[86] Andrewes used the doctrine of Christ's

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[83] Ibid., 19.

[84] Quoted in Allchin, *Participation in God*, 8; it is my contention that later Evangelical mystics, some of whom will be examined in this study, demonstrated a similar paradoxical tendency in various theological, political, and social situations. I suggest that the objective/subjective tensions inherent in an evangelically oriented mystical and pietistic system of thought may have contributed to a mind set given to paradox.

[85] For a brief discussion of this trait in Andrewes see Allchin, *Participation in God*, 15-23; for a more in-depth treatment see Nicholas Lossky, *Lancelot Andrewes the Preacher (1555-1626): The Origins of the Mystical Theology of the Church of England*, trans. Andrew Louth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[86] Nicholas Lossky, *Lancelot Andrewes the Preacher (1555-1626)*, 32.

incarnation to illustrate the union of man with God. For example, in his exegesis of Christ's name "Immanuel" (God with us), he argues that the title itself signifies that at the birth of Christ "the parties are God and we." And he argued from this that on the one hand "God and man are two," on the other hand God makes "them one; recapitulate[d] and cast up both into one sum; to knit *anu*, that is 'we,' and *El*, that is 'God,' with his *Im*, into one---one word and one thing, *univoce* again." The result that came "upon this point" of union was "a second kind of Trinity---God, we, and Christ."[87]

Richard Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes are good examples of the extent to which pietistic and mystical forms could influence later Anglican thought. It should be noted that even though Hooker and Andrewes focused on union as the goal of the Christian's journey, even at times seemingly a union of actual essence, they sought to base their conclusions, unlike the purer mystics, on a more objective, revelational foundation (Scriptural exegesis and theology). At the same time it should not be forgotten that mystics did not necessarily dismiss the objective side either. Thus, the differences can arguably be considered as of degree rather than kind. This point is particularly pertinent when we examine those English and American subjects I have labeled "Evangelical Pietists" such as John Wesley, George Whitefield, and lesser knowns, at least in religious

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[87] Lancelot Andrewes, "Of the Nativity," in *The Works of Lancelot Andrewes*, vol. 1 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1854; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1967), 145-146; it should be noted that Andrewes was very fond of the patristic and distinctively mystical phrase used by Augustine that "God has become man, that man might be able to become God," and the phrase uttered by Athanasius that "He was made man that we might become God." Such terminology was, in Nicholas Lossky's words, "very close to the thought of Lancelot Andrews." Lossky, *Lancelot Andrewes the Preacher*, 186. In modern evangelical circles, Augustine's phrase is commonly rendered without reference to human deification: "The Son of God became the Son of Man so that sons of men might become sons of God."

circles, such as Henry Laurens, James Habersham, and others. They too demonstrated the tensions inherent in a objective/subjective system, as will be seen later in this study.

Given the scope to which leading Anglicans could be influenced by a theology of sentiment, it is not surprising that Continental Pietism as well as other more overt mystical expressions of faith heavily influenced and even germinated within eighteenth century Anglicanism, especially the evangelical wing that would have such a profound impact on later colonial and early national religion in America.

First, we will briefly see the direct impact German Pietism had on Anglican Evangelicals. The direct influence of Pietism, especially from Halle, on eighteenth century Anglicans is often overlooked. As recipients of substantial subjective tendencies from mystics such as Johannes Tauler, Michael Molinos, and Johann Arndt, Pietists such as August Francke and his most important student and disciple, A. W. Boehm (1673-1722), carried these experientially oriented elements into the circle of Anglican missionary efforts through organizations such as the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.). Thomas Bray founded the S.P.C.K. in 1699 primarily as a lay movement. Francke, the most influential Pietist leader at the end of the seventeenth century, became the first non-English member of the S.P.C.K. It was A. W. Boehm, however, that became a greater force within English circles.

In 1663 Prince George of Denmark (a Lutheran) married Princess Anne (later England's Monarch). Prince George made J. W. Mecken (Lutheran minister) the Court preacher. When George partook of Anglican sacraments, Mecken protested. The Prince in turn dismissed his minister, and in 1705, upon the recommendation of Heinrich Ludolf (influential liaison between Halle and England), appointed A. W. Boehm as the Court

preacher. Boehm remained at this position until his death in 1722.[88] This position held by a Halle Lutheran Pietist assured a significant hearing of pietistic views at the highest levels.

Halle Pietism had a large literary influence in England and America. In relation to the concerns of this study, it is arguably the most important role played by Francke and his followers. Because of his position with the Royal Court, A. W. Boehm had the ear of Queen Anne from the beginning. When the S.P.G. (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, a sister movement to the S.P.C.K. , also founded by Bray) began to supply American libraries with religious books, Boehm stated that it "should have as its purpose not the Propagation of sects but true Christianity."[89] This statement was in reference to Johann Arndt's mystical work *True Christianity*, which Boehm had translated into English. Daniel Brunner, in his study of Halle Pietism's role in the S.P.C.K., wrote that Arndt's *True Christianity*, because of its "spiritual and practical Christianity was to Boehm the one best suited to the American wilderness."[90] It is interesting to note that Boehm saw this work as mystical in origin since Arndt had, in Boehm's words, "imbibed chiefly his Doctrine and Living way of practice from *Thauler* [sic] and *Kempis*." Boehm saw to it that copies of *True Christianity* went with every S.P.C.K. shipment to America.[91] The point is that through the persuasion of a Halle Pietist in the British Royal Court, subtle strains of Catholic mystical theology found their way to American readers.

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[88] Brunner, "The Role of Halle Pietists in England (c.1700-c.1740), with Special Reference to the S.P.C.K.," 62.

[89] Quoted in Ibid., 77.

[90] Ibid., 78.

[91] Ibid., 33, 186.

In addition to propagating mystical literature, Pietists also sent out many of their own books, sermons, and essays--printed and published by the S.P.C.K. Four years after A. W. Boehm's arrival in England he translated and wrote a preface to August Francke's history of Halle Pietism entitled *Pietas Hallensis*. This was the first English translation of German pietistic history. A regular text used in the many English charity schools that had emerged in the eighteenth century was Boehm's *The First Principles of Practical Christianity*. Boehm also published Francke's *Definitio Studii Theologici*, "in order to make him [Francke] well-known among the Oxford students," a part of Francke's overall goal to have a hearing among English scholars and divines.[92]

The impact of Halle pietistic literature on principal leaders of eighteenth century English and American evangelicalism (i.e. John Wesley and George Whitefield) cannot be over emphasized. John Wesley, while in route to Georgia in 1735, read Francke's *Pietas Hallensis* and *Nicodemus: A Treatise Against the Fear of Man* (1701, translated into English in 1706). He began to abridge the latter even before reaching Savannah. This work is a call to professors of Christianity, especially ministers, to put away the fear of man so as to prove authenticity by boldly proclaiming the gospel. Although the work cannot be considered a mystical tract in itself, Francke lifted up Dominican mystic friar Johannes Tauler as a prime example to follow. Hints of mystical union as a precedent to spiritual boldness are evident in the work. "Verily, my Brethren, I fear we have good reason to be ashamed," wrote Francke, "when we read what Taulerus saith, . . . : 'A spiritual Person ought to be so inkindled and all flaming with divine Love, & both inwardly & outwardly so conformable to God, that whenever any one came to him, he

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[92] Ibid., 170, 179.

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might hear nothing from him but GOD. . . .'"[93] In a footnote to this quotation, probably written by A. W. Boehm, the reader is informed that Tauler was "a Dominican Friar" who was "highly commended for his holy Doctrine and exemplary Life, both by Protestants and Papists. . . ."[94]

Charles Wesley had placed a copy of *Nicodemus* in Whitefield's hand while both were young students at Oxford. In 1739 during Whitefield's second trip to the newly founded colony of Georgia, the twenty four year old minister acknowledged the similarities of his benevolent endeavors with those in Halle. He entered in his journal that he "was exceedingly strengthened in reading Professor Francke's account [*Pietas Hallensis*] of the Orphan House at Halle, near Gloucha. It seems, in many circumstances," he added, "to be so exactly parallel to my present undertaking for the poor of Georgia, that I trust the Orphan House about to be erected there, will be carried on and ended with the like faith and success."[95] He wrote in his 1741 report of the orphanage's progress "that it may rightly be stiled *Pietas Georgiensis*, and like the *Pietas Hallensis*, or Professor Franck's Orphanage at Glaucha, near Hall, become the joy of the whole earth."[96] In 1746 Whitefield wrote of Francke, his "memory is very precious to me,

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[93] Francke, *Nicodemus: or, A Treatise Against the Fear of Man*, 37- 38; it is interesting to note that Francke rarely makes reference to any other extra-biblical characters (with the exception of magisterials such as Luther) in this work.

[94] Ibid., 37.

[95] George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 46, 334.

[96] Quoted in Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Continental Pietism and the Evangelical Movement in Britain," in *Pietismus und Reveil*, ed. J. Van Den Berg und J. P. Van Dooren (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 212.

and . . . [his] example has a thousand times been blessed to strengthen and encourage me in the carrying on this enterprize [sic]."[97] Near the end of his life Whitefield stated in a sermon that, in reference to his Bethesda home in Savannah, he was "animated by the example of the great Professor Franck . . . ," and, he exhorted, "tell it in *Germany*, tell my great, good friend, Professor *Franck* [the younger G. A. Francke], that *Bethesda's* GOD is a GOD whose mercy endureth for ever.[98]

Halle Pietism not only served as an inspiration to much of Whitefield's work, its experiential message found a hearing at his Bethesda orphanage. Francke's divinity book translated by A. W. Boehm, *Manuductio*, became a regular text for the young orphans in Savannah.[99]

The use of Francke's works in American evangelical enterprises should not be surprising. As church historian W. R. Ward has written, A. W. Boehm's "translations from Francke were formative reading for all the leading early evangelicals."[100] Whitefield particularly appreciated A. W. Boehm's own work as well. "I am glad you like Boehm," he wrote to a friend in 1740, "his works are truly evangelical, and afford sweet nourishment to the new-born soul. The nearer we come to GOD, the better we shall relish

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[97] Whitefield, "Continuation of the Account and Progress, &c. of the Orphan-House," in *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield*, 6 vols. (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1771), 3: 466; for a treatment of Whitefield's correspondence related to Halle Pietism see Nuttall, "Continental Pietism and the Evangelical Movement in Britain," 209-213.

[98] Whitefield, *Works*, 6: 386.

[99] Nuttall, "Continental Pietism and the Evangelical Movement in Britain," 221.

[100] Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*, 305.

searching books."[101] In 1740 an advertisement in the *South-Carolina Gazette* listed

certain books "very much recommended by Mr. Whitefield." The list included "Boehm's

Sermons."[102]

Zinzendorf and the Moravians, who, as noted above, had early and close ties to

Halle, also served as a conduit of mystical and pietistic forms to British and American

Evangelicalism. For one thing, local Moravian groups in North Carolina and Georgia

played a significant role in the Colonial South's religious landscape. Nor was that impact

limited to those regions per se. For example, Moravian leader John Ettwein at Bethabara,

North Carolina had a considerable influence on the pietistic tendencies of Charleston

merchant, planter, and later president of the Continental Congress, Henry Laurens.

Undoubtedly the most important recipient of Moravian pietistic influence, in both

England and America, was John Wesley. It is not too far fetched to suggest that

Methodism, as a denomination, would never have existed had it not been for Moravian

Pietism. Through his contacts with August Spangenberg (first Moravian leader to talk

with Wesley in America) and Peter Bohler (Moravian leader in England), John Wesley

eventually adopted an evangelical faith in 1738. This inwardly focused Aldersgate

experience, where his heart was "strangely warmed," is well known. F. Ernest Stoeffler

explained that "every record we possess indicates that in 1738 John was given a new

message which then sent Methodism on its way." And the inward focus so important to a

pietistic ethos was key since "both consciously and deliberately the early Wesleyan

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[101] George Whitefield to Elizabeth D[elamotte], 1 February 1740, *Works*, 1: 148. Miss
Delamotte was at one time Whitefield's love interest.

[102] *South-Carolina Gazette*, 30 August 1740.

movement made the experience of 'the Kingdom of God within' the touchstone of what is 'real' and of what is not 'real' in personal Christianity." It should not be forgotten, Stoeffler added, that Methodism "was the direct heir of Continental Pietism as initially transmitted to the Wesley's by the Moravians."[103]

It would be a mistake, however, to see the Moravian influence as Wesley's Rubicon without examining his earlier influences. Modern Evangelicals often retell Wesley's conversion story in the following way: "Wesley, prior to his conversion, trusted in his outward good works as an upstanding Anglican priest, but finally, upon meeting with the Moravians, learned that salvation was by faith alone and not by the works of the flesh." This version discounts the mystical influences that had already been at work on the young priest for over a decade. In fact, by the time he sailed to Georgia in 1736 he had already begun to reject *outward* works as the initiating cause of salvation. He had replaced them with a decidedly mystical structure of *inward* works. This instruction he had received from Anglican mystic William Law. Law counseled Wesley to replace outward works with "*mental prayer*, and the like exercises." Wesley would conclude that such was simply another, albeit more "refined way of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness. . . ."[104] But during his Oxford and Georgia days prior to Aldersgate, inward works leading to mystical union with God was the path he would travel.

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[103] Stoeffler, "Pietism, the Wesleys, and Methodist Beginnings in America," in *Continental Pietism and Early American Christianity*, ed. F. Ernest Stoeffler (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 191.

[104] John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872; reprint, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), 1: 100.

John Wesley aptly illustrates Catholic mysticism's potential to influence British and American Evangelicalism. As early as 1725 Wesley began to read more than any other group of writers, the Catholic mystics. Between 1725 and 1735 Wesley read and abridged many of their works. Catholic scholar Maximin Piette has argued that Wesley's Methodism came close to "a Catholic confraternity." Of the many mystics that helped to shape Wesley's spirituality during this period, few were more influential than Thomas a` Kempis. Wesleyan scholar Robert Tuttle has argued that a` Kempis especially "provided a preamble for Aldersgate," which would occur in 1738. Particularly important was the focus on the "imitation" of Christ so prevalent in a` Kempis's writing. It was this concept that led Wesley to change his salvific emphasis from outward to inward works. It "conditioned [him] for mysticism."[105]

A common distinctive among Christian mystics was that in order to attain union with God, one must first be willing to never attain it. In other words, the motive for union cannot be bolstered by a selfish desire for assurance and eternal bliss. One must be willing to remain in the dark, even eternally, before light will come. Otherwise, the journey would be tarnished by something other than a pure love for God. This "passive resignation" or "disinterested love" was described in various ways. From the passive sense it was what St. John of the Cross called the individual's "dark night of the soul," a necessary passage to light and union, and from the individually active sense it was what a` Kempis and St. Francis called following "naked the naked Jesus."[106]

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[105] Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press, 1989), (Piette quotation 66), 55, 62.

[106] Ibid., 62-63, 86. The phrase *nudi nudum Christum sequi* [Naked to follow a naked Christ] or a derivative thereof, as used by Wesley, Whitefield and others, is believed to

Wesley had received this instruction from his voracious reading of the Catholic mystics and strong reinforcement of it through his relationship with William Law. Law helped Wesley to systematize his mystical journey toward perfection in union. He counseled Wesley to pursue the road of inward righteousness as presented to him by the Catholic mystics. In 1738 Wesley wrote that Law had taught him "how to pursue inward holiness, or a union of the soul with God." Integral to this counsel was the mystical works he persuaded Wesley to read as aids to spiritual contemplation. For example, Law inspired Wesley to study the Roman Catholic mystical tract *Theologia Germanica*, as well as works by Molinos and Tauler, the same key mystical works read by Francke and other German Pietists.[107] A. Keith Walker has written in his biography on Law that it is possible to "chart Wesley's spiritual progress according to the mystical ladder of ascent along which Law was guiding him."[108]

It is significant that just prior to Wesley's trip to Georgia and his subsequent Aldersgate conversion, was the period of his university years at Oxford. Oxford, as seen above, was a natural attractant of German pietistic thought, especially through A. W.

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have come from St. Francis of Assisi. See George Whitefield to John Wesley, 1 February 1738 and John Wesley to James Hutton and the Fetter Lane Society, 2 July 1739 in John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Frank Baker, vol. 25, *Letters I, 1721-1739* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 529, 664. Tuttle explains the Christian mystic's concept of passive resignation or disinterested love in this way. "For them, Christ died for the world, but they rarely applied redemption to themselves since this might suggest the desire for a reward which is both mercenary and inconsistent with perfect love. For attainers, the 'means' have ceased. Hope is swallowed up in love. Union with God replaces the inferior faith (the dark night where one must proceed on blind trust). This conscious union is the gift of God, and in order to gain it one must be content to live without it. Only pure, disinterested love leads to union." Tuttle, *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition*, 86.

[107] Tuttle, *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition*, 76-78 (quotation 76).

[108] Walker, *William Law: His Life and Thought*, 134.

Boehm's connections with Queen Anne's Court and with the S.P.C.K. Between the years

1729 and 1735 John and Charles Wesley and other Oxford students, including George

Whitefield, formed the "Holy Club" (or as they were called by their critics "Methodists,"

for their overly strict religious methods). Charles initially started the Club but John

emerged as its principal leader.

Not only did this band of serious Anglican seekers avail themselves to literature

from Halle, but also, not surprisingly, to a heavy diet of mystical literature as well. John

especially read a whole array of mystical writers including Jeremy Taylor, William Law,

Thomas a` Kempis, Jean-Baptiste de Renty, and the Scottish mystic Henry Scougal.

Scougal's work *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, John wrote to his mother in 1731, "is

an excellent book." [109]

It was this work and others that helped lead to George Whitefield's evangelical

conversion. Before Whitefield attended Oxford University he had acquainted himself with

William Law's *Serious Call to a Devout Life*. Through it "God worked powerfully upon

my soul, as He has since upon many others, by that and his other excellent treatise upon

Christian Perfection." After the impression left from Law's writings, Whitefield "began

to pray and sing psalms thrice every day, besides morning and evening, and to fast every

Friday, and to receive the Sacrament at a parish church near our college. . . ." He had

heard of Wesley's Holy Club prior to his coming to the University. He wrote that after his

arrival in 1732, his "soul longed to be acquainted with some of them, and . . . was strongly

pressed to follow their good example," especially he continued, "when I saw them go

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[109] Tuttle, *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition*, 75-76, 79.

through a ridiculing crowd to receive the Holy Eucharist at St. Mary's."[110] Not long after

making Charles Wesley's acquaintance and receiving from him various reading materials,

including Francke's *Nicodemus* and Scougal's *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*,

Whitefield began to lose trust in outward works for salvation and to pursue a mystical

holiness by inward works as William Law had been advising John Wesley. It was

Scougal's instruction that began Whitefield's conversion process.

> At my first reading it, I wondered what the author meant by saying, "That some
> falsely placed religion in going to church, doing hurt to no one, being constant in the
> duties of the closet, and now and then reaching out their hands to give alms to their
> poor neighbours," "Alas!" thought I, "if this be not true religion, what is?" God
> soon showed me; for in reading a few lines further, that "true religion was union of
> the soul with God, and Christ formed within us," a ray of divine light was
> instantaneously darted in upon my soul, and from that moment, but not till then, did
> I know that I must be a new creature.[111]

Whitefield also acknowledged his debt to John Wesley's personal counsel to no

longer trust external works. Whitefield had for a time resorted to a quietistic form of

mystical meditation which had caused him to leave off his previously faithful attention to

outward performances of good works. John helped to redirect him to perform the works

without trusting them as the basis of spiritual advancement.

> He advised me to resume all my externals, though not to depend on them in the
> least. From time to time he gave me directions as my [various and] pitiable state
> required; [and, at length, by his excellent advice and management of me, under God,
> I was delivered from those wiles of Satan. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is
> within me praise His Holy Name!][112]

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[110] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 45-46.

[111] Ibid., 47.

[112] Ibid., 56.

It is interesting to note that this advise was in some ways similar to that given by William Law to John Wesley. And like Wesley, such a turning to the inward parts was a conversion of sorts, but for both, the inward, mystical focus was not yet the evangelical awakening to justification by faith alone, apart from any works, inward or outward. Wesley's Aldersgate experience would not come until 1738. For Whitefield, though he had in 1734, experienced his "first awakenings to the Divine life," his actual evangelical conversion came 1735.

One day, after a seven week bout with sickness, which he called a "purifying" of soul, Whitefield perceived a particular dryness of mouth which could not be allayed with drink. Someone advised him to, like Christ, cry out "I thirst," since once the Savior did, his suffering soon ended. "Upon which I cast myself down on the bed, crying out, 'I thirst! I thirst!' Soon after this, I found and felt in myself that I was delivered from the burden that had so heavily oppressed me." And, he continued, "the spirit of mourning was taken from me, and I knew what it was truly to rejoice in God my Saviour. . . ."[113]

Even still, it was not until later in the same year that Whitefield came to the realization that his salvation was based on free grace apart from any works. He entered in his journal that upon his witness of a death-bed conversion "God was pleased to enlighten my soul, and bring me into the knowledge of His free grace, and the necessity of being justified in His sight by *faith only*." He differentiated this experience with that of certain Holy Club friends who "had rather inclined to the mystic divinity. . . ." He had finally come around, as he described it, to "the good old doctrine of the Church of

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[113] Ibid., 57, 58.

England. . . ."[114] But as will be seen later in this study, he neither threw off completely his subjective mystical bearings of an inward journey toward union nor found that Anglicans in England and America commonly held to "the good old doctrine" of *sola fide*.

That there was this receptivity of mystical spirituality with the Wesleys, Whitefield, and others is not surprising when one considers the enthusiastic subculture that had emerged since the late seventeenth century in England, especially in London. The influence of German Lutheran mystic Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), for example, had permeated much of this subculture. By 1661 all of Boehme's writings had been translated into English. In England, the sect most involved in following and propagating Boehme's writings was the Philadelphian Society. The Philadelphian Society, Rufus Jones has written, existed "for the propagation of the mystical ideas of the followers of Boehme . . . ."[115] In 1663 Jane Lead [also spelled "Leade"] came under the influence of Behmenist Dr. John Pordage, who instructed her to systematically study Boehme's works. Upon Pordage's death in 1681, Lead became the spiritual overseer of his disciples. In 1697 the group officially took the name Philadelphian Society. Two Oxford graduates, physician Francis Lee (Lead's son-in-law) and Anglican minister Richard Roach, both of whom had been very supportive of the Halle Pietist's involvement with the S.P.C.K., strengthened the Philadelphian Society by their status and tireless support. Roach began to publish the *Theosophical Transactions* which, among other things, focused on Jewish mystical

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[114] Ibid., 62.

[115] Rufus M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 231.

thought from the Kabbala.[116] As far as the Philadelphian Society veered from the Anglican norm in its emphasis on mystical and millenarian thought, it nevertheless sought to maintain reasonable conformity to that established Church. "We design not to set up any Form," a Philadelphian wrote in the *Theosophical Transactions*, "or to lay any Burden either upon our Selves, or upon others; but to maintain the Evangelical Liberty of Prophesying, to all those that are, or shall be, Anointed with the Spirit of Christ."[117] As pointed out above, such attempts of conformity with objective structure were consistent with most mystical movements, Protestant or Catholic. As will be seen later in this study, Evangelicals such as John Wesley, George Whitefield, and other lesser lights in the Colonial South practiced mystical forms of spirituality within their own objective structures as well.

Another sect that provides a compelling example of the variant mystical and millenarian expressions that British Anglicans were exposed to in the early eighteenth century was the Camisards or French Prophets. After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), Huguenots throughout France went into exile. Those who remained in the southeastern portion of France became known as the "Desert" Huguenots, primarily due to their desperate state of physical and spiritual survival. From their ordeals came an increasing belief that their suffering was a prelude to the dawn of Christ's millennium. Preoccupation with numerological speculations became a mark of the Camisards. By

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[116] Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets: The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 45, 46, 48; Brunner, "The Role of Halle Pietists in England (c.1700-c.1740), with Special Reference to the S.P.C.K.," 100-101.

[117] Quoted in Schwartz, *The French Prophets*, 49.

1688 prophets arose in their midst, a sign that the end was near and their suffering would soon come to a close. Children also prophesied. In one village alone over sixty children came under the prophetic influence. As time went on the physical demonstrations during prophesy became more violent and the messages more urgent. One farmer's wife who received the unction while sleeping was seen "flailing her arms and legs, shouting 'Mercy, mercy.'" She proceeded then to prophesy that the world's end and Christ's millennial reign was near.[118]

Beginning in 1706 small refugee groups of French Prophets trickled into London backed by what they believed was the call of the Lord to prophesy of impending doom. Although the prophets received a cool reception in London, even among fellow Huguenots, they did begin to attract a significant number of English followers, many of whom became prophets themselves. Hillel Schwartz has shown, contrary to a common view that has downplayed the social and political significance of millenarian groups after the 1688 Glorious Revolution, "that the French Prophets appealed to an astonishing variety of people who drew upon types of millenarian ethos [that had been] common to men and women of the early seventeenth century." The prevalence of dissent in London during Queen Anne's reign was especially noticeable. In that city "religious currents ran with especial confusion," Schwartz wrote, "past the meetinghouses of Quakers, Baptists, Muggletonians, and Philadelphians." In all, around one-fifth of London was comprised of various dissenter sects, many of whom were heavily mystical and millenarian in their

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[118] Ibid., 14-15, 19.

religious expressions.[119] And they profoundly influenced those Anglicans who were inclined toward similar spiritual experiences.

After 1707, principally due to the kinship they found with the Philadelphians, the French Prophets became more anglicized. In that year around three-quarters of the group were English. With this growing English dominance, new manifestations of the prophetic spirit appeared. Speaking in tongues, healings, and more "time-specific" prophetic utterances were added to the mix. One of the most important changes came with the English focus away from the Huguenot "ethos of cataclysm and battle" to the English "ethos of wide evangelism and regeneration."[120]

The French Prophets' influence reached into southern colonial Anglican circles. In 1716 S.P.G. missionary John La Pierre who was serving as rector in a lowcountry South Carolina parish reported that he had "to repair some breaches" recently caused by two heretics. They have "Seditiously . . . Spread . . . that in general men must Not be obey'd, that scriptures of both testaments are but a__ Dead letter. . . ." They also argued "that ye Jewish Sabbath ought to be kept Instead of The Lord's day," and "that ye french prophets, who made such an uproar__ In London are ye true prophets. . . ." This problem was not a small incident. La Pierre claimed that his efforts to squelch their influence "prov'd uneffectual, and many who used to resort__ To our Church Have forsaken our Mutual Assemblies. . . ."[121]

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[119] Ibid., 6-8, 71.

[120] Ibid., 85-86, 95-96, 151-152, (quotations 95, 96).

[121] John La Pierre to the S.P.G., 15 February 1716, The Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1701-1786, B series, 4: 52, S.P.G. Archives, London, microform.

Aside from the pockets of Camisard followings in the colonies, the primary lesson

to be learned from their influence in London is the surprising commonality they shared

with the wider spectrum of mystical and pietistic groups. These points of kinship develop

into a very interesting model. The French Prophets, as unlikely as it may seem, serve as a

common denominator between several of the subjects or groups discussed thus far in this

examination. There was even a connection between them and the Halle Pietists. In 1711

a band of French Prophets visited Halle and met with August Francke. After the first

meeting they left the Pietist leader convinced by his positive reception that they were in his

good graces. Later in 1713, Halle Pietists positively received them even as the Camisards

gave forth extra-biblical utterances from the Lord. To Francke's dismay, however, five of

his Halle followers, including his secretary, received and demonstrated the spirit of

prophesy. Even with Francke's eventual disapproval, the French Prophets held a strong

appeal to many of the German Pietists who came to America.[122]

One particular French Prophet from Birmingham aptly illustrates the potential

synthesis that could exist between the various dissenter groups. Between April 23 and

June 2 (1730) Hannah Wharton experienced a series of prophetic "ministration[s]" in

London. In one sense she "prepared the way" for the synthesis. Schwartz explained that

"her language resembled the English translations of Boehme's works, [and] the

Theosophical Transactions of the Philadelphians. . . ." And, he added, "her theology was

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[122] Schwartz, *The French Prophets*, 177-179, 181-182.

that of continental pietism: divine communications enriched personal movement toward God. . . ."[123]

In one sense, Wharton's spirit manifested itself in actual events. In London the Moravians and Wesley were in contact with the French Prophets. The French Prophets who had been with the Halle Pietists were especially attracted to the Moravians. The Moravian societies such as Aldersgate and Fetter Lane became key rendezvous locations for all, including Philadelphians. In London, Wesley's Fetter Lane Society associates had close connections with the Camisards. For example, Jean Pellet, member of the Fetter Lane Society, a man greatly admired by the Moravians, was a French Prophet for thirty years. It was also through one of Hannah Wharton's followers, Francis Wynantz, that Wesley met Moravian Peter Boehler, a meeting that would eventually lead to Wesley's evangelical conversion at Aldersgate. It is not surprising that many of the early Methodists held great admiration for the French Prophets. Schwartz's assessment that "where the French Prophets left off, Methodism had only begun" may be an overstatement, but the fact should not be lost that the two groups, especially in light of their respective Moravian connections, held more in common than might first be recognized.[124] The most important point to be made of the commonality between the French Prophets and early Methodists was that they, like all Pietists, placed their confidence "in some flickering internal light."[125]

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[123] Ibid., 196.

[124] Ibid., 203-205, 207-208, 210.

[125] Ibid., 207.

In this chapter we have examined a portion of the vast array of pietistic, mystical, and millenarian influences on Continental and British Christianity. The transfer of these strains into the Colonial South is important for at least two reasons. First, the presence of these spiritual forms may provide important clues explaining certain cause and effect dynamics in the political and social realm. Second, the evidence may suggest a stronger presence of pietistic Evangelicalism in the lowcountry of the Colonial and Revolutionary South than has heretofore been acknowledged. This study suggests, among other things, that the first Great Awakening's real permeation in the South has been in some ways camouflaged by the social and political status of the principal recipients and, at least in part, by the subjective nature of the message itself. The subjectivity of mystical and pietistic forms allowed for a certain quiet and flexible reception and implementation of that message under the added cover of accepted objective structures, a common phenomenon since subjective religiosity must by its very nature adopt a certain level of objective language to explain and justify itself. Thus, as will be shown, much of what has passed as Evangelicalism was indeed that. But it was more. With the added pietistic forms it became, at least for certain of the respectable elite, a way to adapt a more satisfying spirituality to the existing structures of their world and a way to manage unique political and social circumstances by a subjectively pliable means without endangering social and political standing.

Chapter Two

Confronting the "Papists": John Wesley, George Whitefield, and Their
Lowcountry Detractors

> As to the State of Religion in this Province, it is bad enough,---Rome and the Devil
> have contriv'd to crucify her between two Thieves, Infedelity [sic] and Enthusiasm.
> (Reverend Alexander Garden
> New York *Journal*, 30 May 1743)[1]

F. Ernest Stoeffler has shown that one identifiable mark of Pietism is its tendency

to be recognized within what he calls an "oppositive" setting. In Pietism, as with any

movement that bears the "ism" suffix, "there must necessarily be an oppositve element."

That is, "the 'ism' must assert itself against a dominant pattern." And, Stoeffler added,

the term only makes sense when the piety it entails "stands over against prevailing norms

of faith and life which are different in nature."[2] As will be seen in this chapter, pietistic

and mystical forms of Christian expression through transatlantic messengers such as John

Wesley and George Whitefield, as well as local converts, stood in stark contrast to

existing norms in the lowcountry South. That contrast is best seen through an

examination of the confrontations between keepers of the status quo and those who would

upset it.

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[1] Quoted in Frank J. Klingberg, *An Appraisal of the Negro in Colonial South Carolina: A Study in Americanization* (Washington, D. C.: Associated Publishers, 1941; reprint, Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1975), 104.

[2] F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 2nd ed. Studies in the History of Religions IX (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 22.

A primary focus of this chapter will be on one particular and seemingly common accusation that adherents of an inwardly focused spiritual expression faced. They were often suspected by some to be secret emissaries of the Roman Catholic Church sent to undermine the efforts of the English Crown and Church in the American wilderness. This chapter will examine those accusations and seek to answer why they were made.

Certain obvious reasons come to mind as to how inhabitants in South Carolina and Georgia might suspect any out-of-ordinary activity, especially religious, to be an attempt to usurp existing authority. For example, the very formation of the colony of Georgia was, in large measure, to create a protective buffer between Spanish Florida and the Carolinas. A united Catholic front so close to English interests was a constant concern. After all, the days of Stuart rule were not too distant a memory, and paranoia of the mid-1740s, when the Young Pretender uprising made such a stir throughout the colonies, illustrates the widespread determination most colonists felt for keeping Catholicism out of the social and political realm.[3] Fears in Carolina and Georgia became reality in 1742 when the Spanish advance came close to Savannah but was eventually driven back by Oglethorpe and his army. Prior to this victory, Oglethorpe expressed his concern over Catholic infiltration in Georgia.

> Some intelligence I had of a villainous design of a very extraordinary nature, and if true, very important, viz. that the Spaniards had employed emissaries to burn all the

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[3] Jacobite fears sometimes were perpetuated by English sources. Consider, for example, the following 1746 entry in *The Gentlemans Magazine*. "The Jacobites are not to be considered as a body of men acting justly upon principles of conscience, for the right worship of God, and happiness of his creatures; but as their practices manifestly shew, they are an obstinate, disobedient minority, denying the authority of the state under which they live and seeking all opportunities to destroy it. . . ." They should be considered, the writer continued, "criminals" just as are "highwaymen, house breakers, and incendiaries." *The Gentlemans Magazine*, August 1746, 415.

magazines and considerable towns in the English North-America, thereby to prevent the subsisting of the great expedition and fleet in the West-Indies: and that for this purpose, many priests were employed, who pretended to be physicians, dancing-masters, and other such kinds of occupations; and under that pretence [sic] to get admittance and confidence in families.[4]

As plausible as the above reasons are, they only show the atmosphere for anti-Catholic paranoia; they do not explain how those who were in no way willing cohorts of the Papal See, who in fact consistently denied for the most part the differentiating doctrines and practices of the Catholic Church, could be accused in seeming sincerity of such connections. As will be argued in this chapter, the highly charged, inward, experiential tendencies that were conceived by mystical and pietistic sources, incubated in the halls and closets of Oxford University and in the religious societies like Aldersgate and Fetter Lane, and eventually birthed in America, were recognized in the southern colonies for what they actually were--manifestations of spiritual expression from a medieval Catholic tradition. And those manifestations would not go unchallenged.

When John and Charles Wesley landed in America on 6 February 1736 neither had experienced evangelical conversion. That would come later, after their short and largely unsuccessful mission to Savannah, Georgia. Of course their influence on America, especially the South, through organized Methodism, first as an Anglican auxiliary fellowship and later as a separate denomination, is well known but beyond the central

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[4] James Oglethorpe to George Clark, Esq., 16 May 1741, Daniel Horsmanden, *The New York Conspiracy*, ed. Thomas J. Davis (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 351.

focus of this study. Yet, their short stay in the American South sheds light on later confrontations.[5]

The Wesleys had originally come as S.P.G. chaplains to convert the Indians in southern Georgia. Once they arrived, however, they learned that reaching the Indians would not be their "main design." As a backup plan, John wrote, "we considered in what manner we might be most useful to the little flock at Savannah." The plan for this "little flock" was decidedly patterned after practices familiar to their Oxford experience of small group, extra-church meetings for those who wanted to pursue a more sentimentally oriented spiritual lifestyle.

> And we agreed, 1. To advise the more serious among them to form themselves into a sort of little society, and to meet once or twice a week, in order to reprove, instruct, and exhort one another. 2. To select out of these a smaller number for a more intimate union with each other, which might be forwarded, partly by our conversing singly with each, and partly by inviting them all together to our house; and this, accordingly, we determined to do every Sunday in the afternoon.[6]

Some have credited the Moravians for the later Methodist emphasis on small worship groups. It is true that the infra-structural system of "Bands" within the Methodist denomination was closely aligned with Zinzendorf's method of graduated (based on spiritual maturity) "Choirs." But as can be seen, Wesley was already practicing something akin to Zinzendorf's method prior to any noticeable Moravian impact on his thought. He was transplanting what had become a popular practice in England. Small group movements originated in medieval mystical conventicles and were developed further

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[5] For a historical treatment of this period in John Wesley's life that is done sensitive to its theological context see Martin Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*, vol. 1, trans. Norman P. Goldhawk (Nashville: Abingdon Press, [1963]).

[6] John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 14 vols. (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872; reprint, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), 1: 30.

within Continental Pietism and in Anglican societies.[7] Martin Schmidt has asserted that the French catholic mystic Jean-Baptiste de Renty, whose life Wesley was carefully studying at this time, had a direct impact on Wesley's emphasis on small groups.[8]

As seen previously, John Wesley was heavily involved in an intensely inward focused spirituality from mystical and pietistic influences upon his arrival in Georgia. While in Savannah he began to have second thoughts about his voracious reading of the mystics, no doubt due in part to his considerations of evangelical assurance he had recently observed in the Moravians. "I think the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of the faith," he wrote to his brother, Samuel, "was in the writings of the mystics, under which term I comprehend all, and only those, who slight any of the means of grace." He had recently "drawn up a short scheme of their doctrines," based on his own correspondence with mystics and "from their most approved writers, such as Tauler, Molinos, and the author of *Theologia Germanica.*" Wesley was anxious that his brother read his "short scheme of their doctrines" and give his "thoughts upon it, as soon as you can . . . as particularly, fully, and strongly as your time will permit." And, he added with urgency, "they [Samuel's thoughts] may be of consequence not only to all this province but to nations of Christians yet unborn."[9] Thus, he conveyed this urgency because he

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[7] This conclusion is based in part on Albrecht Ritschl's argument set forth in chapter one that Continental Pietism was in some degree the institutionalization of Franciscan and Dominican mysticism. Both of these medieval preaching Orders placed considerable emphasis on conventicles as vehicles of increased lay involvement in worship and service.

[8] Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*, 1: 191.

[9] Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 25, *Letters I, 1721-1739* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 487-488.

believed that his ultimate verdict on the veracity of mystical theology would have monumental ramifications in Georgia and the world. Even though Wesley, especially after his evangelical conversion at Aldersgate chapel in London, publicly downplayed or even denounced mystics, he continued to read them and incorporate aspects of their inward religiosity to his and to his followers' faith.

Although while in Savannah Wesley was attempting to leave off external works for the purpose of personal salvation, as instructed by William Law, the inward mystical works that were to replace them manifested themselves in rigid methods of holy observance not appreciated by many in the infant colony. It did not take long for Georgia inhabitants to notice Wesley's actions as out of the ordinary. Some began to associate his religious demonstrations with what was then recognized as the most obvious source of sentimental spirituality: medieval Catholic mysticism.

Georgia settler Dr. Patrick Tailfer and some of his companions published a very critical expose on what they saw as the failures of Oglethorpe's Georgia experiment. They argued, among other things, for the legalization of chattel slavery in the young colony before the inhabitants themselves became slaves. One means of enslavement in their eyes was the threat of Roman Catholic influences. On that score, John Wesley was a particular threat. ". . . A new kind of tyranny was this summer begun to be imposed upon us, for Mr. John Wesly [Wesley], who had come over," they wrote, "and was received by us as a clergyman of the Church of England," demonstrated "that his aim was to enslave our *minds*, as a necessary preparative for enslaving our *bodies*." Eventually, they continued, "all persons of any consideration, came to look upon him as a Roman Catholick," and "persons suspected to be Roman Catholicks were received and caressed

by him as First Rate Saints." They explained more specifically their concern that

Catholicism might infringe on their hopes as freemen.

> . . . There is always a strict connection betwixt Popery and Slavery; so the design of all this fine scheme seemed to the most judicious, to be calculated to debase and depress the minds of the people, to break any spirit of liberty, and humble them with fastings, penances, drinking of water, and a thorough subjection to the spiritual jurisdiction which he asserted was to be established in his person; and when this should be accomplished, the minds of people would be equally prepared for the receiving civil or ecclesiastical tyranny.[10]

Certain of Wesley's stipulations for worship, at least from their perspective,

smacked of an overt Catholic practice. He sought "to establish confession, penance,

mortifications, mixing wine with water in the sacrament. . . ." They were particularly

concerned that Wesley seemed to teeter toward a transubstantiational view of the Lord's

Supper since he suppressed "in the administration of the sacrament, the explanation

adjoined to the words of communicating by the Church of England, to shew that they

mean a feeding on Christ by faith, saying no more than 'the body of Christ; the blood of

Christ. . . .'"[11] What may not have been understood by these observers is the fact that

Wesley, who definitely did not hold to a literal transubstantiation position, did likely

appreciate the inward reality that might come by mystifying the objective elements as if

they did become the body and blood of Jesus, thus leaving off the words "by faith." Such

action would be well within the purview of a mystical encounter since the inward,

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[10] Patrick Tailfer, et al., *A True Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia*, ed. Clarence L. Ver Steeg (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1960), 67-69. The caustic nature of this work by these Georgia malcontents should be taken into careful consideration before advancing the conclusions therein as valid. In my view, notwithstanding the clear biased purpose behind the work, their assessment, albeit exaggerated, that Catholic elements appeared to be present in Wesley's methods was essentially correct.

[11] Ibid., 69.

subjective experience, to a mystic, may be seen as more real than any objective

counterpart. "When a *Methodist* was receiving the *Sacrament, God* was pleased," Wesley

later wrote, "to let him *See a Crucified Saviour;* he *saw* the Fountain opened in his

Side."[12]

Tailfer's account goes on to suggest Wesley's connection, at least in practice, with

the Jesuits. He had used his religious authority to turn family members and servants

against each other, and "those who had given themselves up to his spiritual guidance

(more especially women) were obliged to discover to him their most secret actions, nay

even their thoughts and the subject of their dreams." All of this was Wesley's clever use

of "Jesuitical arts . . . to bring the well concerted scheme to perfection. . . ."[13]

One advantage that Wesley had was his relationship with Oglethorpe. Both he and

Charles had gained the General's confidence, and Charles even served for a time as

Oglethorpe's secretary. It is interesting that Oglethorpe, who had his own Catholic

paranoia, was not suspicious of the Wesleys and even defended their authenticity as

Anglican clerics. But John's connections in high places could not insulate him from

controversies of his own making. Ultimately it was not so much the suspicion of being a

Catholic or even of his rigid methods that hastened his departure in December of 1737.

Controversies that surrounded his doctrine and methods notwithstanding, the immediate

reason for his exodus was related to the controversy surrounding his refusal to administer

the sacraments to a young lady named Sophia Hopkey who, after an extended but

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[12] Quoted in [George Lavington], *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared,* vol. 1, part 2 (London: Printed for J. and P. Knapton, 1754), 122.

[13] Tailfer, et al., *A True Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia,* 70.

uncertain quasi-romance with him, without notice married another.[14] This refusal of the

sacraments was taken as the height of insult by her new husband Mr. Williamson and by

her uncle Thomas Causton, Savannah's chief magistrate.[15]

After appearing in November before several court hearings over these allegations

(which included "hinderer of, the public peace"), Wesley was again called on 2 December

to answer the charges. Unknown to his accusers he had already made plans to leave for

Charleston that day and then on to England. When he learned of their intention to

interrogate him further and to require a bond to keep him in the province he "saw clearly

the hour was come for leaving this place. . . ." Once he fulfilled his duty of reading

evening prayers, he and three others left on foot to Purrysburg, then to Beaufort, and then

by boat to Charleston where they arrived on 13 December. ". . . I shook the dust of[f] my

feet, and left Georgia, after having preached the Gospel there (not as I ought, but as I was

able) one year, and nearly nine months." John Wesley boarded the ship *Samuel* on the

22nd., and on Christmas Eve crossed the Charleston bar never to see American soil

again.[16]

The Wesleys' primary importance for this study is twofold. First, it was their

influence at Oxford that first captivated George Whitefield's attention and subsequently

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[14] For a detailed account of this episode see Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*, 1: 195-209.

[15] There was a connection between the theological accusations of popery and this incident. Sophia's new husband, Mr. Williamson, was one of the malcontents associated with Peter Tailfer. Williamson and Tailfer made the accusations of popery after this incident occurred. See Schmidt, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*, 1: 204.

[16] Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley* (Zondervan edition), 1: 60-61, 68-70.

pointed him in the direction of an experientially charged life and ministry. True, Whitefield later adopted a strong Calvinistic objective theology, in opposition to John Wesley's Arminianism. Nevertheless, the mystical and pietistic influences that he internalized at Oxford, although later publicly denounced, heavily informed the content and style of his early ministry. Second, Wesley's activities in and departure from Savannah set the backdrop for Whitefield's arrival there. Much of the same controversy faced by Wesley would later attach itself to the young Whitefield as well.

Whitefield left Deal, England for Georgia on 2 February 1738, a day after John Wesley had returned from his disastrous mission. When Wesley heard that Whitefield was in the vicinity of Deal he sent him a letter warning him to abort his mission to Georgia in light of the troubles he had encountered. As one of Whitefield's biographers observed, "Who can estimate what would have been the consequences of Whitefield's yielding to Wesley's wish? Had he now returned to London, the probability is he would never again have started for America. . . ."[17] Whitefield arrived in Savannah on May 7th. It would be the first of seven trips to America before his death in 1770. He had among his companions a young convert from England, James Habersham, whom he brought initially to serve as schoolmaster and later to organize the orphanage Whitefield had dreamed of. The young follower would one day become a wealthy merchant, serve as president of the council and as interim governor of Georgia.

Georgians received Whitefield and company with warmth and seemed receptive to their ministry. On 10 June Whitefield wrote to a friend, "all things have happened better

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[17] George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 119; see also 119n for quotation from Tyerman's *Life of Whitefield.*

than expectation. America is not so horrid a place as it is represented to be." As to his ministry he reported, "God . . . sets his seal to it here, as at other places." He had high hopes "that the rising generation may be bred up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."[18] "Blessed be God," he wrote on 18 July, "in Savannah they hear the Word gladly, and people everywhere receive me with the utmost civility, and are not angry when I reprove them."[19] Whitefield had high hopes for Savannah due to the overwhelming attendance at his preaching in and around the town. His expressed optimism was not empty rhetoric. Colonel William Stephens, who had been dispatched the previous summer as the Trustees' secretary, documented in his diary from 21 May to 26 August the remarkable and swift success the twenty three year old Whitefield enjoyed in that wilderness town. He often preached to a "thronged congregation" with "great Abilities" and "much Eloquence." He "went on captivating the People with his moving Discourses," and "a great many loose Livers . . . heard him gladly. . . ." He "gained more and more on the Affections of the People by his Labour and Assiduity. . . ." There is "a full Congregation at all Times" which "demonstrated the good Opinion the People had conceived of Mr. Whitfield, the like disposition not appearing so universal in time past ." "Mr. Whitfield preached his farewell Sermon this Afternoon to a Congregation so crouded [sic], that a great many stood without Doors, and under the Windows, to hear him,

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[18] George Whitefield to Mr. H., 10 June 1738, George Whitefield, *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield*, 6 vols. (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1771), 1: 44 (hereafter *Works*).

[19] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 160.

pleased with nothing more than the Assurance he gave, of his Intention . . . to return to them as soon as possible."[20]

On August 28th while en route to Charleston Whitefield reminisced over his last four months of ministry in Georgia and was convinced that "America . . . is an excellent school to learn Christ in, and I have great hopes some good will come out of Savannah because the longer I continued there, the larger the congregations grew." Moreover, he added, "I scarce knew a night, though we had Divine service twice a day, when the Church House has not been nearly full--a proof, this, I hope, that God has yet spiritual and temporal blessings in store for them."[21]

Whitefield's first visit to Charleston was also encouraging. Alexander Garden, Rector of St. Philip's and regional Commissary for the Bishop of London, impressed Whitefield as a "a good soldier of Jesus Christ," who, "received me in a most Christian manner. He and several others offered me a lodging, and were more than civil to me." This Christian hospitality caused the young minister to exclaim, "How does God raise me up friends wherever I go! Who is so good a God as our God?"[22]

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[20] *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, vol. 4, *Stephens' Journal, 1737-1740*, ed. Allen D. Candler (Atlanta: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, 1906), 145, 148, 157, 165, 187, 191 (hereafter *Stephens' Journal, 1737-1740*); see also 150, 154, 168, 174, 175, 177. The Trustees had received various complaints and reports of divisions in the colony. Colonel Stephens was to be the "eyes and ears" of the Trustees and keep them informed of the true nature of events. He had been a respected member of Parliament for around twenty five years and had the Trustees' confidence to give authentic accounts. He served in this capacity from 20 October 1737 to 4 October 1740. See preface to Ibid., 3.

[21] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 160, 165.

[22] Ibid., 165.

During his short lay-over in Charleston in route to England to receive official ordination, he noticed the "neatness of the buildings and the largeness of the place." The prestigious St. Philip's Church "is very beautiful, and the inhabitants seem to be excellently well settled." But he also sensed that God had a complaint with Charlestonians over their lack of devotion to the Faith. For this nominal commitment "God's judgments have been lately abroad amongst them by the spreading of the small-pox." And, he added, possibly anticipating his future usefulness there, "I hope they will learn righteousness."[23]

Whitefield set sail for England around five o'clock in the evening on 9 September 1738. He would face on this voyage much treacherous weather and conclude that it was the hindrance of Satan, but he would later learn that teaching Charlestonians to "learn righteousness" would create a greater tempest than he could ever anticipate, especially with "the good soldier of Jesus Christ" Alexander Garden who was, Whitefield would later conclude, "as ignorant as the rest."[24]

Controversy in the Georgia and Carolina lowcountry over Whitefield's designs did not begin to brew until he had left for England. It first began in Savannah. The Georgia Trustees opposed the licensing of ministers by the Bishop of London. This because once licensed, they were more difficult to remove if they turned out to be undesirable. ". . . We think it better for the souls of our people," wrote one trustee, the Earl of Egmont, "that a good man should be removed by us, than a bad one continued upon them." But the trustees realized that the Bishop of London had his own reasons for wanting a minister under his licensure so that his prerogatives would go forward within the colony. Because

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 165-166, 173, 400.

of the controversy surrounding Wesley's stint in Savannah, the Bishop of London licensed a Reverend William Norris, as Egmont wrote, to "keep up his authority in our province."[25] Accountant to the Georgia Trustees Harman Verelst informed William Stephens that Norris was "well educated at the University of Dublin," a deacon and priest of strong character, who was "appointed by the Trustees [at the approval of the Bishop of London] to perform ecclesiastical offices in the room of John Wesley." And, Verelst assured him, "you will find him a man after your own heart. . . ."[26]

When he arrived in Georgia on 15 October 1738, Norris found to his surprise that Oglethorpe had no letters of recommendation for him from the Georgia Trustees and, he wrote, the General "considered me only as one who would contribute to the present and growing calamity." To add insult to injury Oglethorpe informed him, as Norris complained to Secretary Verelst, "Mr. Whitefield at his departure substituted Mr. Habersham in the ministerial office in which he was expected to continue till Mr. Whitefield's return."[27] Originally, Whitefield was supposed to re-locate in Frederica upon his return. But while in England he wrote asking the Commons Council of Georgia to grant him the Savannah parish and transfer Norris to Frederica instead. They granted his request and also resolved that the money Whitefield had managed to collect would be used

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[25] Great Britain, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont: Diary of the First Earl of Egmont (Viscount Percival) 1730-1747*, vol. 2 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1920-23), 498, 499 (hereafter *Egmont Diary*).

[26] Harman Verelst to William Stephens, 4 August 1738, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and West Indies*, ed. K. G. Davis, vol. 44 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1969), 183 (hereafter *CSP: Colonial Series*).

[27] Reverend William Norris to Harman Verelst, 19 October 1738, Ibid., 228.

in part for building the orphan house the evangelist had so wanted to establish.[28] Thus, due to his success in Savannah and, no doubt, to Oglethorpe's and the Commons Council's support gained thereby, Whitefield had managed to establish a foothold of religious hegemony that allowed him to choose his place of ministry, and that choice was the Savannah parish. But neither his nor his disciples' authority would go unchallenged. Norris informed Verelst , "I shall stay here till advice from the Trustees."[29] And so he did. He preached his first sermon in the Savannah church seven days after arriving.[30]

Within a month of Norris' arrival in Savannah, the controversy between him and James Habersham began. William Stephens informed the Trustees "of the discord arisen betwixt Mr. Norris and Mr. Habersham. . . ." Although Habersham was a "diligent and useful man," he was, along with Whitefield, Stephens had been informed, of a "fraternity" that is "magnified as men of more zeal in religion which, they are apt to carry to too great a length. . . ." And, he added, they "even . . . assume the power of opening and shutting the gates of heaven." Habersham was resolved to carry on in this apostolic style as his mentor Whitefield had instructed him, "often professing in all conversation," in Stephen's words, that he and Whitefield "were formed into a society . . . whom nothing in this world could separate and whatever one of them said the other would maintain. . . ."[31] It is clear from this entry that Stephens, who had previously praised Whitefield highly, began to have

[28] Minutes of Common Council of Georgia, 20 December 1738, Davies, ed., *CSP: Colonial Series*, 44: 268.

[29] Reverend William Norris to Harman Verelst, 19 October 1738, Ibid., 228.

[30] Candler, ed., *Stephens' Journal, 1737-1740*, 214.

[31] William Stephens to Trustees for Georgia, 21 November 1738, Davies, ed., *CSP: Colonial Series*, 44: 248-249.

second thoughts, probably due to conversations Norris had with him. As for Norris, he perceived there was more involved with Habersham and Whitefield than met the eye.

Under Whitefield's and Habersham's ministry elements of Wesley's practices had remained intact. Norris wrote that the church in Savannah had lost the purity of Anglican worship due to "many Romish and German corruptions." Several had been excluded from the sacraments, as Norris informed, "whom neither the economy of the gospel nor the constitution of our church have ever rejected as unfit members." Established Anglican liturgy such as "the common form of prayer appointed for the day, the exhortation, absolution, psalms and first lesson were totally omitted. . . ." Particularly disturbing was "a judaising spiritual pride which has prevailed in the pastors of the church" whereby they ignored "measures and ordinances" and in turn "gave the sanction of divine influences to the delusions of their heated imaginations and established them for principles and rules of worship." Also, as was common in the pietistic tradition, "a separate nightly assembly was formed at the minister's house which made up a communion of saints and were distinguished by the name of the faithful," but he added, they "were indeed such members as neither contributed to the credit of religion nor society." Those who formed themselves into this exclusive group "observed particular forms of worship and duties such as public confession, penance, [and] absolution. . . ." Norris suggested, echoing those who had made the same accusations concerning Wesley's ministry, that the culmination of these unorthodox elements meant "an avenue was herein opening for the introduction of popery."[32] The Holy Club, it seemed, was alive and well in Savannah.

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[32] Reverend William Norris to Harman Verelst, 12 December 1738, Ibid., 261-262.

Norris was able to quickly work his way into a regular priestly ministry in the parish church and thereby attempted to "recover the true spirit of the gospel. . . ." The support from William Stephens went far in this regard. Yet, Whitefield's young zealot Habersham managed to become a thorn in Norris' side. He "has employed all his authority and credit to the prejudice of my ministry and private character," Norris wrote, "but that I am truly satisfied of the inefficacy of his efforts and of the blind zeal which pressed him to it." This type of "blind zeal" was, in Norris' estimation, a counterpart to another problem in the church that had been caused by an over emphasis on sentiment. Because of the "abhorrence" many members felt toward "such enthusiasm, will-worship and presumption," a general "destitution and contempt of all worship" had taken hold. Norris faced two religious extremes as he saw it, the apathetic and the overly zealous. "One," he wrote, "quite loses all devotion and the other is quite lost in it," and each justified their respective positions by the presence of the other. In Savannah, he surmised, "religion [is] split upon the very rock on which it was to be founded." He believed it was his job to return a cool and reasonable balance to religious life by reducing "extremes of passion and prejudice to a just sense and temperature in the worship and duties of religion and to reconcile both in the exercise of it."[33]

By the end of October 1738 the problem between Habersham and Norris grew to such an extent that Norris feared, in William Stephen's' words, there might be a "spiriting up [of] a new Sect, who through Ignorance might be led away, and absent themselves from publick Worship" altogether. This was even more probable due to Norris' lack of confidence in his own preaching abilities. Whitefield had demonstrated remarkable

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[33] Ibid., 262.

qualities of extemporaneous rhetoric with, as Stephens wrote, "peculiar Eloquence" and

"great Volubility," which "captivated his Hearers very much. . . ." Norris' inexperience

kept him so close to scripted liturgical procedure, a process Stephens admired, but one he

realized could draw sharp criticism or even dissent from those who viewed over

attentiveness to external formalities as a hindrance to inward religion.[34]

In the Spring of 1738 James Habersham took advantage of Norris' absence to

reinforce Whitefield's earlier emphasis on evangelical experience and doctrine. During

Whitefield's absences (even after his return from England he spent a considerable time in

the northern colonies) Norris had charge of all the services except during two of his

extended visits to the parish at Frederica. When Norris was away Habersham generally

led in worship, not only in the reading of prayers and other liturgical exercises, but also in

delivering his own or reading others' sermons. Beginning in April 1739 Habersham began

to focus on the doctrines of Regeneration and Justification. He began this emphasis on the

first Sunday Norris left to minister in Frederica. "Mr. Habersham, the School-Master,

read the Prayers of the Church, in the Absence of Mr. Norris;" William Stephens noted,

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[34] Candler, ed., *Stephens' Journal, 1737-1740,* 219; Later in October 1740 Stephens gave an interesting account of Habersham's attempt to preach in a more extemporaneous fashion. He recorded in his journal, 26 October 1740, the following: "Mr Habersham read the Church-Service, and Sermons, Morning and Afternoon: wherein he was so fond of aping the Gestures and Manners of some of our late Teachers, that even in reading the Lessons out of the Bible, whether historical or not, he affected a vehement Emphasis, frequently in the wrong place too; and turning himself to and fro in several Postures towards different Parts of the Congregation, many People looked on it as ridiculous, instead of giving reverend Attention to God's Word; and some were apt to think that he was grown almost ripe for exercising the ministerial Office, and preaching to as good Purpose as some others did." *The Colonial Records of Georgia,* supplement to vol. 4, *Journal of Colonel William Stephens Secretary to the Board of Trustees at Savannah* (Atlanta: The Franklin-Turner Company, 1908), 18.

"and also read a Sermon upon operating Faith and Regeneration, . . . being a Subject much dwelt on by the Fraternity of Methodists." In early June Habersham read a letter from the now famous (especially in England) Whitefield to the congregation. Stephens noted that it informed of his soon return and permanent ministry among them with an exhortation "to bear in Mind the doctrine he had formerly preached among them. . . ." Norris was back in the pulpit by the next Sunday (24 June), and served in that capacity until his next trip to Frederica in November. On 18 November Habersham read a sermon "setting forth the Operation of the Spirit upon a new Birth," a topic Stephens wrote, "which . . . some of the Audience were pretty well tired with heretofore."[35]

When Whitefield returned in January (1740) he began to reinforce the messages of *sola fide* Justification and a heart felt Regeneration. On his first Sunday back he was the subject of great curiosity. He used the attention to set forth his doctrine and to draw the battle lines. Stephens made the following observation on that day.

> SUNDAY. Mr. Whitfield's Name, which of late had made so much Noise in England, could not fail drawing all Sorts of People to Church, who professed Christianity, to hear what Doctrine it was that he preached; When both in the Morning and Afternoon, he made our Justification by Faith only, the Subject of his Discourse; taking those Words in St. Matthew for his Text, "What think you of Christ?" Which he pressed home with great Energy, denouncing Anathema's on all such as taught otherwise.[36]

At this point Whitefield and his companions began to methodically and relentlessly preach the objective Protestant doctrines of Justification and Regeneration. This was irritating enough for High Anglicans who had long looked upon Luther's and Calvin's de-emphasis on good works as an inroad for Antinomianism. A lack of due emphasis on

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[35] Candler, ed., *Stephen's Journal, 1737-1740,* 325, 352, 455.

[36] Ibid., 489.

good works, William Stephens feared, would likely produce "a dry and inactive Faith" which "might prove a dangerous State" for the soul.[37] But it was the subjective context with which Whitefield couched the objective message that made the objective even less palatable for those already disinclined to accept it. On one occasion Stephens expressed his concern that the test of having received the "New Birth" and "Justification," as instructed by Whitefield, was passed only if it "produce[d] an Evidence within Hearts; which he insists on," Stephens added, "we may feel with a real Sensation; and till that is wrought within us, we are in a state of Damnation."[38] Of even more concern to Stephens was Whitefield's new boldness to confront and condemn. Stephens' diary entry of 2 February 1740 perfectly illustrates his recognition of this objective/subjective tension as well as his uneasiness with Whitefield's invectives against the clergy.

> . . . At the Seven a Clock Evening Lecture, I went again, . . . when the Work he [Whitefield] took in Hand, was expounding on a Chapter in St. John's Gospel; and, indeed, he did it, I thought, with great Perspicuity; but when he came towards a Conclusion, he could not shut up without a Touch on his darling Topick of Regeneration, which must spring from a vital Principle in the Heart, infused by the Holy Spirit; till which is made sure to us, we are all in a State of Damnation: And the Way to attain this, is by strong Faith, without Regard to good Works; which will occasion great Pangs in the New Birth; and when by struggling with God in Prayer, we have obtained his Grace, we shall find the Holy Spirit sensibly moving upon our Hearts, as it did upon the Face of the Waters: Which if any one denies, in plain he told us he lied; for that the Warmth of the Spirit was as sensibly felt, as the Beams of the Sun upon our Bodies: But this, he said, was a Doctrine which very few of our modern Clergy approved of; whom he inveighed against terribly, as slothful Shepherds, dumb Dogs, &c. who led their People dreaming on in a carnal Security to Destruction. . . .[39]

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[37] Ibid., 495.

[38] Ibid., 531.

[39] Ibid., 504-505.

On the following Sunday Stephens capsulated his view of Whitefield's method as one "with great Vehemence, which some call Power. . . ."[40] It is interesting to note that in all this, Stephens did not associate Whitefield with Catholic mysticism as others had done. This is a little unusual since one of Stephens' duties as secretary for the Trustees was to look out for Catholic influences and report it to them. As to his duties concerning religion, Stephens' Instructions stated

> You are to Inform the Trustees whether the People frequent divine Service, according to their Several perswasions [sic], by which means they will know whether any concealed Papists are among them. . . .[41]

Possibly Stephens did not understand the connection or, if he did, concluded that Whitefield was not an actual Catholic threat. If the latter is the case, he may be credited with actually having more understanding than other of Whitefield's critics.

Whitefield's anathema on clergy who did not teach evangelical *and* experiential doctrine, moved from the general to the particular. It was not long until Reverend William Norris became the object of attack. When Whitefield returned from England, Norris, already distraught over the controversies between him and Habersham, immediately and voluntarily abdicated his position as the head minister. Strangely enough, Whitefield asked him to stay on as his permanent assistant, suggesting that Norris go to Frederica on occasion as needed. Norris declined citing as his reason that his instructions stipulated that he was to locate in Frederica on a permanent basis.[42] Norris did, however, stay a

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[40] Ibid., 509-510.

[41] "Instructions to William Stephens from the Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia in America," Appendix B in *The Journal of William Stephens 1741-1743*, ed. E. Merton Coulter, 2 vols. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958-59), 1: 262.

[42] Candler, ed., *Stephen's Journal, 1737-1740*, 487, 490.

while longer and assist with the sacraments and even filled in on two consecutive Sundays while Whitefield went south to Frederica. It is not altogether clear why Whitefield asked Norris to stay knowing the lack of sympathy Norris held for his doctrine and pietistic methods. It is possible that, in light of his suggestion that Norris reconsider his ministry in Frederica and of his own two week trip there in February, he was attempting to buy time in order to shore up evangelical support in Frederica before Norris could make inroads to the contrary.[43] That possibility seems more probable in light of the events that followed after Whitefield's return.

In early March what seemed to be a growing but odd congeniality between two very opposite ministers suddenly ended. There was "common Talk of the Town Yesterday," Stephens wrote, "of what passed between our two Ministers. . . ." It seems that Whitefield asked Norris to meet with him for a discussion over a friendly cup of tea. Norris soon discovered that there was more to the meeting than he had first realized. James Habersham and a Mr. Brownfield came "that they might testify what they heard . . . ." The party then confronted Norris with accusations of doctrinal error preached "during the Time of Mr. Whitfield's being absent in the South [Frederica]. . . ." Habersham and Brownfield backed up the charges claiming that in Whitefield's absence,

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[43] Ibid., 514, 519; it is interesting to note that on the first Sunday Norris filled in for Whitefield (17 February), he informed Stephens that "he had not so much as any Knowledge given him of Mr. Whitfield's Intention to be absent . . ." (514). This may support even more the possibility of broader stealth intentions on Whitefield's part. Whitefield states in his journal that his primary intention in going south was to meet with General Oglethorpe, who was at that time in Frederica, and to "fetch the orphans in the southern parts of the colony." He also paid a visit to a "Scots' settlement" in Darien, near Frederica, where the minister, Mr. MacLeod, was very sympathetic to his efforts and allowed him to preach to his congregation; see Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 397-399.

Norris had indeed taught false doctrine. They also gave Norris several names of others who would back up their claims. Norris denied the charges asserting the Bishop of London's personal approval of his soundness. Whitefield dismissed any appeal to the Bishop of London since he was one who knew less about true Christianity "than Mahomet, or an Infidel. . . ." Whitefield also expressed his concern over Norris' playing "on the fiddle, and at Cards with the Ladies," and with his keeping "polite Company. . . ." He informed Norris that even though he had assisted him in administering the sacraments, "he never should again. . . ."[44]

Thus, the confrontation that began with Norris' assessment that Whitefield and his companions were creating an inroad for popery did not end, as with Wesley, in defeat for the accused. In this case the accused turned the tables on a weaker aggressor. The storm over Whitefield's subjective presentation of objective doctrine, with similar accusations of Romanism, would switch to Charleston, but there he would find a much more dogged opponent in the South Carolina Commissary and Rector of St. Philips, Alexander Garden.[45]

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[44] Candler, ed., *Stephen's Journal, 1737-1740*, 528-530. Stephens noted in his 24 February Sunday entry that Norris "preached such orthodox Divinity to his Hearers, as they might well understand, and ought to put in Practice" (519). This strong statement indicates that Norris may well have tried, in Whitefield's short absence, to correct the teachings he had heard from Whitefield and Habersham.

[45] It is important to note that Garden did not agree with the accusations of popery made earlier against John Wesley. In a 1737 letter to the Bishop of London Garden reported that Wesley had been slandered as "a setter forth of strange doctrine, a Jesuit, a spiritual tyrant, mover of Sedition." Quoted in James Barney Hawkins IV, "Alexander Garden: The Commissary in Church and State" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1981), 114. One can only surmise why he accused Whitefield of being under the influence of Rome and not Wesley. Most likely he did not have first hand knowledge of Wesley's methods, and

Whitefield had already paid two visits to Charleston, once en route to England from Savannah, as mentioned above, and another (January 1740) on his return trip by land from Philadelphia, where he had landed on his first return from England. While in Charleston during this second stop he met with a "Mr. L......re" who with several other "gentlemen of the town," he recorded in his journal, "expressed great willingness to hear me preach." On 6 January he went to service at St. Philips, but with Alexander Garden absent, the "curate had not a commission to lend the pulpit. . . ." That afternoon, since "most of the town . . . being eager to hear me," he wrote, "I preached . . . in one of the Dissenting meeting-houses. . . ." To his disappointment he did not find on this occasion evidence of the Holy Spirit's moving among them. He was, he said, "to them as one that mocked." Nevertheless, many continued to express their desire for him to preach again the next day. "I preached at the French church, . . . and blessed be God, I saw a glorious alteration in the audience, which was so great that many stood without the door. . . . Many were melted into tears." As Whitefield was about to board the boat for Beaufort and then Savannah, there was such a demand for more preaching, he postponed his departure one day and preached in "the meeting-house . . . because it was the largest place."[46] Thus, as in England and Savannah, he was creating a considerable following. But on his next trip to Charleston later that same year, though his preaching would continue to be in great demand, his methods and doctrines would not go unchallenged because Alexander Garden would not this time be absent.

Wesley certainly did not pose the same immediate threat to Garden's religious authority as did Whitefield.

[46] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 384-385.

Whitefield returned to Charleston for the third time on 14 March where

Commissary Garden gave him "a cool reception."

> After I had been there a little while, I told him I was informed he had some questions to propose to me, and that I had now come to give him all the satisfaction I could in answering them. Upon this, I immediately perceived passion to arise in his heart. "Yes, Sir," he said, "I have several questions to put to you. But," he added, "you have got above us," or something to that effect. Then he charged me with enthusiasm and pride, for speaking against the generality of the clergy, and desired I would make my charge good. I told him, I thought I had already; though as yet I had scarce begun with them.

An argument ensued when Whitefield rebuked the elder Garden for not speaking out

"against the assemblies and balls" in the city. Garden justified his not doing so because, he

said, "I think there is no harm in them." Whereupon Whitefield responded that in light of

Garden's indifference to evil, he said, "I shall think it my duty to exclaim against you." At

this Garden ordered him out of his house. The battle lines were drawn.[47]

In most historical accounts of the controversy that ensued between Garden and

Whitefield, little attention has been given to some of the more subtle details of and reasons

for Garden's complaint. For our purposes, Garden's accusations, much like complaints

against Wesley and Habersham in Savannah, provide a window through which to view the

larger assertions set forth in this study that Whitefield's methods were reminiscent of

Roman Catholic mysticism.

Alexander Garden was no stranger to dissent in South Carolina. From early on,

his ecclesiastical duties as Commissary included keeping non-Anglican Christians in check.

French Huguenots, Scotch Presbyterians, Baptists, and others had been a large part of the

lowcountry's religious landscape since early settlement. The period from settlement to the

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[47] Ibid., 400, 401.

mid-1700s saw considerable conflict over everything from divergence in doctrinal issues to dissenter ministerial rights of marriage and to the question of forced monetary support to the established Church of England by non-members.

Much of the concern expressed by Carolina's Anglican leaders had to do with the fear of their own members leaving for dissenter churches. The Fundamental Constitutions, South Carolina's proprietary constitution (1669), gave considerable incentives for non-Anglican settlement. By the early eighteenth century the situation for some Anglicans had become alarming. For example Nicholas Trott, early Carolina legal and biblical scholar informed the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1702/3 that in South Carolina "we are here Very Much infested with the Sect of the Anabaptists. . . ."[48] Dissenter hegemony was growing. It was around this time that the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sent its first missionaries to the colonies for the express purpose of converting Indians and slaves, but as historian Carl Bridenbaugh has stated, and this was no doubt true for South Carolina, the S.P.G.'s underlying design was "to bring the plantations under Episcopal control."[49]

In 1704 the Church of England became the established church of South Carolina by an Act of the Commons House of Assembly. Two years later the 1706 Church Act reinsured establishment along with an added stipulation which allowed for dissenter positioning in the political and social life of the colony. Possibly the most significant part

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[48] Nicholas Trott to Archbishop of Canterbury (Thomas), 17 February 1702/3, Transcripts of South Carolina Records of the Bishop of London (Fulham Palace Papers) in the Lambeth Palace Library, nos. 116-300, 1710-1767, no. 245, microform (hereafter Fulham Papers, Bishop of London, 1710-1767).

[49] Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics, 1689-1775* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 26.

of the Act was the allowance for dissenters to represent parishes in the Commons House of Assembly.[50] One year later (1707), in part to stall this trend of possible dissenter hegemony, the Bishop of London sent his first Commissary, Reverend Gideon Johnston, to South Carolina.

By the latter half of 1708 the tide had not yet turned. In fact the Anglican establishment was in danger of disintegration. The colony, Commissary Johnston observed, is "a perfect Medley or Hotch potch made up of Bank[r]upts, pirates, decayed Libertines, Sectaries and Enthusiasts of all sorts. . . ." Moreover, within the established church "many . . . pretend to be churchmen" and are "strangely crippled in their goings between the Church and Presbytery . . . sometimes going openly with the Dissenters. . . ." He was especially concerned that these vacillating parishioners had "Liberty & property to the full and enjoy the free and undisturbed exercise of their Religion in all respects." They could hold any given position in civil and military service, and, most alarmingly, they "have now actually a majority both in Council, Parliament or assembly, and yet," he added, "they are never to be satisfyed till they can compass the downfall of this Infant Church."[51]

By the time Alexander Garden came in 1720 to be Rector of St. Philips, some of the controversy between dissenters and the establishment had abated, due in no small measure to the work of Commissary Johnston, who had died in 1716. Yet, the situation

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[50] Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, 10 vols. (Columbia: Printed by A. S. Johnston, 1836-1873), 2: 282-295.

[51] Gideon Johnston to Bishop of Sarum, 20 September 1708, in *Carolina Chronicle: The Papers of Commissary Gideon Johnston, 1707-1716*, ed. Frank J. Klingberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946), 22-23.

was not harmonious by any definition. In 1724, after South Carolina had become a royal

colony (1721), fear still held considerable sway. Royal Governor Francis Nicholson

informed the clergy of his concern that dissenters would not stop until they had control of

or secured secession from both civil and religious authorities in the colony. ". . . Our

brethren the Protestant Dissenters," he warned the clergy, might not be satisfied until they

"have the Supream [sic] Command both of Church & State or at least a Distinct

Government both Ecclesiasticall [sic] & Civil ---[.]"[52]

When Garden officially became Commissary in 1729 he was keenly aware of

existing threats to Anglican establishment. And he was determined, as is evident by the

guarded posture he took throughout his tenure, not to allow those threats to materialize.

Although historians have commonly placed the entrance of Evangelicalism into the

southern colonies with Whitefield and the First Great Awakening, it is important to note

that many of these early Carolina dissenters were indeed evangelical, at least as that term

was understood within the Protestant tradition. They, for the most part, held to the

classical Reformation tenets of Justification by faith alone and the necessity of a new birth

conversion, or Regeneration. Thus, it is a mistake to conclude that Garden's controversial

posture was due altogether to Whitefield's evangelical and decidedly Calvinistic theology,

although, it should be stressed, such was a part of Garden's overall polemical scheme.

Garden had for years been in direct contact with such theology and had come to terms,

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[52] Governor Francis Nicholson to South Carolina Clergy, 30 June 1724, Fulham Papers, Bishop of London, 1710-1767, no. 286.

albeit not approvingly, with it.[53] In his 1754 farewell sermon he stated that he had "always

lived in all Peace and friendship" with "Dissenters, of any denomination" and that they had

"always treated . . . [him] with Civility and decent regard."[54]

The difference between Whitefield and the lowcountry dissenters was in the

method and form in which their similarly held objective doctrines were presented. Unlike

Whitefield, they did not stress, at least not to the extent nor as publicly as he did, an

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[53] Neither Garden nor the provincial authorities had come to terms with all dissenters.
This was especially true with the radical French millenarian Dutartre family. Peter
Rombert, a lead prophet of the group announced that the end of the world was at hand
and that only they would remain to raise "up a godly seed upon earth." Rombert also
divorced his wife and married her younger sister by divine direction. Three in the group
were tried and convicted in 1724 for murdering John Simmons, a Carolina militia captain
who attempted to serve a warrant on them in part for their refusal, again by divine
exemption, to serve in the militia. Garden reported that a primary force behind the beliefs
of the Dutartres was the writing of German mystic Jacob Boehme. For this account by
Garden on the Dutartre cult see Alexander Hewatt, *An Historical Account of the Rise and
Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for
Alexander Donaldson, 1779; reprint, Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company,
1971), 1: 301-308; also see George Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South
Carolina*. vol. 1 (Charleston: Walker, Evans and Cogswell, 1870), 194-197. Garden also
joined other South Carolina ministers in 1725 in a letter to the Bishop of London about
the Dutartres. "A certain Family having some years ago expounded Enthusiastik Notions
that they were Divinely Inspired in all their Sentiments, refused all obedience to Civile
Government, and after all just and honest Endeavors by us to make them sensible of their
Mistakes having proved ineffectual, they at length grew so incorrigible and insufferable
that [they] were apprehended by Civile Magistrate in order to be brought to Justice." The
letter goes on to tell of their demise. Quoted in Hawkins, "Alexander Garden: The
Commissary in Church and State," 82-83. It is interesting to note that Garden saw
Whitefield as of the same ilk. Whitefield recorded in his journal 13 July 1740 that he
"heard the Commissary preach." And, he added, Garden "seemed to ransack church
history for instances of enthusiasm and abused grace. He drew a parallel between me and
all the *Oliverians*, *Ranters*, *Quakers*, *French Prophets*, till he came down to a family of
the *Dutarts* [sic], who lived, not many years ago, in South Carolina, and were guilty of the
most notorious incests and murders." Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 442.

[54] Frederick Dalcho, *An Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South-
Carolina, from the First Settlement of the Province, to the War of the Revolution*
(Charleston: E. Thayer, 1820), 169.

inwardly focused pietistic or mystical spirituality as a validation of true Christianity. True,

Whitefield found some of his most ardent supporters in the dissenter churches. This,

however, may have been due to his stress on these objective doctrines more than his

subjective presentation of them. Nevertheless, Whitefield's added dimension of mystical

and pietistic forms were either not understood or simply overlooked by those dissenters,

such as the French and Independent Calvinists, whose denominations had historically

shunned overt emotionalism.[55] Alexander Garden understood the subjective side, and he

did not overlook it.

It will be helpful at this juncture to briefly examine some of Whitefield's subjective

characteristics that made his presentation of objective doctrine so controversial, and more

importantly to understand why Garden made the same conclusion of him as others had

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[55] A significant exception to this generalization was the Reverend Josiah Smith (1704-
1781), pastor of Charleston's Independent Congregational Church. In 1740 Smith came
out in strong support of Whitefield and his methods in a published discourse entitled "A
Sermon, on the Character, Preaching, &c. of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield." In this sermon he
not only agreed with Whitefield's objective emphasis on Justification and Regeneration,
but he also defended the more subjective elements as well. "True religion is an inward
thing, a thing of the heart; it chiefly resides there, and consists in a right disposition and
sanctified temper of the will and affections. . . ." Yet, Smith perceived the danger of going
too far with the subjective and sought to explain Whitefield's position for those who saw
too much in the young evangelist's emphasis on extra-biblical impressions. Smith argued
that Whitefield did not really see himself as having apostolic authority from his inward
impressions as Garden and others claimed. "He also allowed these feelings of the Spirit
were not in every person, or at all times, in the same degree; and that though a full
assurance were attainable, and what every one should labour to obtain, yet not of absolute
necessity to the being of a Christian.---Only he asserted that we might feel the Spirit of
God, in his sanctifying and saving impressions, and witnessing with our own spirits."
Josiah Smith, "Whitefield's Character and Preaching," in *The Great Awakening:
Documents Illustrating the Crisis and Its Consequences*, ed. Alan Heimert and Perry
Miller (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1967), 65-66; this selection is
taken from Josiah Smith, "A Sermon, on the Character, Preaching, &c. of the Rev. Mr.
Whitefield," in George Whitefield, *Fifteen Sermons Preached on Various Important
Subjects* (New York, 1794).

made of Wesley and Habersham: that Whitefield was possibly connected to a Roman

Catholic conspiracy.

As seen earlier in this study, Whitefield had been heavily influenced by mystical

writings from his active participation in the Oxford Holy Club. During that time a work

by the mystic Henry Scougal directly initiated his conversion experience. After his

conversion he read and meditated much on William Law's writings, especially *The*

Absolute Unlawfulness of the Stage Entertainment (1735) and *A Serious Call to a Devout*

and Holy Life (1736). During his first voyage to Georgia he noted in his journal

concerning the ship's captain who was "earnest about the great work of his salvation" that

"he has read Arndt's *True Christianity*, and is now reading Law's *Christian Perfection,---*

books worth their weight in gold, and which God has blessed to the conversion of

many."[56] Although by 1740 he had begun to publicly denounce mysticism, various clues

indicate its continued sway over his thought patterns. It is true that he did not

intellectually hold to pure mystical notions such as purgation and progression into ultimate

unity or to a non-faith based righteousness or to a notion that disinterested love must

precede an authentic relationship with God. But what he denied intellectually he

sometimes demonstrated considerable approbation for emotionally. Whitefield's verbal

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[56] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 63, 79, 144. After returning to England in
1739 Whitefield again demonstrated his allegiance to Law's *Christian Perfection*. Upon
talking with Benjamin Seward, a former student at Cambridge and recent convert who had
opposed him he wrote the following: "My proceedings he could by no means approve, and
he had once a mind, he said, to write against Mr. Law's enthusiastic notions in his
Christian Perfection. But lately, it has please God to reveal His dear Son in him, and to
cast him down to the earth, as he did Saul, by eight days' sickness, in which time he scarce
ever ate, or drank, or slept, and underwent great inward agonies and tortures. After this,
the scales fell more and more from the eyes of his mind." Whitefield, *George Whitefield's
Journals*, 254.

denial of mysticism in contradistinction to his clear propensity for its sentiment oriented benefits demonstrates an underlying theme presented thus far in this study: that the tension between the objective and subjective elements in Evangelical Pietists such as Whitefield go far in explaining the complexity and controversy surrounding their encounter with colonial society.[57]

The most visible and obvious characteristic to an outside observer of enthusiastic behavior was the sheer emotionalism involved in spiritual exercises. Whitefield often emphasized the paramount role feelings played in authentic spirituality. In 1740 on a preaching tour in Philadelphia he wrote of his own experience to John Wesley: "Our Lord frequently manifests himself in such a manner, that it throws me into an agony which my body is almost too weak to bear." The next day he wrote to a friend in London that while ministering in New York and Philadelphia his "soul was taken almost out of the body."[58] In Savannah that same year while praying for anxious souls he testified that his "soul was carried, as it were, out of the body, and I wrestled with our Lord in prayer on their

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[57] The point should not be missed that usually when Whitefield spoke out against mysticism it was directed toward a specific type: Quietism. He believed, in fact, that a *vita contemplativa* emphasis almost wrecked his spiritual journey early on. His mystical leanings were much more in line with a Taulerian *vita activa* mysticism, consistent with his German influences, especially Arndt and Francke (see chapter one). Whitefield wrote to an inquirer about Quietism in December 1740 and explained that the true communion with God "I fear is contrary to the *false stillness*, you and some others seem to have fallen into. I was just in the same case some years ago at *Oxford*, when I declined writing, reading, and such like exercises, because I would be still." This, he wrote, was revealed to him to be a "delusion." George Whitefield to Mr. G___ C___, 11 December 1740, *Works*, 1: 228. Whitefield, in the height of his experimentation with Quietism failed to meet certain academic responsibilities due to his "stillness."

[58] George Whitefield to John Wesley, 9 November 1740 and George Whitefield to Mr. M_____, 10 November 1740, *Works*, 1: 219, 222.

behalf."[59] On his way to England from America in February 1741 he wrote to friends at the Bethesda Orphanage, "if you ask, how is it with my soul? Blessed be GOD, I can reply, 'Very well.' The LORD gives me a feeling possession of himself."[60]

He often determined the spiritual receptivity of his hearers by the level of emotional manifestations. In the Spring of 1740 while preaching to five thousand people in New York he "did not perceive much power in the congregation" since during the sermon "the people were still and quiet. . . ." The next day, however, he preached "to a somewhat less congregation than last night, but with much greater power; for towards the conclusion of my discourse," he noted, "God's Spirit came upon the preacher and the people, so that they were melted down exceedingly."[61] Of his meetings in Charleston in August of 1740 he noted, "I scarce know the time wherein I did not see a considerable melting in some part of the congregation, and often it spreads over the whole of it."[62]

This "melting" of the people commonly manifested itself in profuse weeping and bodily prostration, and, often in the same subjects upon their conversion, by rapturous ecstasies. In the Spring of 1740 a "melting" in New Brunswick, New Jersey reached such a fevered pitch, Whitefield wrote, "had I proceeded, I believe the cries and groans of the congregation would have drowned my voice." And, he added, "one woman was struck

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[59] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 448.

[60] George Whitefield to Mr. B and his wife at Bethesda, 17 February 1741, *Works*, 1: 244.

[61] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 415.

[62] Ibid., 449; in July 1740 he wrote in his journal that a previously critical "gentlewoman" and her elite companions came to hear him preach on St. John's Island and were "much melted down." Later, she provided her barn for a meeting place and "a lovely melting was visible in several parts of the auditory." And in the after-meeting, he added, "God enabled me to speak many gospel truths amidst a polite set of people." Ibid., 443.

down, and a general cry went through the assembly." A few days later in Philadelphia he

talked with a black woman who had been converted under his ministry the year before.

She told him of a rapturous experience she had recently had while hearing a Baptist

preacher. She was taken up in such joy that her loud praises and crying prompted the

minister and others to try and silence her, but, she told Whitefield, she could not stop. Of

this incident Whitefield maked an interesting comment showing on the one hand his

hesitancy to validate excessive emotion, and on the other hand his belief that true revival

usually is accompanied by it. "Such cases, indeed, have not been very common; but when

an extra-ordinary work is being carried on, God generally manifests Himself to some souls

in this extraordinary manner."[63]

As noted above, Whitefield and other Evangelical Pietists allowed emotion to

become a criteria for God's leading. While extra-biblical direction was an uncommon

practice with the early Reformers, mystics and Pietists saw inward sentiment as a natural

means for spiritual guidance. But to Reformers like Luther and Calvin, any extra-biblical

leading was a violation of *sola scriptura*. Simply put, the Reformation doctrine of the

priesthood of every believer operated only within the confines of written revelation.

Whitefield is a somewhat unusual case in that he was squarely in both traditions

simultaneously. Thus, for him the objective/subjective tension involved both an

intellectual acceptance of Scripture alone as the instrument of God's leading and an

emotional acceptance of God's leading through feelings, visions, and dreams. He affirmed

the possibility and even testified to the fact that he had received revelations in dreams and

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[63] Ibid., 413, 419-420.

in what he called walking "impressions."[64] On one occasion he said that he received "fresh

Teachings, and Communications from God's *Holy Spirit*."[65] He even hinted that such

revelations came to him prior to his evangelical conversion. Recounting a conversation he

had with his sister he wrote, "'Sister, God intends something for me which we know not

of. . . . I think God will provide for me some way or other that we cannot apprehend.'" In

reflection he added, "How I came to say these words I know not. God afterwards

showed me they came from Him."[66]

Preoccupation with inward direction led Whitefield into a sense of revelational

immediacy; that is, whether intentionally or not, he seemed at times to convey an apostolic

authority of direct inspiration in his preaching. A sign of Whitefield's mystical

preoccupation was this attempt to authenticate his authority through claims of immediate

and binding revelation. For example, while in London between his first and second trip to

America he noted in his journal why he preferred extemporaneous preaching to the more

confining method of reading from a written sermon. "I find I gain greater light and

knowledge by preaching extempore, so that I fear I should quench the Spirit, did I not go

on to speak as He gives me utterance."[67] On the next day after spending all night in prayer

at Fetter Lane, he preached to around twelve thousand people. He then contemplated on

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[64] See Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 14-15, 30-31.

[65] Quoted in Lavington, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. In Three Parts*, vol. 1, part 1, 46.

[66] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 42.

[67] Ibid., 205.

how he saw his authority amongst his hearers (especially his detractors) in the context of the Holy Spirit's power within him.

> This has been a sabbath indeed! How has God owned me before near twelve thousand people this day! How has He strengthened my body! How has He filled and satisfied my soul! Now know I, that I did receive the Holy Ghost at imposition of hands, for I feel it as much as Elisha did when Elijah dropped his mantle. Nay, others see it also, and my opposers, would they but speak, cannot but confess that God is with me of a truth. Wherefore then do they fight against God?[68]

Whitefield's view of immediacy sometimes led to a close identification of his spiritual journey and ministry with that of Christ's. He sometimes placed himself within Christological passages. He also had the tendency to automatically view his detractors, not as *his* enemies, but as enemies of Christ.[69] Of course he cannot be accused of actually seeing himself in any degree as a divine figure. Neither did any of his followers see him in that light. Nevertheless, some illustrated their awe by employing similar Christological language to describe him in quasi-messianic terms. In 1739, for example, James Habersham wrote to a minister in Dorchester, South Carolina that in times of opposition, Whitefield "answers not a Word," alluding to the Isaiah's prophesy of Christ's crucifixion, "but as a Sheep before his sheare[r]s is Dumb so he openeth not his Mouth." Habersham added in the same letter, "you may communicate a part or the whole of this letter to Mr. Garden. . . ."[70]

The notion of immediate utterances from the Holy Spirit particularly worried Commissary Garden. In 1740 Garden wrote in a short introduction to a sermon he had

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[68] Ibid., 206.

[69] See for example Ibid., 56, 442,

[70] James Habersham to Rev. Mr. Roe, 12 June 1739, Jones Family Papers, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah. See Isaiah 53: 7.

preached that year against Whitefield, "I saw the Wolf a coming; ---a vain, *visionary*

Creature! Who would fill your Heads with Visions *and new* Revelations. . . ." In the

sermon he warned his hearers that such enthusiastic pretensions were outside the "Reach"

of "Reason and Revelation." And he added, Whitefield and the like, "have God himself

speaking inwardly to their Souls; immediately teaching, and infallibly leading them into all

Truth. . . ." Garden perceived that Whitefield's tendency to condemn any who disagreed

with his doctrines was a by-product of his view of the Holy Spirit's immediate

communication. He concluded that those who made such claims "are either Men of

enthusiastic-Heads or *Emissaries* of Rome."[71] He went on in the sermon to warn:

> Beware, my Brethren, this is an arrant *Jumble* of Contradiction and Confusion,
> either calculated by a *Romish* EMISSARY, to distract and confound weak Minds; or
> the Produce of a warm, frantick, *Enthusiastick* Brain.
> We know *Rome* has her *Seed* and *Harvest* Missionaries. Her *Seedsmen* sow
> INFIDELITY and ENTHUSIASM, to distress and unsettle weak Minds, often to
> *Distraction*; and then appear the *Harvest Men*; to *heal* their Wounds, and *gather*
> them home into the *Bosom* of their *Mother*, from whom they had gone astray.[72]

Another area in which Whitefield drew suspicion of a Catholic connection was his

emphasis on a sort of a mystical transubstantiation in the Eucharist. As noted earlier,

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[71] Alexander Garden, "Two Sermons on Regeneration," in Heimert and Miller, eds., *The Great Awakening*, 48, 49, 50-51, 58; this selection is taken from Alexander Garden, *Regeneration, and the Testimony of the Spirit. Being the Substance of Two Sermons . . . Occasioned by some erroneous Notions of certain Men who call themselves Methodists* (Charleston, South Carolina, 1740; reprinted Boston, 1741). Particularly annoying to Garden was Whitefield's statement in an earlier letter (February 1740) that Archbishop of Canterbury John Tillotson had only a *"bare Historical Faith"* and concerning true Christianity "was as ignorant as Mahomet." Garden wrote to Whitefield that Tillotson's memory and writings "will doubtless long survive in the highest *Honour* and *Esteem*, after you and your dirty *Pamphlets* are sunk into Oblivion." Alexander Garden to George Whitefield, 21 April 1740, in Alexander Garden, *Six Letters to the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield,* 2nd ed. (Boston: T. Fleet, 1740), 33, 36 (hereafter *Six Letters*).

[72] Garden, "Two Sermons on Regeneration," 60.

inhabitants of Savannah suspected that John Wesley was Catholic because of his claim of a mystical presence of Christ in the Eucharist. After all, Wesley did say that God allowed the earnest partaker at times to "See a Crucified Saviour" and "the Fountain opened in his Side."[73] For this claim of a visible presence of Christ at the Lord's table, Wesley received accusations of holding to a disguised transubstantiation.

Interestingly, Whitefield's claims were very similar to Wesley's. He too experienced visions of Christ at the table. In 1737 he wrote, "The early [morning] sacraments were exceedingly awful [full of awe]. . . . How often have we seen Jesus Christ crucified, and evidently set forth before us!" It is very difficult at times to determine whether or not Whitefield is claiming actual visions or simply using metaphorical language. Nevertheless, such usage could and was taken by some to be more than spiritualized talk. Bishop George Lavington, whose criticisms of Whitefield will be examined in more detail below, interpreted Whitefield's statement as showing a sort of Catholic corporal presence of Christ in the sacrament.

> Upon this I asked, "Whether this did not encourage the Notion of a *real Corporal Presence* in the *Sacrifice of the Mass*; and was not as good an Argument for *Transubstantiation*, as the several *fleshly* Appearances produced by the *Papists?*"[74]

The point is that whether or not he meant to replace a literal presence in the elements with a real but mystical apparition is not as important for our purposes as the fact that it was indeed interpreted by some as just that. Thus, others, such as Garden, may have seen in

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[73] Quoted in Lavington, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*, vol. 1, part 2, 122.

[74] Ibid.

such language an attempt, as some did with Wesley in Savannah, to veil the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation by use of mystical language.[75]

Within the context of this emphasis on inward sentiment, more overt mystical themes sometimes emerged in Whitefield's ministry. Phrases and concepts that were mystical in origin found their way into his counseling and preaching vocabulary. For example, at times he referred to a pre-conversion state in much the same way a mystic would describe the purgation or "Dark Night" stage prior to union with God. Alan Heimert in his *Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (1966) has rightly distinguished between the Puritan's regimented "preparation" period prior to conversion and that of the later revivalists such as Whitefield. Yet, at times Whitefield does not seem so far from the Puritan model. Heimert may have overstated the case when he wrote that "'conviction' was for the revivalists merely a possible antecedent of conversion, and not a necessary one. It represented the travail pains that some men, but not all, experienced in coming to the joyful release of spiritual rebirth."[76] W. R. Ward's analysis seems also to discount this element of preparation in Whitefield's conversion motif. Whitefield's revivalistic preaching, especially as it concerned the New Birth, was as Ward wrote, "shorn of the laborious Puritan morphology of conversion . . . ," and he continued, "it was a great self-validating event in which the Holy Spirit implanted itself in the soul." Ward rightly

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[75] I am not aware that Garden ever heard such language from Whitefield in reference to the Lord's Supper. I only suggest it as a possibility given Whitefield's penchant for such language during this period in his ministry.

[76] Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), 39.

concluded that "by the logic of the New Birth all kinds of abnormal psychological phenomena which had been marginalized as enthusiasm in the old Puritan morphology of conversion became direct evidence of spirit-possession."[77] The point that both Ward and Heimert seem to miss is that often in Whitefield's ministry the "all kinds of psychological phenomena" occurring in revival conversions included a type of morphology similar (if not in degree, in kind) to the Puritan method.[78]

Whitefield did not deny that the actual point of conversion was instantaneous, but the normal route to that state, he believed, "passed through the pangs of the new birth."[79] In 1737 before his first voyage to Georgia he told spiritual seekers in Bristol that "the first and grand thing is to get a true and lively faith in Jesus Christ, seeking for it by earnest prayer." And, he said, all should constantly pray "in all our struggles, for it is God alone who can subdue and govern the unruly wills of sinful men."[80] Some of his acquaintances, including his friend John Hutton, a printer who had been influenced by Moravians, "tried to show him," Whitefield biographer John Pollock wrote, "that the long torture of soul

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[77] W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 290.

[78] The English and New England Puritans were not exempt from mystical notions. Ernst Troeltsch has argued, for example, that Puritanism was a conduit of Anabaptist pietistic ideals into Germany. See Horst Weigelt, "Interpretations of Pietism in the Research of Contemporary German Church Historians," *Church History* 39 (June 1970): 238-239. The Puritan emphasis on a detailed, structured, and drawn out method of conversion is in ways similar to mystical purgation prior to union. And, though Whitefield did not place near the emphasis on the structure as did the Puritans, he was not as divorced from it as some believe.

[79] See Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 108.

[80] Quoted in John Pollock, *George Whitefield and the Great Awakening* (Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., 1972; Tring: Lion Publishing, 1986), 41.

which had preceded his discovery in Oxford had been unnecessary." Although Whitefield

did not completely discount their advise, "he did not yet dare let God remake anyone,

anywhere, on an instant of time."[81] In 1739 James Habersham held the same view as his

mentor. He advised a young lady in Charleston who was contemplating conversion "not

to rest till you rest in God." And, he added, "Go on, then," for "the whole Host of

Heaven will be ready to assist you to press through the strait & narrow gate. . . ." Even

though "the way is stremed [sic] with thorns & briers, the further you get into it, you will

find it smoother & smoother. . . ."[82]

On 3 August 1740 wealthy South Carolina plantation owners Jonathan Bryan and

his brother Hugh Bryan along with other companions came to meet with Whitefield in

Savannah.[83] The next day upon their request for him to preach, he agreed and

commenced to pray first whereupon one of the company, a "Mr. B......ll" suddenly

"dropped down, as though shot with a gun. Afterwards he got up, and sat attentively to

hear the sermon." The next day Whitefield instructed them "on the nature of the new

birth, and the necessity of closing in with Christ. . . ." Then, showing his hesitancy to rush

a conversion, he "kneeled down, prayed with them, and took . . . leave, hoping the Lord

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[81] Ibid., 49.

[82] James Habersham to Miss Henderson, 17 May 1739, Jones Family Papers, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.

[83] For an examination of Whitefield's influence on Hugh Bryan see Harvey H. Jackson, "Hugh Bryan and the Evangelical Movement in Colonial South Carolina," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (October 1986): 594-614; for his influence on Jonathan and Hugh Bryan see Alan Gallay, "Impassioned Disciples: The Great Awakening, George Whitefield, and the Reform of Slavery," chap. in *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 30-54.

would pluck them as brands from the burning."[84] Eleven days later Whitefield wrote to a

friend in New York the following concerning his Carolina visitors:

> I have reason to think, that three persons who came to see the orphan--house, have
> been effectually called by our LORD JESUS. I have now some Carolina visitors in my
> house; two of them, I believe, are coming truly to JESUS. ---The word runs like
> lightning in Charles-Town.[85]

This event illustrates that Whitefield evidently saw the need, at least in these subjects, for a

deeper work of conviction to take place before the actual conversion experience. It is true

that Whitefield also stressed the instantaneous nature of the conversion experience, a view

incidentally that Alexander Garden criticized as well, but at the same time he possessed, at

least in 1740, an equally strong notion of preparation prior to conversion.

Even more mystical in tone and content were hints he gave that the classic mystical

notion of disinterested love was not altogether absent from his thinking. For example,

Whitefield spoke of following "naked the naked Christ." On one occasion in 1739 he

wrote to a young man's father who had threatened his son with disinheritance if he did not

cease following a certain unnamed religious person. The son had come to the young

evangelist for help. Whitefield wrote the father: "He now sits by me; I read over your

letter to him, and he continues as resolute as ever." And, he added, "being disinherited

does not terrify him at all. He has a more abiding inheritance, and is willing naked to

follow a naked Christ."[86] Later that same year he wrote from Philadelphia to a "Mrs. H.":

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[84] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 447-448.

[85] George Whitefield to Mr. N------ 15 August 1740, *Works*, 1: 203; Jonathan and Hugh
Bryan became two of Whitefield's most ardent supporters.

[86] George Whitefield to an unnamed Father, 26 July 1739, *Works*, 1: 56; see also a letter
written on 18 July 1739, Ibid., 1: 52.

"If you endure to the end, and naked follow a naked CHRIST, great shall be your reward in heaven."[87] As noted earlier, this phrase had been used by St. Francis and Thomas a` Kempis to exemplify the mystic's necessary resolve to be willing to never attain union with God before such union could take place. That is, all selfish motivations for being one with God had to be stripped from an individual. Only a selfless man could find a selfless Christ. While Whitefield cannot be accused of fully holding to this mystical notion of disinterested love, statements such as this may have led others to make the mystical connection.[88]

Although this phrase "follow naked the naked Christ" did not hold for Whitefield a Franciscan notion of disinterested love, it was related to what some of his critics saw as a mystically motivated element in his ministry: an excessive preoccupation with suffering. Part of what he meant by the phrase, as is evident in the examples above, is that the believer should be willing to experience any deprivation for the cause of Christ. Of course suffering for the Faith has always been part of the Christian tradition and is not in itself a mystical notion. But Whitefield placed an unusually high premium on suffering. This is not surprising since the early Methodists from the Holy Club did as well. They commonly took spiritual consolation in the bantering and physical abuse leveled against them. Soon after Whitefield's evangelical conversion in 1735 he went to his home town of Gloucester and influenced several young men who formed a religious society. His young converts, he

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[87] George Whitefield to Mrs. H., 28 November 1739, *Works*, 1: 125.

[88] The writings of Thomas a` Kempis were standard fare for members of the Oxford Holy Club. It is likely that Whitefield picked up this phrase from either his companions at Oxford or from reading a` Kempis or both. Whitefield acknowledged that a` Kempis's writings "were of great help and furtherance to me." Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 56.

wrote, "had quickly the honour of being despised at Gloucester, as we had been before them at Oxford."[89]

There is possibly no other more frequently recurring theme in Whitefield's early journals and letters than suffering. He consistently emphasized it as an absolute spiritual necessity. In November of 1739 he wrote, "I am persuaded, that suffering for righteousness sake, is the best, the greatest preferment in the church of Christ."[90] Whitefield's resolve to suffer was particularly strong in anticipation of his ministry in America. While on board ship during his second trip to America he wrote, "I expect to suffer for my blessed master's name sake."[91] His craving for reproach was strengthened by reading August Francke's *Nicodemus: or, A Treatise Against the Fear of Man* (1701). A. W. Boehm's English translation had been in circulation for around twenty five years when Charles Wesley gave a copy to Whitefield.[92] The work greatly impressed the teenage seeker to follow a life of reproach. Shortly after meeting the Wesleys and other Holy Club members at Oxford, Whitefield was embarrassed to be seen with them. Francke's counsel changed his perspective.

> But, blessed be God! this fear of man gradually wore off. As I had imitated Nicodemus in his cowardice, so, by the Divine assistance, I followed him in his courage. I confessed the Methodists more and more publicly every day. I walked

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[89] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 60. a` Kempis said of suffering: "Who . . . is in most favour with God? Truly, he that gladly suffereth most for God." Thomas a` Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, ed. Edward J. Klein, trans. Richard Whitford (New York: Harper & Brothers Publications, 1941), 41. This edition is from the first English translation made in 1530.

[90] George Whitefield to "My dear Friend," 10 November 1739, *Works*, 1: 68.

[91] George Whitefield to "Reverend and dear Sir," 14 August 1739, *Works*, 1: 61.

[92] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 46.

openly with them, and chose rather to bear contempt with those people of God, than to enjoy the applause of almost-Christians for a season.[93]

When one considers the strong mandate against the fear of man that Francke sets forth in *Nicodemus*, Whitefield's boldness is better understood. "*Fearfulness* is a Daughter of Unbelief, and a Mother of Hypocrisy," Francke wrote. Being a hypocrite was the last thing Whitefield intended to be. Francke also asserted that "we must resolutely break thro' all Oppositions surrounding us, and take up the Reproach of Christ, before we can expect," he added, "that the full Blessing of the gospel should attend our Endeavours." Even more to the point of suffering he wrote:

> High and Low, Teachers and Hearers, must alike suffer themselves to be censured by the World, when once they earnestly turn themselves to God. For as soon as their Actions do no more comport with the fashionable Ways of the World, the scoffs and rails, crying them down for Fanaticism, Singularity, Pharisaical Hypocrisy, and loading them with a thousand Lies and Calumnies. Now he that is afraid of this Reproach from the World, must needs continue an Hypocrite as long as he lives.[94]

Pietists often presented Christian suffering as a necessary step toward attaining the fulfilled spiritual life. For the medieval mystic, the ultimate goal was union with God. This was not simply the evangelical tenet of being one "in Christ," a phrase used in the New Testament to show the believer's position through God's declaration of righteousness. Mystical union involved a union of essence whereby an actual fusion of man and God took place. The end result is the deification of man. Although Francke

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[93] Ibid., 50.

[94] August Herman Francke, *Nicodemus: or, A Treatise Against the Fear of Man*, 3rd. ed., trans. [A. W. Boehm] (Boston: Printed by Rogers and Fowle, for N. Procter, 1744), 64, 106, 108; this 1744 edition is based on A. W. Boehm's first (1706) English translation. It is interesting to note that John Wesley read and began an abridgment of this work during his voyage to Georgia. See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, "Continental Pietism and the Evangelical Movement in Britain," in *Pietismus und Reveil* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978), 208-209.

never adopted a pure notion of mystical union, the influence of the doctrine is present in his writings nonetheless.

In *Nicodemus* Francke quoted Johannes Tauler, fourteenth century German Dominican mystic, hinting at the relationship of fearlessness with mystical union. Francke believed Tauler's example should shame the average Christian who often lacks resolve in the face of opposition. Tauler based fearlessness in part on his notion of union. Francke quoted Tauler: "A spiritual Person ought to be so . . . all flaming with divine Love, & outwardly so conformable to God, that whenever any one came to him, he might hear nothing from him but GOD. . . ."[95] It would be easier to pass off this statement as metaphorical were it not from one who clearly taught a union of essence with the Divine. Although Whitefield did not assent to the doctrine as such, identifiable remnants of its influence are evident in much that he said and wrote.[96] After all, he had, before and after his evangelical conversion, been on a steady diet of writings that advocated it.

During his second voyage back to America after receiving priestly orders, Whitefield read Fox's *Book of Martyrs*. He wrote to an acquaintance while on board in reference to those who had suffered for the faith. "They make me blush to think how little I suffer for Christ's sake. They warm my heart, and make me think the time long till I am

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[95] Francke, *Nicodemus*, 37-38.

[96] Note the following statement by Whitefield to the Bethesda caretaker. In addition to allusion of mystical union, the Taulerian *vita activa* (see chapter one), as opposed to the Quietism's *vita contemplativa* may be read into the statement as well. "Are any of the Orphan Lambs bleating after their great Shepherd? Is your mouth opened? Is your heart enlarged? Is your soul swallowed up in God? . . .If you ask, how is it with my soul? Blessed be God, I can reply, 'Very well.' The Lord gives me a feeling possession of himself. I have been enabled to compose *nine discourses* for the press." See George Whitefield to "Mr. B and his wife at Bethesda," 17 February 1741, *Works*, 1: 244.

called to resist even unto blood. . . ."[97] By this time the emphasis Whitefield placed on suffering became almost acute. Harry Stout has observed that "at the same time . . . he renounced the world, Whitefield made sure the world knew he renounced it." It was "a pattern he would follow throughout his early preaching career" in which he systematically "publicized his difference, incurred reproach, and then used that reproach as divine confirmation."[98]

In addition to the emotionally charged and mystically oriented subjectivity in Whitefield, another complaint Garden had with him had to do again with immediacy, not so much in terms of direct revelation but with the time sequence of conversion. That is, Garden protested Whitefield's insistence that regeneration and conversion were instantaneous and communicated directly to the conscience. In this vein he insisted that good works must precede Justification. Regeneration, he said, involved a life long process of faith and works with Justification as the end result. It was necessarily a cooperation between man and God. Garden did not deny biblical examples of instantaneous conversions (i.e. the Apostle Paul and the thief on the cross) but saw them as extra-ordinary and not to be used as normative examples for non-Apostolic times. Normally, he argued, Justification comes gradually by the combination of reason, faith, and good works.[99]

Garden outlined his polemic further in a series of letters to Whitefield. Again he focused on conversion unto justification as gradual. In one letter he argued, particularly in

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[97] George Whitefield to Mr.-----, 16 August 1739, *Works*, 1: 64.

[98] Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*, 21.

[99] Garden, "Two Sermons on Regeneration," 50, 57, 59.

response to Whitefield's sermon "What Think Ye of Christ," that contrary to the

evangelist's assertions, Justification necessarily came as a result of both good works *and*

faith.

> For as a true and *lively* Faith, you admit, must *precede* Justification; so *good Works .
> . . do spring necessarily out of a true and lively Faith.* Now, if good Works do
> *necessarily spring* out of a true and *lively* Faith, and a true and *lively* Faith
> *necessarily precedes* Justification, the Consequence is plain, that good Works must
> *not only follow after*, but precede Justification also. And therefore your explaining
> the Article so, as to separate a true and lively Faith from good Works, admitting the
> one to go before, and the other only to follow after *Justification*, is explaining the
> Article into a Contradiction to your own Doctrine.[100]

To Garden, instantaneous regeneration was dangerous in that the subject would

become a passive and direct recipient of grace apart from any institutional structures and

could potentially discount the role of the church as the mediator of ordinances and

instruction which together aid the member on gradually to a state of salvation. His

concern was, as Harry Stout suggests, that "piety was no longer something inextricably

bound up with local community and corporate spirituality."[101] "The Populace," Garden

wrote to Whitefield with a hint of sarcasm, "have been strangely amused of late with the

Doctrine of *Regeneration*, as a sudden, instantaneous Work (Act) of the *Holy Spirit*, and

in which the Subjects are *entirely passive*." Regeneration, "is not a *sole*, critical or

instantaneous [event], but a *gradual co-operating* Work of the *Holy Spirit*; commencing

at *Baptism*, and gradually advancing throughout the whole Course of the Christian Life

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[100] Alexander Garden to George Whitefield, 17 March 1739/40, Garden, *Six Letters*, 5-6;
the sermon, "What think ye of Christ," to which Garden addressed his remarks is in
Whitefield, *Works*, 5: 353-372.

[101] Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*, xx.

. . . ."[102] To the Commissary this could not be done autonomously; the church played the principal role in the process.

It should be noted that on the doctrines of Regeneration and Justification, Garden, not Whitefield, held a decidedly Roman Catholic position. Martin Luther in the early sixteenth century argued that Justification was God's forensic declaration of the sinner's righteousness based on faith alone apart from any works whatever. That is, Protestants believe that the sinner is declared holy based only on the merits of Christ's sacrifice completely apart from any holiness inwardly infused. Catholic doctrine, on the other hand teaches that righteousness is an inward experience by means of grace conferred through the sacraments and good works.[103] To Luther, Calvin, and other Protestants, good works could not precede Regeneration because prior to that point of awakening, the sinner is spiritually dead and incapable to perform them. Thus, only by an instantaneous act of God's awakening influence (Regeneration) could the sinner be enabled to believe. And, at that very point of awakening and belief, Justification occurred. That is, Regeneration and

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[102] Alexander Garden to George Whitefield, 15 April 1740 in Garden, *Six Letters*, 26, 28.

[103] A major difference between Protestant and Catholic soteriological positions has historically been over the nature of Justification. Protestants hold to the forensic imputation of Christ's righteousness whereas Catholics hold to the infusion of that righteousness. Justification for the Catholic is something that happens *inside* the subject and is progressive. For a work that clearly sets forth the differences in these views see Charles Hodge, *Justification by Faith Alone*, ed. John W. Robbins (Hobbs, New Mexico: The Trinity Foundation, 1995). It is interesting to note that many German Pietist groups and other Evangelicals compromised on the Protestant and Catholic differences. Some, for example, maintained that Justification was by faith alone but held that it was infused rather than imputed. George Whitefield, on the other hand, held that it was by faith alone and imputed, precisely in line with Calvin and Luther. This is one key area which differentiated Whitefield from mystical theology. Conversely, it is the point where Commissary Garden was very much in accord with Roman Catholic teaching.

Justification occur together.[104] To the Protestants, therefore, Justification was instantaneous leaving no time for a progression of good works to initiate it.

Notwithstanding this differentiation, Garden nevertheless honed in on Whitefield's view of immediacy (i.e. direct communication from God) and the Apostolic consciousness that followed from it and on the emotionally charged context in which it all appeared. His conclusion was that in all this George Whitefield was likely in league with Rome to divert American Anglicans away from the faith of the Church. Garden criticized him for not answering his theological queries. Whitefield had decided not to answer Garden publicly, and in this silence Garden saw another reason to believe he was in league with Rome. "It is a *Maxim*, I am told, among the *Jesuits* in Controversy," Garden wrote on 30 July 1740, "never to regard the Arguments or Objections of an Adversary; but to neglect them, and always return to their own Assertion, as nothing had been offered against it. A *Maxim* worth indeed of that *singular Order!*" Then, Garden asked, "Did you learn it of them?"[105]

This notion that Whitefield was under direction from Rome, was, of course, wrong. Neither Whitefield nor any of his associates were ever in confederation with the Roman Church. Garden's suspicion, however, went beyond the common paranoia of Spain's covert operations in the colonies. He saw, it seems, the vestiges of a Catholic mystical influence woven into Whitefield's words and actions. Garden recognized the overtly subjective elements in Whitefield and made the most logical conclusion, that their source was largely medieval Catholic mysticism. And on this score, he was right.

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[104] See Garden's argument against awakening faith and Justification occurring together in his letter to Whitefield, 8 April 1740 in Garden, *Six Letters*, 16-17.

[105] Alexander Garden to George Whitefield, 30 July 1740, in Ibid., 43.

Garden was not alone in this conclusion. Churchmen in England, who also feared the loss of religious hegemony due to Whitefield's popularity drew the same conclusions of Catholic influence. One of the most vocal opponents who recognized the similarities between Evangelical Pietists (commonly called "Methodists") and mystically oriented Catholics was Bishop George Lavington. In his work *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared* (1754) Lavington argued that Methodism and Catholicism were strikingly similar. The highly charged polemical nature of this work leaves much to be desired. Lavington often draws untenable conclusions based on non-binding points of similarity. His tendency to say that every point of similarity proves a Catholic relation or influence significantly weakens his argument. Notwithstanding this serious flaw, Lavington often succeeds in demonstrating that the subjective elements in both the Methodists and Catholics are often too similar to dismiss. His work demonstrates the commonality Church leaders perceived existed between Evangelical Pietists and Roman Catholicism. Lavington is a valuable source, not in his detailed comparisons, which are often skewed, but in his correct recognition of Catholic mysticism as a principal source of the enthusiastic activity permeating Whitefield's and Wesley's ministries.

Lavington emphasized that he does not attempt to compare the Methodists with *"the most wild and extravagant, the most ridiculous, strolling, fanatical, frantic, delirious, and mischievous of all the Saints on the Romish Communion,"* or else, he added, "the *Parallel* would not hold. . . ." Rather, he based his comparisons mainly on Roman Catholics who have been canonized by the Church. Most of the parallels are

drawn from the ministries of St. Francis, St. Dominic, and St. Ignatius.[106] Interestingly,

Francis and Dominic were founders of the Orders that Albrecht Ritschl claimed were the

major influences on Pietism (see chapter one), and Ignatius founded the Jesuit Order that

Commissary Garden frequently associated with Whitefield. More importantly, all three

men (Francis, Dominic, and Ignatius) were known for their mystical religiosity, and it is on

this point that Lavington makes his principal comparisons.

Lavington made it clear that he did not necessarily believe that Wesley and

Whitefield, the main subjects of his criticism, were in actual league with Rome, but he did

believe they were, if unintentionally, furthering its cause.[107]

> I would not be understood to accuse the *Methodists* directly of Popery; though I
> am persuaded they are doing the *Papists Work* for them, and agree with them in
> some of their Principles; ---designing only to shew how uniformly both act upon the
> *same Plan*, (as far as *Enthusiasm* can be said to carry on *any Plan*:) ---their Heads
> fill'd with much the same grand *Projects*, driven on in the same wild Manner; and
> wearing the same *Badge of Peculiarities* in their Tenets: ---not perhaps from
> *Compact* and Design; but a similar Configuration and Texture of *Brain*, or the
> Fumes of *Imagination* producing similar Effects.[108]

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[106] Lavington, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*, vol. 1, part 1, 7.

[107] For John Wesley's refutation of Lavington see "A Letter to the Author of 'The
Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared,'" and "Second Letter to the Author of
'The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared,'" in Wesley, *The Works of John
Wesley*, vol. 9, *Letters and Essays* (Zondervan edition), 1-14, 15-60. Wesley denies that
Methodism promotes popery. " I have now considered all the arguments you have
brought to prove that the Methodists are carrying on the work of Popery. And I am
persuaded, every candid man, who rightly weighs what has been said with any degree of
attention, will clearly see, not only that no one of those arguments is of any real force at
all, but that you do not believe yourself; you do not believe the conclusion which you
make as if you would prove: Only you keep close to your laudable resolution of throwing
as much dirt as possible" (58). He does, however, leave open the door concerning
Whitefield. "If you say, 'But I have proved the charge upon Mr. Whitefield;' admit you
have, (which I do not allow,) Mr. Whitefield is not the Methodists; no, nor the societies
under his care; they are not a third, perhaps not a tenth, part of the Methodists. What then
can excuse your ascribing their faults, were they proved, to the whole body?" (60).

[108] Lavington, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*, vol. 1, part 1, 8.

Though not necessarily "from Compact and Design" the strikingly similar enthusiastic spirit that existed in both Methodists and "Papists" caused Lavington, like Garden, to recognize the reason as more than happenstance.

Due to the scope of this study it will not be possible or profitable to catalogue the hundreds of similarities Lavington saw between the Methodists and Catholics. Since the main purpose here is not to refute or validate his conclusions but to show the extent to which some Anglican leaders viewed the origins of Evangelical pietistic behavior, I will limit the examples Lavington offers to those that best illustrate that point.

As to Whitefield's claim of having out-of-body experiences, Lavington wrote that "tales of this nature are so numerous among the *Popish Saints*, especially the *Female*, that some of their Lives consist of little else." He gives the example of Mary of Agreda who "had such Raptures, that she *sunk down to the Centre of her own Nothingness*," and of Magdalen of Pazzi whose "Life was almost one continued *Ecstasy*." He gives examples of men such as St. Alcantara, who at age six was often "*wholly absorpt in God, and carried* into Raptures." And, Lavington added, "he caused his Followers to be in an Ecstasy at the Sacrament, ---and often enjoyed the Presence of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and St. Francis, &c."[109]

As illustrated above, Whitefield and Wesley, some believed, demonstrated a Catholic mystical tendency in the Eucharist as a substitute for the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Early in his evangelical life Whitefield asserted that visions of Christ at the table were "exceedingly awful" [full of awe] at *certain places and times*. For

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[109] Ibid., 59.

example he wrote that especially in the early morning meetings "at Cripplegate, St. Ann's,

and Forster Lane, how often have we seen Jesus Christ crucified, and evidently set forth

before us!"[110] Lavington saw this as particularly Romish in that, he believed, it copied the

Catholic use of Eucharistic visions that were advertised as occurring only in certain places

for the purpose of attracting converts to a central locale of miraculous manifestations.[111]

> St. Teresa says, that in a "particular Monastery, the Building whereof she had
> negociated [sic] with God, --among other Favours to herself and Society, was the
> perceiving the Person of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament, so as to perceive visibly his
> Corporal Presence; so generally and ordinarily, that we found the Blessed Sacrament
> never had wrought such an Effect upon us in any Place, as here."[112]

Lavington also saw the Methodists' claims of immediate revelations as originating

in Catholic mysticism. "Mr. Whitefield, in particular, is ever flying upon the Wings of

Inspiration, and talking sublimely in the Apostolic Style." And, Lavington wrote, "As to

Papistical Pretensions in general to *Inspiration*, they are without Number or End."[113] For

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[110] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 88.

[111] This emphasis on specified visionary localities is still a prominent motif in the Catholic Church, especially as it relates to Marian Apparitions.

[112] Lavington, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*, vol. 1, part 2, 122-123; in the second volume of this work Lavington spends a great deal of space on what he sees as demonic associations both with Methodist and Catholic practices. He evidently saw Methodist and Catholic enthusiasm as sometimes having evil origins. Of Eucharistic visions he wrote the following: "*Gabr. Biel*, the famous *Popish Canonist*, owns, 'that their *Miracles* are sometimes effected by the *Operation of Devils* to deceive *disorderly Worshipers*;' and particularly, 'that the *Apparition of Christ in the Eucharaist* [sic] may be by the *Illusion of the Devil* to deceive and delude the Unwary.'" Lavington added, "and why may we not suspect the same in our *Visionary Methodists*, who have so often at the *Sacrament evidently seen Jesus Christ crucified before* them?" (vol. 2, part 3, 86).

[113] Ibid., vol. 1, part 1, 46, 49.

example, he points out, quoting from Bartholomaeus de Pisis' *Book of Conformities Between the Lives of Jesus Christ and St. Francis* (1510) that

> St. Francis was not only inspir'd himself in Teaching, but all the Rules of his Order were dictated by Heaven. He was a most wonderful Preacher, by virtue of the Holy Ghost. --All heard the Voice of Christ in the Air, saying, 'Francis, there is nothing of your own in your Rule, but all is mine.'"[114]

St. Ignatius Loyola as much as claimed direct divine inspiration for his work and words.[115]

"St. *Ignatius*," Lavington wrote, "was carried on by a strong *Inspiration*, and guidance of the *Holy Ghost*, which spoke through him." Several Popes (Paul III, Julius III, and Gregory XIII) espoused Ignatius' direct inspiration, including his efforts to found the Jesuit Order. The same inspiration has at times been recognized by Catholics for the founding of other Orders including the Dominicans and Franciscans.[116]

Lavington saw the Methodist's emphasis on suffering as connected to Catholic enthusiasm. After listing several statements from Whitefield from various sections of his journal that show his strong desire to receive opposition, Lavington wrote that "the same *Love* of Contempt, Abuse, and Injury, the same *ardent Thirst* after Persecution and Martyrdom, possessed their *Competitors* [papists] in propagating *true Religion*." He then compared Whitefield with various Catholic mystics. Quoting again from de Pisis' *Book of*

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[114] Ibid., 50; Lavington used the 1590 edition of de Pisis' work. He pointed out that the 1510 edition had many more "*extravagant Fables and Blasphemies*" than the 1590 edition. Also, Lavington wrote of the 1510 edition, it had "the *Licence [sic] and Approbation of the General Chapter of the Franciscans*, as written by the *Favour of God, and wanting no Correction*." Ibid., vol. 1, part 2, 21.

[115] Ibid., vol. 1, part 2, 81.

[116] Ibid., vol. 1, part 1, 50.

Conformities Between the Lives of Jesus Christ and St. Francis on St. Francis and from

Ribaden's *Lives of the Saints* on St. Ignatius and St. Dominic:

> St. *Francis* wishes, and gives Orders, that he may be disgraced by all.---He was
> not able to rest for the burning Desire of *Martyrdom*.
> St. *Ignatius* desired to be mock'd and laugh'd at by all;---in the Fervour of his
> Mind, would have gone about the Streets naked, and like a Fool, that the Boys of
> the *Town* might have made Sport with him, and thrown Dirt upon him.---St.
> *Dominic* desired to be contemned, and trampled upon by all the World;---took great
> Pleasure in visiting the *Villages*, where he was affronted and abused; ---had a
> Longing to die for *Christ* by the most exquisite and bitter Pains.[117]

To Bishop Lavington the overt desire for suffering indicated the presence of a

mystically driven disinterested love. Like papists, he wrote, Methodists "must *desire*,

love, and *pray* for *ill Usage, Persecution, Martyrdom*," and, he added, hinting at what he

saw as their similar tendency toward disinterested love, "*Death and Hell.*" They are like

"*Papistical Mystics*, and others," which have "such an excessive and *disinterested Love of*

God . . . as should oblige us to love him, though we were sure of being *damned*; and even

to keep up that Love during the whole eternal State of *Damnation*[.] . . ."[118]

Another mystical tenet Lavington pinned on Methodists was the notion of ultimate

union with God. As noted earlier, Whitefield did not adopt a pure notion of such, but

because of certain statements tending in that direction, critics such as Lavington picked up

on them and concluded a Catholic connection. It is interesting that he saw a similarity

between the mystical tenet of purgation and the Methodist tenet of New Birth "pangs,"

both necessary precursors to a union of essence.

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[117] Ibid., 22-23.

[118] Ibid., 20, 26.

For, it seems, through such *painful Lustrations and purgative Fires*, our *Methodists* arrive at *Perfection, Visions of God and Angels, Ingulphments into the Deity, Union with God, yea, and being God*.[119]

Whitefield made statements that could be construed to infer a mystical union of essence. On one occasion in 1741 he wrote to a friend in Charleston that he longed "for that happy time, when we shall be swallowed up in the vision and full fruition of the glorious Godhead." And on the same day he wrote asking the overseer at Bethesda, "Is your soul swallowed up in God?"[120] Whether such words meant actual union of essence (which I do not believe they did, at least not to the extent commonly used by the mystics) is a debate beyond the scope of this study. Well within the scope for our purposes is that whatever was actually meant, it is clear that past indulgence into mystical associations and writings had a profound impact on the religious language used, and that language caused well read observers such as Lavington to make the connection.[121]

Meshed within the themes of suffering, visions, and immediacy was a permeating desire in Pietists such as Whitefield to somehow experience an authenticating primitiveness of the Christian faith. This desire culminated in an Apostolic and, to a lesser degree, Messianic complex that is evident in Whitefield's vocabulary. As Harry Stout has

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[119] Ibid., vol. 2, part 3, 207.

[120] George Whitefield to Mr. J. B., 17 February 1741, and George Whitefield to Mr. B. and his wife at Bethesda, 17 February 1741, *Works*, 1: 244-245.

[121] Lavington saw union in essence connected with the role of the pope as the vicar of Christ and with his power of canonization. Popes, he wrote, exercised themselves as "God-makers." He then tied this tradition to Greek antiquity. Quoting Plutarch: "The *Thasians* had determined to *make him . . . God*, and erect *Temples to his Divinity*; and sending *Ambassadors* to acquaint him with it, he asked them, whether *their City could make Gods of Men?* They replying, That it *could*; Go then, saith he, make *yourselves* such, and then I shall believe that you can *make a God of me also*." Lavington, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*, vol. 2, part 3, 216.

written of Whitefield, "biblical characters became 'types' or models that provided a pattern for his own image." And, he added, "in a sense he *became* the apostles he embodied." This apostolic personification was particularly true in relation to the Apostle Paul. Whitefield's letters and journals are filled with Pauline phraseology. Of this Stout wrote, "he virtually adopted Paul's persona for his own." [122]

Lavington saw roots of Catholic mysticism in this as well. Of Whitefield in particular he wrote, "one of their *Preachers* especially, and sometimes others of them, are so *presumptuous*, as to be fond of *comparing* themselve[s] with *Patriarchs*, *Prophets*, and *Apostles*; and even with *Christ* himself." [123] In response to Whitefield's justification of field preaching that, he argued, originated with Christ and the Apostles, Lavington wrote, "and will you never leave off your *inexcusable Pride* in comparing yourself to *Christ*, and his *Apostles?* Will you still persist in this *Presumptuous Sin?*" [124] Of a Catholic parallel he cited Bartholomaeus de Pisis who applied, "most of the magnificent *Predictions in the Bible* to St. *Francis*, making him better than several of the *Apostles*, and even superior to

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[122] Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*, 56.

[123] Lavington, *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*, vol. 1, part 2, 20.

[124] Ibid., ix.; in this selection Lavington tries to make the case in a letter to Whitefield that his field preaching was somehow connected to a Catholic, especially Franciscan, influence. The fact is, however, Whitefield's use of field preaching had a more practical origin. He resorted to it because by-and-by churches refused their pulpits to him and the crowds were so enormous no building could readily accommodate them.

Christ as to *Miracles*."[125] Lavington quoted a Franciscan saying to further illustrate his

point: ". . . *Jesus Christ* saved the World *before* St. *Francis* came, but he *afterwards*."[126]

At the close of his two volume polemic against Whitefield and Wesley, Lavington

summarized what he believed were the chief characteristics of a Methodist's enthusiastic

religion.

> [He must] talk much of *Impulses, Feelings, Raptures*, and *Ecstasies*. But above all,
> let him boast of *Inspirations, divine Missions, familiar and amorous Conversations
> with God*. . . . By Degrees he becomes *equal to Prophets, Apostles, or Christ
> himself*. Is intitled [sic] to *Visions, Revelations, Prophecies*, and *Miracles*. . . . [He
> must go through] *the Pains of Hell, Damnation, and Hell itself*. . . . But having
> undergone these *fiery Lustrations*, he hath *Apparitions of God and Angels* coming
> to carry him to *Heaven*; He is *united to God*; he is *plunged into God*; he is *All
> God*.[127]

It was a mere "*trifling Circumstance*," Lavington sarcastically concluded, that all of this

lacked any scriptural foundation for belief, "but that *Defect* is sufficiently supplied from

Heathenism and Popery."[128]

As the above examples indicate, Bishop Lavington, like Commissary Garden, believed that

there was more to the sentiment oriented enthusiasm of the Methodists than simple sorrow

for sin or joy over forgiveness from it. Certainly Peter Tailfer, William Norris, Alexander

Garden, and later George Lavington read more into these demonstrations than truth

warranted. Yet, it is clear that their suspicions were credible in so far as they recognized

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[125] Ibid., 21.

[126] Ibid., 25; Lavington does not cite the source of this quotation.

[127] Ibid., vol. 2, part 3, 272-273.

[128] Ibid., 273.

that the most natural source in the eighteenth century religious world of such expression was medieval Catholic mysticism.

Even with the strong confrontation led by Garden against Whitefield in Charleston, Whitefield experienced considerable success there. Garden made a vigorous effort to silence him through sermons, published letters, and by holding an ecclesiastical trial at St. Philip's, which came to nothing due in part to Whitefield's protest that Garden had no jurisdiction over him and to his resistance to follow-up hearings the next year.[129] Garden admitted as much in a letter to the Bishop of London complaining that the suspension sentence pronounced on Whitefield from the ecclesiastical trial "had no effect upon him. . . ." "Whitefield" for all practical purposes, Garden lamented, "escaped without Censure."[130]

In spite of all Garden could do, Whitefield's style of Evangelical Pietism with its subjective and objective elements made a considerable mark on Charleston and the surrounding lowcountry region. One need only read the scores of letters he wrote to new

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[129] Whitefield attended the first phase of his trial in Charleston (1740) but did not appear at the second phase one year later. In September 1740, while in route from Charleston to Boston, Whitefield wrote the Bishop of London asking whether or not Garden had jurisdiction over him. "I only desire your Lordship's explicit opinion and determination, whether Mr. G----, (supposing he hath power over his own clergy,) has authority to erect such a court to arraign me, who belong to the province of Georgia." George Whitefield to the Right Reverend Father in God, Edmund Lord Bishop of London, [no day given] September 1740, *Works*, 1 : 206. Due to Whitefield's belief that no such jurisdiction existed, he ignored the censure leveled against him by the ecclesiastical court. For an account of the trial and the censure leveled against Whitefield see David Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina, from its First Settlement in 1670 to the Year 1808*, 2 vols. (Newberry, South Carolina, 1858; reprint, Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1959, 1971), 2: 8-11 (see especially 9n-10n).

[130] Alexander Garden to Bishop of London, 1 February 1750, Fulham Papers, Bishop of London, 1710-1767, no. 290.

converts and other supporters in the lowcountry after the showdown with Garden to know that his influence upon many was substantial.[131] Other reports indicate considerable success there as well. Whitefield wrote in his journal in July 1740 that "God . . . will yet shew that He hath much people in Charleston, and the countries round about."[132] He wrote to John Wesley the next month that "many in Charles-Town, I believe are called of God. You may now find a christian, without searching the town as with a candle." And, he added, "Mr. G_____ [Garden] is less furious, at least in public. He hath expended all his strength, and finds he cannot prevail."[133] In February 1741 during his second return voyage to England Whitefield wrote to a minister friend in Edinburgh, Scotland that "a great work is begun in *America*, at *Georgia*, *South-Carolina*, *New-York*, *Philadelphia*, and *New-England*." And he added, "GOD has confirmed the word by spiritual miracles and signs." This in spite of the fact that he was "lately bound over at Charles-Town in South-Carolina, for libelling [sic] the clergy."[134]

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[131] For example see letters written to lowcountry converts and supporters during his second return voyage (January/February 1741) to England. See *Works*, 1: 235-248, 253.

[132] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 442.

[133] George Whitefield to John Wesley, 25 August 1740, *Works*, 1: 205.

[134] George Whitefield to the Rev. Mr. D----, 16 February 1741, Ibid., 242. When one considers the relatively large contributions for the orphanage Whitefield received from Charlestonians and other lowcountry residents, it is understandable why he would see his ministry there as a success. During his 1740 tour in New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania where he preached 58 times to crowds that ranged from four to twenty thousand people he collected around "five hundred pounds sterling, in money and provisions, for the Orphan-house at Georgia." George Whitefield to Mr. G---- L----, 22 May 1740, Ibid., 179. Five hundred pounds sterling is obviously a considerable amount. Yet, in a short period in Charleston alone he collected, prior to his trip north, seventy pounds sterling for the orphanage. "Shortly I shall go northward, to preach the gospel and collect fresh contributions for my orphans. GOD has given me an earnest of what he will

The confrontation with Whitefield had the opposite effect Garden intended. At least Whitefield believed this to be the case. "I have appeared thrice in open court, before the commissary and some of his clergy," he wrote in a July 1740 letter. "Many, I believe, are really pricked to the heart. The commissary's detaining me here, has much tended to the furtherance of the gospel."[135] This may have been especially true concerning the lowcountry elite. We know that the Carolina elite had grown to dislike ecclesiastical courts. Garden had conducted one other trial against a clergyman for drunkenness which ran into considerable financial cost. He explained to the Bishop of London in 1735 that Carolina "Gentlemen of the common Law are . . . professed Enemies to Ecclesiastical Courts. . . ."[136] We also know that numerous of the elite class in Charleston, especially dissenters, supported Whitefield's efforts.

Even though Garden's censure did not have an immediate effect, it is important to note that Whitefield did eventually issue a recantation of sorts to some of the criticisms leveled against him. In a 1748 letter he acknowledged to Rev. Mr. S---- from South Carolina,

> Alas! alas! In how many things have I judged and acted wrong.---I have been too rash and hasty in giving characters, both of places and persons. Being fond of scripture language, I have often used a style too apostolical, and at the same time I have been too bitter in my zeal. Wild-fire has been mixed with it, and I find that I frequently wrote and spoke in my own spirit, when I thought I was writing and speaking by the assistance of the spirit of GOD. I have likewise too much made inward impressions my rule of acting. . . . By these things I have given some wrong

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do in *America*, by the large collection that was made at *Charles Town.* . . ." George Whitefield to Mr. Wal----., 26 March 1740, Ibid., 157.

[135] George Whitefield to Mr. G---- L----, 18 July 1740, Ibid., 200.

[136] Quoted in Hawkins, "Alexander Garden: The Commissary in Church and State," 134.

touches to GOD's ark, and hurt the blessed cause I would defend, and also stirred up needless opposition.

He continued in the letter to thank God for showing him the error of his way and for "ripening" his judgment so as to "correct and amend" his "mistakes."[137] Nevertheless, seeds of mystical and pietistic religious forms had already been sewn in the lowcountry almost a decade before, and they would render a harvest.

The controversy between Garden and Whitefield happened in the midst of the First Great Awakening in America, of which George Whitefield was the primary mover.[138] Historians have commonly downplayed the overall impact of that movement in the lower South. This analysis is valid in so far as the South did not experience the almost earth shattering religious awakenings as did the middle and northeastern colonies. On the other

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[137] George Whitefield to Rev. Mr. S----, 24 June 1748, *Works*, 2: 144. In this same letter Whitefield made a most interesting comment to the effect that he was just finishing his abridgment of William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. Whitefield stated that in this abridgment he "endeavoured to gospelize" the work--yet another evidence of the subjective/objective tension he operated in even as he is attempting to further distance himself from the subjective side. Lavington revealed that the recipient of this letter is a South Carolina minister; see Lavington, *The Methodists and Papists Compared*, vol. 1, part 2, xvii. The identification of this minister is not altogether clear; it possibly refers to his friend and supporter Rev. Josiah Smith of the Independent Circular Church in Charleston.

[138] For a good review of pertinent literature through 1989 on Whitefield's role in American revivalism see Jon Butler, "Whitefield in America: A Two Hundred Fiftieth Commemoration," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 113 (October 1989): 515-526. Two key works on Whitefield that came out after Butler's review are Harry Stout's *The Divine Dramatist* (1991) and Frank Lambert's *"Pedlar in Divinity": George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). It should be noted that Jon Butler discounts the notion that there was a unified and definable First Great Awakening. See Jon Butler, "The Plural Origins of American Revivalism," chap. in *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), 164-193; also see his "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction," *Journal of American History* 69 (September 1982): 305-325.

hand, such analysis is at best incomplete in that it does not recognize that religious influences of this sort can take on many different forms. For example, in much of the country the First Great Awakening had a dual effect of harmony and division. On the one hand it tended to foster cooperation between denominations that held common cause with Evangelicalism proper. On the other hand, much divisiveness ensued between revivalists and anti-revivalists within and without denominational lines.[139]

In some ways the same was true of the lowcountry South, especially in and around Charleston. The greatest degree of negative reaction to Evangelical Pietism came from within the Anglican establishment. Much of this was due to the threat church leaders anticipated from a bypass or usurpation of institutional structures. Although Whitefield found more friends within dissenter churches--not surprising since these churches more readily opened their pulpits to him and were already in agreement with his Calvinistic views--the elite Anglicans, were surprisingly silent in any structured opposition, if indeed they opposed him to any degree at all. Granted, there were several anti-Whitefield pieces (several anonymous) in the *South-Carolina Gazette* during and after the initial controversy, some of which were most likely written by Garden, one under the pseudonym "Arminius."[140] Also, several Anglican clergy came to the Commissary's defense, some of

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[139] For a portrayal of this type of countercultural Evangelicalism in the Revolutionary Era see Richard Beeman and Rhys Isaac, "Cultural Conflict and Social Change in the Revolutionary South: Lunenburg County, Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 46 (November 1980): 525-550.

[140] For the Garden's "Arminius" article see *South-Carolina Gazette*, 1 February 1740, 9 February 1740. For Josiah Smith's answer to Arminius see Ibid., 16 February 1739/40. For examples of other entries against Whitefield in the same paper see 12 July 1740, 8 August 1740, 16 October 1740, 19 September 1741, 1 August 1743, 12 November 1744, 19 November 1744, 17 February 1745/46. There were some pro-Whitefield letters as well, mostly by Reverend Josiah Smith. See Ibid., 23 August 1740, 22 March 1740, 18

whom may have served in the actual trial. But that beyond this there was not an

organized show of support for Garden against this "Emissary of Rome" is surprising. It

was not because elite communicants lacked the ecclesiastical power to do something. In

South Carolina boards of commissioners technically had more local ecclesiastical authority

than the Bishop of London, and one of their duties was to act against "unreasonable

prejudices taken against" the clergy.[141] As Donald Mathews has written, southern colonial

Anglican priests were "an important link in the colonial chain of authority" and were

"protected by law from 'disparagement,' lest authority itself be disparaged."[142] This being

the case, it is at least unusual that Garden, who was not only the rector of the most

prestigious parish in the South but also the commissary for the Bishop of London, was

unable to effectively influence lowcountry Carolinians to avoid this religious "Wolf," as he

called him.[143] One can only wonder whether some saw Garden and not Whitefield as the

libeler.

July 1740, 25 July 1740, 23 August 1740, 30 August 1740, 2 October 1740, 9 October
1740, 22 January 1741. Some consecutive weekly entries are continuations of a single
letter. One of the pro-Whitefield entries is by a "T. Z." (25 July 1740), and one placed
there by the editor Peter Timothy (25 July 1740). Timothy also ran updates (probably
sent in to the paper) of Whitefield's activities. The following appears in the
aforementioned 25 July 1740 edition. "At all which Places he preache'd with very general
Acceptance, and with such Flame and Power" which was able "to conquer the Prejudices
conceiv'd against him. . . ." He also ran glowing accounts of Whitefield's successes in
New England. See 6 November 1740 and 13 November 1740.

[141] David Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, 2: 7.

[142] Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: The University of Chicago
Press, 1977), 5.

[143] It seems that few saw Whitefield as the great threat Garden believed he was. Garden,
for example, had even associated Whitefield with the radical millenarian Dutartre family of
South Carolina whose leaders were arrested and executed by civil magistrates in 1724.
See Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 442. If authorities had believed Garden's

Garden's warnings did not go far, it seems, in preventing the people, elite or otherwise, from hearing and supporting the young evangelist. The overall positive response to Whitefield's preaching may not have produced as visible and immediate emotional outburst (although there are accounts plenty of such in the lowcountry) in comparison to other regions where the concentration of inhabitants were less genteel, but an entrenchment of mystical and pietistic thought did occur which over the next decade manifested itself in surprising ways. In fact, the subjective religious elements that led to confrontation with Garden would later have an opposite, even harmonious, effect.

Alan Heimert in *Religion and the American Mind* has argued that the primary difference between Garden and Whitefield was the latter's doctrinal emphasis on the sovereignty of God and especially the New Birth.[144] These objective evangelical tenets preached by Whitefield certainly played a major part in the controversy, but underneath them was the subjective element of medieval Catholic mysticism that Garden recognized and feared as a threat to church establishment in South Carolina. Mysticism has always bypassed liturgical and doctrinal trappings in the quest for spiritual reality, and it has usually done so irrespective of established authority. If one characteristic of mystical and pietistic spirituality stands out above any other it is its ability to cross virtually any denominational line and strike at the heart of those who want more out of outward religion than they are getting. And once men of different religious traditions share their

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assessment, they most likely would not have allowed Whitefield to continue preaching in the province.

[144] Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 36-37.

common bond of spiritual sentiment, unity in any number of areas may occur.[145] Such, as

will be argued in the following two chapters, was the case in lowcountry South Carolina.

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[145] It should be noted that the subjective element in pietistic and mystical thought was not
the sole impetus for spiritual unity. The objective tenets of the common Christian gospel
also provided for men such as Whitefield a strong basis for spiritual consensus with those
from different denominational backgrounds. This was no doubt true for many of the
lowcountry recipients of their message as well. Thus, a continuation of an
objective/subjective motif.

Chapter Three

Whence the Harmony?: Pietistic Transcendence as a Co-Facilitator of
Consensus in South Carolina

Philosophy, baptized
In the pure fountain of eternal love,
Has eyes indeed; and viewing all she sees
As meant to indicate a God to man,
Gives *him* his praise, and forfeits not her own.
(William Cowper, "The Task")

When John Wesley and George Whitefield played the role of pietistic and mystical transmitters, a considerable and expected backlash of controversy emerged mainly from those who were either seeking leverage to wage political discontent, as in the case of Patrick Tailfer and company, or from those who were commissioned to do the opposite in maintaining established authority, as in the cases of William Stephens, William Norris, and Alexander Garden. The latter group's concerns were valid in that the authority of religious establishment, and to an extent Crown prerogative, were threatened. This was especially true for Charleston since the Bishop of London's commissary Alexander Garden, with all the effort he could muster, failed to stem Whitefield's influence. But as seen in the last chapter, the evangelical message couched in a subjective presentation drew a positive response from many provincials. The very thing that caused confrontation from certain segments of authority elicited approbation from the rest. This approbation, I argue in this chapter, would in the long run contribute to political consensus in colonial South Carolina.

Robert M. Weir in his 1969 article "'The Harmony We Were Famous for': An Interpretation of Prerevolutionary South Carolina Politics" concluded that this harmony emerged in part due to a recognition of inward human frailty among mid-eighteenth century Carolina provincial elites. They recognized that intrinsic to the preservation of personal independence was belief in the limitations of human nature. That is, an enduring personal independence required a parallel recognition that man, left to himself, would eventually succumb to reckless human passions and lose both property and independence. The individual who would preserve his landed independence must exercise self discipline over these passions. But he was not expected to go it alone. Government, especially the Commons House of Assembly made up of gentry peers, played a part. Its role was not only to protect from outsiders, but from the inward passions on individual subjects as well. Thus, ideal government served both as a check of inward passion and as a deterrent to outward aggression.[1]

Weir also pointed out that a particular social dynamic of common concerns contributed to this harmony. Between 1738 and 1742 the ever present concern of slave revolts as well as threats from Indian and Spanish aggression, and concern over religious zeal spawned by the Great Awakening caused lowcountry gentry to pool their efforts for preservation, an action that afforded itself to a considerable display of political harmony.[2]

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[1] Robert M. Weir, "'The Harmony We Were Famous for' : An Interpretation of Prerevolutionary South Carolina Politics," in Weir, ed., *"The Last of American Freemen": Studies in the Political Culture of the Colonial and Revolutionary South* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986), 2-3.

[2] Ibid., 10-13.

But this harmony owed its existence to more than local dynamics. Its direction came, Weir argued, from the political philosophy of "country ideology." Adherence to the principles of country ideology, at least as far as South Carolina was concerned, came first from the influence of Anthony Ashley Cooper (Earl of Shaftesbury) and John Locke in their Fundamental Constitutions, Carolina's founding proprietary document. The more immediate and pervasive promulgator of the country ideal came later from the very popular writings of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon in their *Cato's Letters* and *The Independent Whig*, which had been in circulation in one form or another since the early 1720s. The philosophy that emanated from these types of writings stressed an individualism that certain elite Carolinians, especially those who had not attained a coveted seat on the Royal Council, found exceptionally appealing. After all, councilmen were more or less beholden to royal instructions and could not readily aspire to the coveted independence stressed by country ideology. As long as the Commons could guarantee protection of private property to the landed gentry, independence from over-reaching royal prerogative was possible. Country ideology created a "solid front" within a practically factionless mid-eighteenth century Carolina Commons that reverberated into a lasting harmonious political and social ethos right through the revolutionary and into the early national and antebellum eras.[3]

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[3] Ibid., 7-8, 14-15, 17-22 (quotation 22), 29-31. It should be noted that this stifled view of the Royal Council was not always present in other colonies. In New York, for example, this "forgotten branch of colonial government," Jessica Kross has shown, was a highly prized position throughout the colonial period and was not necessarily in contradistinction to the country ideal. See Jessica Kross, "'Patronage Most Ardently Sought': The New York Council, 1665-1775," in *Power and Status: Officeholding in Colonial America*, ed., Bruce C. Daniels (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), 205-231, (quotation 206).

Such consensus, because it centered around what became a "hypertensive independence" and "abrasive individualism" may explain, Weir asserted, why Carolina's leading men, especially during the revolutionary period, "pursued apparently erratic political courses that are impossible to classify accurately under traditional rubrics." And, he suggested, the well known posture of consensus characterized by John C. Calhoun's dominant leadership during the early and middle nineteenth century had roots in the same harmony that began a century before.[4]

Weir's thesis of harmony resulting from local common concerns and country ideology serves as a directive for the analysis that is to follow. In the main I agree with his overall thesis that a general spirit of political and social consensus emerged around the mid-century mark and that country ideology played a significant role. I also agree that lowcountry elites who saw in the Great Awakening a real threat to stability likely used that threat as an impetus to unity. Where I take exception seems minor on the surface, but that exception tends to loom large in its overall interpretive consequences, shedding new light on how and why the harmony came when it did.

Weir asserted that by around 1750 religious toleration was present and that it was so, in part, because religious zeal marked by the First Great Awakening had abated. This abatement presumably came as the elite members of lowcountry society took on a defensive posture against enthusiasm's divisive elements for the sake of preserving unity and independence. At the same time, the ever growing dissenter presence in the social and political realm necessitated cooperation among religious parties, including the established church. Assemblyman and merchant Thomas Smith among others serves as an example of

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[4] Weir, "'The Harmony We Were Famous for,'" 25, 29, 28, 30-31.

this toleration in that he was willing to partake at the Lord's table in a dissenting church as much as in his own Anglican congregation.[5]

Weir's presentation of the religious dynamics is in the main correct. Greater religious toleration did emerge at the mid-century mark and there had been concern early on over the potential divisiveness associated with religious awakening. I do not believe, however, that the abatement of religious zeal served primarily as a contributor to toleration.[6] In fact, at the very height of that zeal's introduction (1739-1740) a recognizable toleration began to emerge, a toleration that in time would become a contributing factor to the harmony that would later dominate in the 1750s. Moreover, the transcendent quality inherent in the subjective, less creedally oriented religious forms found in pietistic and mystical expressions became a means by which the harmony could germinate and eventually blossom.

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[5] Ibid., 10, 13.

[6] Whitefield's criticism of certain slave owners who were cruel to and did not seek to christianize their slaves did cause concern over the evangelist's ministry among Carolina's elite. Alexander Garden specifically pointed out this concern. Later when Hugh Bryan, Carolina slave owner and Whitefield convert, acted out a biblical imagination of himself as Moses and his slaves the Israelites in bondage, he not only almost drowned himself trying to part the waters of a river, he also came close to being jailed for attempting to incite a slave riot. For an in-depth treatment of Hugh Bryan see Harvey H. Jackson, "Hugh Bryan and the Evangelical Movement in Colonial South Carolina," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (October 1986): 594-614; also see Alan Gallay, "Impassioned Disciples: The Great Awakening, George Whitefield, and the Reform of Slavery," chap. in *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 30-54. As divisive as pietistic religion could be in relation to already tension filled social institutions like slavery, as Bryan's case aptly illustrates, it does not follow that the religious awakening in the lowcountry created an overall divisive atmosphere. In fact, as will be shown in a later chapter, pietistic religion actually helped to facilitate the advancement of the peculiar institution.

As mentioned by Weir, the country ideal in relation to Carolina's proprietary government came first through Shaftesbury's and Locke's Fundamental Constitutions. That document placed special emphasis on religious toleration. As a result, the Carolina lowcountry from its inception attracted a considerable array of non-Anglican Protestants such as French Huguenots, who came after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), as well as Baptists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Lutherans, and Independents. For all that dissenters gained during the early eighteenth century politically, such as a growing presence in the Commons, their successes only added to the religious tension, at least from the Anglican perspective. Anglicans saw a strong dissenter presence as threatening to their church's already precarious position and acted accordingly. Thus, for all that the Fundamental Constitutions did toward attracting dissenters to South Carolina, once settled, those dissenters, especially after 1704 when the Anglican Church became the established religion, found that the toleration ideals promised, did little toward advancing any authentic religious harmony between them and Anglicans.

A strong case can be made, as Weir does, that the more direct influence toward harmony came through other country ideologues, especially John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. The introduction of their writings in the early 1720s, especially *The Independent Whig* and *Cato's Letters*, had a profound impact on Carolina's elite and no doubt helped to facilitate their common cause toward becoming full fledged English country gentlemen. With this, I do not take issue. But as implied above, and as stated more directly here, the harmony needed within the religious realm could hardly have been realized apart from the introduction of Evangelical Pietism.

With the emphasis in the last chapter on the Catholic origins of Evangelical

Pietism's more subjective elements, it would seem at first glance that country ideology,

especially as developed by Trenchard and Gordon, could not mix with that form of

religious expression. After all, *The Independent Whig* and *Cato's Letters* demonstrate

considerable paranoia over Jacobite advances in England. Country ideologues have

seldom been shy about employing the papist boogey in defiance of any pretense toward

Stuart resurgence. In addition, Trenchard and Gordon were well known for their distrust

of religious enthusiasm in general. Thus, one could legitimately doubt the possibility of a

lasting camaraderie between pietistic religion and their brand of country ideology. Such

may be a first impression, but it is not altogether a correct one.

Pietism's tendency for forming small group conventicles is well known. Less

known is the connection between the forming of such conventicles and the promulgation

of country opposition thought. For example, various particulars of country thought came

from themes already developed in the Anglican conventicles, especially the Societies for

the Reformation of Manners (S.R.M.) The S.R.M.'s emphasis on corruption in

government, Henry Rack has written, "left a legacy of moral reforming rhetoric which

became part of the stock in trade of opposition 'country' politicians for much of the

eighteenth century." And, he added, "there was a certain congruity of sentiments between

the propaganda of such politicians and evangelical religious reformers."[7] Not only does

this statement support the proposition that there existed a defined compatibility between

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[7] Henry Rack, "Religious Societies and the Origins of Methodism," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38 (October 1987): 589.

adherents of Pietism and those of country ideology, it also shows that the two had very

similar goals and in one sense utilized each other to reach them.

In order to elucidate this similarity further it will be necessary to examine the

particular type of country ideology Trenchard and Gordon espoused. Compared to the

more Tory oriented country ideal as promulgated by Bolingbroke, *The Independent Whig*

and *Cato's Letters* were very Lockean in their orientation. In contrast to most country

categories, Trenchard and Gordon emphasized an array of Lockean precepts. They

espoused such issues as the "Laws of Nature and Reason," natural rights, government as a

"Trust," and the non-hierarchical view of society.[8] Isaac Kramnick has asserted that

> Thomas Gordon . . . made Locke's argument the core of his *Essay on Government*. Men left the state of nature and set up governments because 'confusion arose from men being judges in their own cause, and their own avengers.' This common power, or civil government, to be justly instituted, must have the consent of the people. 'The fountain and original of all just power must be from the people.'[9]

Leonard W. Levy and Alfred Young reiterate this point and add that Trenchard and

Gordon were largely responsible for taking Locke to the common man.

> The writings on political theory by the great John Locke were preeminent, of course, and the basis too of much of Trenchard and Gordon. But the common people or newspaper public did not read formal political theory. Trenchard and Gordon, who were political journalists, popularized Locke and radical Whig ideas for readers on both sides of the Atlantic.[10]

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[8] Marie P. McMahon, *The Radical Whigs, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon: Libertarian Loyalists to the New House of Hanover* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1990), 106. McMahon asserts that Trenchard and Gordon are more driven by Whig vs. Tory than country vs. court issues.

[9] Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), 118.

[10] David L. Jacobson, ed., *The English Libertarian Heritage: From the Writings of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon in "The Independent Whig" and "Cato's Letters"* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965), vii. This work is a selected

Some have argued that because Trenchard and Gordon were beholden to Locke's philosophy they cannot be considered legitimate promulgators of country ideology. Marie McMahon for example has written that "'Cato' is distinguishable from the Country ideologues because Trenchard and Gordon . . . endorse . . . Lockean principles." And, she added, "'Cato' can not be an exemplary Country ideologue and voice and echo Lockean ideology at the same time."[11] Although McMahon is correct in showing their deviation from past country thought by their more Whiggish and Lockean bent, it does not necessarily follow that they disqualify as representatives of a country ideal. Be that as it may, the important point for our concern is that Lockean thought was a clear point of differentiation between Trenchard and Gordon and other country opposition writers.

One may reasonably question how this Lockean connection could possibly favor a pietistic influence. After all, Locke was an outspoken critic of religious enthusiasm as well. In his famed *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke dedicated an entire chapter against religious enthusiasm. Enthusiastic religion was particularly loathsome to Locke because in essence, it laid reason aside and sought to establish "revelation without it." In so doing it eliminated "both reason and revelation, and substitutes in the room of them the ungrounded fancies of a man's own brain," and is dangerous in that man mistakenly "assumes them for a foundation both of opinion and

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collection of *The Independent Whig* and *Cato's Letters*. All quotations from *The Independent Whig* and *Cato's Letters* are from this collection.

[11] McMahon, *The Radical Whigs, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon*, 111. McMahon's view is opposite that of J.G.A. Pocock in his "Machiavelli, Harrington and English Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly* 22 (October 1965): 549-583.

conduct."[12] And, like Whitefield's and Wesley's detractors, Locke elucidated on the similarities of enthusiasm and Romanism.[13] With such a critique, it would seem improbable that those of a pietistic or mystical bent would count Locke an ally to their purposes. Yet, many have done exactly that.

Jonathan Edwards, for example, drew considerably from Locke's philosophical system and applied it to the American religious landscape. To Edwards, America was in a sense a unique Lockean *tabula rasa* upon which the Holy Spirit could write, as Alan Heimert has noted, his "new ideas."[14] Moreover, a careful examination of Edward's theological system reveals that his "analysis of regeneration reflected his acquaintance with and reformulations of Lockean psychology. . . ." But Edwards did not so much construct a philosophical justification of the New Birth in his use of Locke as much as he simply borrowed Lockean language to describe it.[15] The reason Edwards and other revivalists could borrow from Locke was the latter's emphasis on experiential sensation. This is key to understanding pietistic approbation of Lockean thought. For many revivalists, Locke's language of sensation provided a sort of philosophical justification for emphasis on the experiential elements of the New Birth.

But Locke provided more than language and a parallel structure from which religious experimentalism could claim a philosophical basis. Locke's critique of

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[12] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, vol. 2, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1959), 430.

[13] Ibid., 450.

[14] Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), 97.

[15] Ibid., 41.

enthusiasm itself provided revivalists a means to potentially use him to their advantage. A

close reading of Locke's criticism of enthusiastic religion reveals that the philosopher had

a great deal in common with pietistic and mystical forms. For example, *"Reason"* to

Locke was *"natural revelation"* whereby God "communicates . . . truth . . . within the

reach of . . . natural faculties. . . ." Locke stated further that *"revelation is natural reason*

enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately; which," he

continued, "reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they

come from God."[16] Thus, Locke argued not against extra-biblical revelation, but in a real

sense, for it. He clearly allowed for an immediate revelational communication from God

to man.

The problem with enthusiasts, according to Lock, was not that they claimed

immediate revelation, but that they did not verify its authenticity by natural reason.

Locke wrote that senses and reason, or what he called the "natural ways of knowledge,"

were

> the greatest assurances we can possibly have of anything, unless where God
> immediately reveals it to us: and there too our assurance can be no greater than our
> knowledge is, that it *is* a revelation from God.[17]

And he explained,

> some have been very apt to pretend to revelation, and to persuade themselves that
> they are under the peculiar guidance of heaven in their actions and opinions,
> especially in those of them which they cannot account for by the ordinary methods of
> knowledge and principles of reason.[18]

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[16] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2: 431.

[17] Ibid., 420.

[18] Ibid., 431.

Locke believed that when God "illuminates the mind with supernatural light, he does not," consequently, "extinguish that which is natural."[19] Thus, he argued that the delusion comes, not because enthusiasts believe that God communicates to their minds, but because they fail to allow reason to referee those communications.

In addition to this warning against any pretense of revelation apart from reason, Locke asserted that true revelation had its essence in natural reason. For Locke, reason and revelation were of the same substance. While *"reason* is *natural revelation"* so also *"revelation* is *natural reason enlarged* by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately; which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God."[20] This combination of reason and immediate revelation could easily fit into the most subjective form of mysticism since to the mystic, as explained by Kurt Reindhart, the inner pursuit of God is not "irrational" but is "supra-rational" in that it is "above [not against] the natural light of reason."[21]

But for Locke natural reason alone was not always an adequate criteria for judging the authenticity of divine communication. He asserted that immediate divine revelation was not always subject to a reliable examination by natural reason. In fact, he wrote, *"Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything."* And, he added, "I do not mean that we must consult reason, and examine whether a proposition revealed from God can

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[19] Ibid., 438.

[20] Ibid., 431.

[21] Kurt Reindhart, introduction to *St. John of the Cross: The Dark Night of the Soul* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1957), ix.

be made out by natural principles, and if it cannot, that then we may reject it. . . ."[22] The

authority of written revelation in the Christian Scriptures, Locke believed, could validate

the authenticity of an impression even if reason could not.

> If he [God] would have us assent to the truth of any proposition, he either
> evidences that truth by the usual methods of natural reason, or else makes it known
> to be a truth which he would have us assent to by his authority, and convinces us
> that it is from him, by some marks which reason cannot be mistaken in.[23]

Another element in Locke's system that may have attracted Evangelical Pietists

was his emphasis on external proof as a means toward determining the divine origin of

impressions. Locke saw the biblical writers as illustrative of this point. He believed that

these "holy men of old" were not enthusiasts because they "had something else besides

that internal light of assurance in their own minds, to testify to them that it was from

God." Specifically, they had "*outward signs* to convince them of the Author of those

revelations. . . ." They had "visible signs to assert the divine authority of a message they

were sent with." As examples he offers Moses and the burning bush and his rod's

transformation into a serpent, and Gideon's fleece as a sign that God would deliver Israel

from the Midianites.[24] To Locke, the indictment against enthusiasm was strengthened by

showing that it was, as he saw it, void of sensory proof. But this was, it should be noted,

very much in line with revivalistic religion as presented by a Whitefield or Wesley.

Pietistic Evangelicalism could operate within a Lockean construct because of its emphasis

on the New Birth as a "proof" of divine power at work. It was, in a sense, a visible

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[22] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2:438-439.

[23] Ibid., 438.

[24] Ibid., 439-440.

experiment to the veracity of divine intervention. Harry Stout made this point particularly

well. "As sensation represented the only avenue for natural knowledge in Lockean

epistemology," he wrote, "so the supernatural experience of the New Birth became the

sole authentic means to spiritual knowledge in the evangelical revivals."[25]

Locke's approach, therefore, not nearly as tied to strict reason as some would

suppose, allowed him to express approbation for an "inward light" and criticize

enthusiasm at the same time. As long as that light or impression was "conformable to the

principles of reason, or to the word of God," one could "safely receive it for true, and be

guided by it in . . . belief and actions."[26] Moreover, if visible signs could be produced,

revelation could be validated since nothing is more reasonable than sensory proofs.

Thus Locke opened the door for Evangelical Pietists to interpret his polemic

against enthusiasm in practically any way they chose. Possibly Locke became for them, as

T. H. Breen has written concerning many in the late colonial period, a "universalist

vocabulary" that aided them in developing a "rhetorical strategy" for their own purposes.[27]

After all, as shown previously in this study, subjective oriented Christians, even the most

radical, who delved into the world of mystical spirituality, rarely did so beyond arm's

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[25] Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 205.

[26] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2: 439.

[27] T. H. Breen, "Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions *Once More* in Need of Revising," *The Journal of American History* 84 (June 1997): 13-39. Alan Heimert has also shown that Christians of various backgrounds used Locke's writings to justify their respective positions within their political settings. See Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 17.

length of familiar objective language. And for some, a combination of Locke and the Bible provided that familiar language.

John Wesley aptly illustrates the extent to which Evangelical Pietists could use Locke in support of their religious position. Thus far Wesley's mystical tendencies have been emphasized. But it should not be overlooked that throughout most of his life he was an avid student of Lockean thought. In fact, Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* was a required text at Wesley's Kingswood School. [28] Wesley's "experiential emphasis" in spiritual matters, Richard Brantley has argued, was born "in large measure, from the experiential emphasis of Locke." Wesley saw himself as a man "'of reason and religion'" in that he found "his twice-born Christianity and his rational empiricism . . . strangely analogous to each other."[29]

Much of Wesley's encounter with Locke came through Bishop Peter Browne's *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding* which Wesley had abridged in 1728. From this work he developed "a Locke-derived theology with which he was more than merely comfortable." *The Procedure* presented Locke's "philosophy of experience" as a prerequisite to the "emotional and intellectual acceptance of the Spirit's ministrations as theological equivalents for distinct impressions from without." Browne believed "that immediate revelation not only 'greatly enlarges our intellect,' but also 'gives an immense scope to human understanding.'" Locke's philosophy, Brown argued, was a means by which man "'perceives'" and "'senses'" divine action in the natural World.

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[28] Richard E. Brantley, *Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English Romanticism* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1984), 5.

[29] Ibid., 2, 14.

Thus, Wesley gained from *The Procedure* a way by which he could juxtapose a pietistic acceptance of immediate revelation and empirical verification, a union that Locke saw as absolutely necessary to authenticity. Wesley sought to harmonize "sense perception and the mind's response to the feeling of faith. . . ." This mixture of "Methodist experience and Lockean method," Brantley wrote, "constitutes an especially distinctive early modern blend of religion and philosophy." It was, in sum, a "theologized empiricism."[30]

The search for a viable, empirically based epistemology was not at all unusual for Pietists such as Wesley. The mystic William Law as well as the English pietistic hymn writers Isaac Watts and William Cowper, in J. Clifford Hindley's words, also sought to blend spiritual experience with the "the philosophical demand for empiricism."[31] Evangelical Pietists are often classified as Enthusiasts because they, it is supposed, discounted empirical evidences in favor of an unverifiable religious fideism. This is largely a myth. W. R. Ward has explained that in some ways the very opposite is true. Pietists have commonly sought to compensate for their lack of institutional support with the use of widely respected philosophical structures that could hopefully give greater legitimacy to their respective movements.

> It was indeed pretty generally true that the Orthodox parties in the Lutheran and Reformed worlds (like their high-church counterparts in England) favoured intellectual and political isolationism, while those who wished, for latitudinarian, rationalistic, or pietistic reasons, to dent the Orthodox monopolies, adopted broader perspectives, knowing that they could not 'go it' alone.[32]

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[30] Ibid., 30, 35, 101, 127.

[31] Quoted in Ibid., 9.

[32] W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 13.

Possibly the most important principle upon which Pietists could find common ground with Locke was his emphasis on religious tolerance. This is especially pertinent concerning our subjects in mid-eighteenth century South Carolina whose efforts toward social and political harmony will be examined. Much of Locke's *Essay Concerning Toleration* (1667) was in line with what Evangelical Pietists already held as a guiding tenet. Granted, those given to a more subjective approach to spirituality had obvious and practical reasons to promote religious tolerance, not the least of which was that they were often the object of religious establishment's disfavor.

George Whitefield, contrary to what some have assumed, stressed catholicity in his ministry. How much of this influence came from Locke's writings is uncertain. He does at times utilize Lockean language to describe spiritual experience. For example, he wrote in 1743 that he had put his soul "as a blank, into the hands of Jesus Christ . . . , and desired him to write upon it what he pleases." And, he added, "I know it will be his own image."[33] One message he believed Christ had written on his *tabula rasa* was that of disciplined tolerance. True, if Whitefield believed that fundamental doctrine, especially relating to soteriology, was at stake, division was preferable to unity. Beyond that, he stressed an overall catholic spirit toward fellow believers. In 1735 at age twenty, just after his conversion, he made the following entry in his journal which illustrates the desire for tolerance that such an experience could create: "I bless God, the partition wall of bigotry and sect religion was soon broken down in my heart. . . ." This change came immediately,

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[33] George Whitefield to Mr. S-----, 27 June, 1743, George Whitefield, *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield*, 6 vols. (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1771), 2: 28 (hereafter *Works*).

"for, as soon as the love of God was shed abroad in my soul," he wrote, "I loved all of whatever denomination, who loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity of heart."[34]

For Whitefield, denominational tolerance was key to evangelical success in Britain and America. In 1738 he recorded in his journal after suggesting that a religious society of soldiers unite with the "Scotch Church": "Oh, when will that time come, when all differences about externals shall be taken away. . . ." On another occasion concerning the Scottish Kirk's tendency of exclusion he wrote, "What a pity it is, Christ's seamless coat should be rent in pieces on account of things in themselves purely indifferent!"[35] In 1739 while in Philadelphia he rejoiced over the "divine harmony and attraction" that existed between believers of various denominations. He was glad that in the "true faith" "all little distinctions about externals fall away, and every other name is swallowed up in the name of JESUS CHRIST[.]" And, he added, "this . . . is that catholic spirit, which will cement all denominations of sincere professors together."[36] The next year he wrote from Savannah that "bigotry and party zeal" are not "as becometh saints!" In anticipation of his next trip to New England he wrote that he would "recommend an universal charity amongst all the true members of CHRIST's mystical body."[37] In 1740 after administering the sacrament "in

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[34] George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 62.

[35] Ibid., 131, 132, 138.

[36] George Whitefield to Mr. G., 28 November 1739, *Works*, 1: 132.

[37] George Whitefield to Rev. Mr. C., 24 January 1740, Ibid., 142.

our way" to "a serious lively Baptist minister" he wrote, "O bigotry, thou art tumbling down a-pace! Blessed be God."[38]

It is clear that Whitefield was dedicated to the Anglican tradition and viewed unity from the perspective that the Anglican way ("our way") was the ideal. Nevertheless, for all his anglicized notions of tolerance and unity, he possessed what Harry Stout has called an "alternative religious vision" of transdenominational associations.[39] This vision was very much akin to Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf's ideal for the Moravians. He saw the Moravians more as a missionary association than a denomination. Zinzendorf advised Moravians in America, for example, to consider infiltrating various denominations while keeping to their own pietistic tenets in hopes of bringing others to a more heartfelt religious experience. As for Whitefield, by 1743 a more acute desire to breach divisions by means of transdenominational associations seemed to occupy his mind. I "long for that time," he lamented, "when the disciples of Christ of different sects shall be joined in far closer fellowship one with another. Our divisions have grieved my heart."[40]

As seen earlier in this study, Continental Pietism significantly influenced Whitefield's religious perspective. The movement largely began as a spiritual response to an over emphasis on polemics.[41] A brief reflection on Philip Spener's *Pia Desideria*, an

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[38] George Whitefield to Mr. N-----, 15 August 1740, Ibid., 203.

[39] Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*, 203.

[40] George Whitefield to Rev. Mr. I----- -----, 6 May 1743, *Works*, 2: 19.

[41] For a concise treatment of Pietism's historical role in relation to religious tolerance see Martin Schmidt, "Ecumenical Activity on the Continent of Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948*, 4th ed., ed. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1993), 99-105.

early text of the German pietistic movement, illustrates well the commonality between Lockean tolerance and Pietism. A key reason for Spener's writing *Pia Desideria* was to call attention to the unchristian character of overt religious dispute. This is not to suggest that Spener or other Pietists believed doctrinal issues unworthy of polemical defense. Yet, from the overall pietistic perspective, religion of the heart could not germinate in a climate of unmitigated theological contention. Spener believed that Orthodox Lutheran theologians and ministers wrongly "stake almost everything on polemics." Too often "they think that everything has turned out very well if only they know how to give an answer to the errors of the papists, the Reformed, the Anabaptists, etc." This becomes particularly counter-productive when these religious leaders "pay no attention to the fruits of those articles of faith which we . . . hold in common with" the very ones attacked.[42]

The latter half of *Pia Desideria* is taken up with "Proposals to Correct Conditions." In that section Spener wrote that while "we take no pleasure in their unbelief or false belief" we should "practice . . . heartfelt love toward all unbelievers and heretics." Furthermore, "we should demonstrate that we consider these people to be our neighbors . . . ," he added, and "regard them as our brothers according to the right of common creation and the divine love that is extended to all." Spener believed that any hope of Christian union must be forfeited unless Christian leaders ceased to "stake everything on argumentation," a misguided strategy that he believed was "filled by as much fleshly as spiritual zeal. . . ."[43] Again, it should not be concluded that Spener and other Pietists

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[42] Philip Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, trans. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 49.

[43] Ibid., 99.

routinely compromised fundamental doctrine for unrealistic ecumenical ideals. Most

Pietists were, after all, confessing Evangelicals who held certain objective doctrines close

to the vest. Yet, due to the subjective side of the movement, a side that allowed for a

transcendence of divisions for the sake of common fellowship, toleration of dissent was

always a part of the pietistic warp and woof.

No other Continental Pietist had as profound an influence on Whitefiled's religious

perspective as did August Francke. Whitefield particularly liked Francke's work

Nicodemus: or, A Treatise Against the Fear of Man. This work not only encouraged the

young evangelist to endure suffering in America for the sake of Christ, but it also likely

strengthened his belief in religious tolerance. It is interesting to consider that for Francke,

belief in the necessity of boldness, while it often manifested itself in controversy, also

served a seemingly opposite function. Francke taught that the fear of man was a principal

cause of religious division. The fearful man "is not forward to give way to *Universal*

Love towards those that are engaged in other Sects, for fear of incurring the Displeasure

of those of his own." Moreover, "by reason of this want of Love, the same Enmity is kept

up amongst our Modern Parties," he added, "as was between the *Jews* and *Samaritans* of

old."[44] For Francke, apart from the fearless proclamation of heartfelt religion there could

be no true and lasting religious toleration.

Comparison of this pietistic approbation for tolerance with Locke's ideal sheds

light on how a pietistic and Lockean perspective could blend. It is fitting here to briefly

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[44] August Herman Francke, *Nicodemus: or, A Treatise Against the Fear of Man*, 3rd ed., trans. [A. W. Boehm] (Boston: Printed by Rogers and Fowle, for N. Procter, 1744), 67-68.

examine Locke's text that had the earliest and most direct influence on South Carolinians, the Fundamental Constitutions (1669). This founding document written by Locke and Shaftesbury, issued just two years after the former's *Essay Concerning Toleration*, illustrates an attempt to put Locke's ideals of religious tolerance into a workable and practical setting. It was a fleshing out, so to speak, of his philosophy.[45]

The Carolina proprietors from the beginning wanted to attract dissenters for settlement. In order to draw them they ensured a degree of religious toleration. In 1665 the proprietors adopted the Concessions and Agreements which allowed for the formation of a representative assembly of freeholders, a system of land ownership, and freedom of conscience. Four years later Locke's and Shaftesbury's Fundamental Constitutions sought, among other things, to establish a principle of religious toleration for future settlement. The method used in establishing this principle is very similar in tone and content to what an Evangelical Pietist might employ. Immediately one is struck by the warm almost evangelistic appeal aimed at non-Christians and dissenters.

> . . . Jews, Heathens, and other dissenters from the purity of the Christian religion, may not be feared and kept at a distance from it, but, by having an opportunity of acquainting themselves with the truth and reasonableness of its doctrines, and the peaceableness and inoffensiveness of its professors, may by good usage and persuasion, and all those convincing methods of gentleness and meekness suitable to

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[45] It is probable that at the very least, the Fundamental Constitutions was as much from Shaftesbury's thought as Locke's. M. Eugene Sirmans believed that Shaftesbury was responsible for writing most of the document and that Locke was more the amanuensis. Yet, considering that Locke had just completed his *Essay Concerning Toleration*, it is difficult to conclude that the section on toleration in the Fundamental Constitutions was not heavily informed by his thought. See M. Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663-1763* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 6-9.

the rules and design of the gospel, be won over to embrace and unfeignedly receive the truth. . . .[46]

Throughout South Carolina's colonial history aspirations to live up to the ideal set forth in this document are evident. With some Anglicans there was an expressed desire to somehow enforce prescribed church rubrics without overly offending or ostracizing those less inclined toward them. In 1670, for example, a Carolina Anglican described the ideal rector for his Carolina parish. He should be "of a moderate zeale not strickt episcopalle nor yet licentious nor rigid presbiterian nor yet hypocriticall but swayeing himselfe in an even Ballance betweene all opinions but especially," he added, "turneing his face to the Liturgie of the Church of England. . . ."[47]

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[46] John Locke, comp., "The First Set of the Fundamental Constitutions of South Carolina: As Compiled by Mr. John Locke," In *Historical Collections of South Carolina; Embracing Many Rare and Valuable Pamphlets, and Other Documents, Relating to the History of that State, from its First Discovery to its Independence, in the Year 1776*, vol. 2, comp. B. R. Carroll (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1836), 385. Locke's emphasis on the importance of religious tolerance came largely from his experience of living through the Interregnum and Restoration, a period which demonstrated to him the extent to which religious "party zeal" could threaten social and political harmony. For him the social tension characteristic of sectarianism within an established church setting was not so much the sect's as it was the government's responsibility to alleviate. As Neal Wood has written, "a 'pluralistic' society with limited constitutional government and liberty for different sects--except Catholics and atheists--within the framework of the equal preservation of all was the best insurance against civic conflict arising from religious party struggle." For a government to coercively regulate a dissenting sect "would accomplish little more than uniting and strengthening them, increasing their defiance of law and order and exacerbating civic tension and conflict." Neal Wood, *The Politics of Locke's Philosophy: A Social Study of "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 103.

[47] William Owen to Robert Blayney, 22 March 1670, in Langdon Cheves, ed., *The Shaftesbury Papers and Other Records Relating to Carolina and the First Settlement on Ashley River Prior to the Year 1676*, in *Collections of the South Carolina Historical Society*, vol. 5 (Charleston: South Carolina Historical Society, 1897), 304.

Although Carolina provincials never officially adopted the Fundamental

Constitutions, South Carolina's proprietary legislature wrote religious tolerance into law.

In 1697 legislation from the Commons House stipulated "That all Christians which now

are, or hereafter may be in this Province (Papists only excepted) shall enjoy the full, free

and undisturbed liberty of their consciences. . . ." And this leeway was to make allowance

for a respective sect's "exercise of . . . worship according to the professed rules of their

religion," and they were to be free from "molestation or hindrance by any power either

ecclesiastical or civil whatsoever."[48]

After 1706 church leaders tried to strike a balance within the social framework

between Anglican and dissenter obligations. Early efforts had been temporarily hampered

by passage of the 1704 Church Act which stressed enforcement of church establishment in

important particulars. For example, it forbade any other than an Anglican minister to

marry; it required the *Book of Common Prayer* to be "solemnly read by all and every

Minister or Reader in every Church which now is or hereafter shall be settled and by law

established within this Province."[49] Dissenters appealed to the House of Lords for a

repeal of the Act. Eventually Queen Anne ordered the Lord's proprietors to repeal it. In

1706 the Carolina Assembly passed another Church Act which eased tensions between

dissenters and establishment by allowing dissenters to be in the Commons House. After

this Act Carolina's first commissary Gideon Johnston came in 1707 and began to seek out

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[48] Thomas Cooper and David J. McCord, eds., *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, 10 vols. (Columbia: A. S. Johnston, 1836-1873), 2: 133.

[49] Ibid., 236.

grounds of cooperation between dissenters and Anglicans all the while enforcing Anglican establishment.[50]

Yet, most attempts to develop a balanced system were limited at best. The problem grew in no small part because of the sheer growth in dissenter population. Their presence in the Assembly grew to such an extent that by the 1730s the church establishment had to take on a decidedly defensive posture. When Alexander Garden became commissary in 1729 his focus was not so much on facilitating harmony as much as holding dissent at bay. He found, as James Hawkins has written, that "establishment required constant husbandry."[51] Thus, efforts such as the 1706 Church Act which helped to create harmony from a dissenter perspective, created a sense of disharmony for Anglican leaders who feared the loss of hegemony in long held religious prerogatives. The tables had turned, so to speak, in that the establishment was in some ways acting as if it were a dissenting sect trying to maintain legitimacy within the social structure. Yet, even with the advances made over those past twenty years, dissenters still operated under the normal disadvantages of subservience to establishment. From this it is easy to see why both Anglicans and dissenters, especially landed and merchant elites, would find good reason to seek religious common ground. It should not be forgotten that for all the reasons Robert Weir lists as motivations for political and social harmony, a fundamental division that superseded all social and political elements was religious. That is, no matter

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[50] James Barney Hawkins, IV, "Alexander Garden: The Commissary in Church and State" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1981), 8-9, 140-141.

[51] Ibid., 140-141 (quotation 141).

the outward commonalties shared such as potential slave revolt, Indian and Spanish threat, financial progress, etc., none could fully breach the gap of religious division.

It was within this historical setting of religious tension that Anglican and dissenter elites were reading Trenchard's and Gordon's *The Independent Whig* and *Cato's Letters*. Even though country ideology went far in elucidating a harmonious environment, it could not on its own solve the deeply held religious differences. In one sense country ideology set forth the principles of tolerance and harmony but could not translate them into practical reality. Country ideology could outline what needed to be done but fell short in supplying the means to do it. The subjective elements inherent in the less creedal pietistic and mystical forms helped to fill that void. Pietism, in a sense, acted as an engine to drive home the country ideal.

By the time Whitefield had arrived in Charleston in 1738, Trenchard's and Gordon's unique blend of country ideology and Lockean thought had been in circulation in and around Charleston for almost eighteen years. As with Locke's principles, those from Trenchard and Gordon found a compatibility with pietistic thought. Before showing Pietism's direct role as a facilitator of harmony, it will be beneficial to briefly demonstrate this compatibility.

Country ideology, like Pietism, was wary of creedal religion. Trenchard and Gordon associated the Roman Catholic conciliar tradition with the high Anglicanism's penchant for an overbearing creedalism. Just as the Catholic Church welded its rule through creeds from pope and council, so too priests in the Church of England had become "Dictators in Faith." Trenchard and Gordon asserted in *The Independent Whig* that overt attention to creeds violated both reason and love. ". . . Belief or Disbelief can

neither be a Virtue or a Crime in any One, who uses the best Means in his Power of being informed. If a Proposition is evident [by natural reason], we cannot avoid believing it . . . ." Thus, there is no need for its formulation into a creed. To arbitrarily accept a creed is to detach one's God-given ability to reason from Scripture whether a thing be true or not. As to their violation of love, creeds are "the Engines of Wrath and Vengeance, nor could they serve any other Purpose." The very nature of a creed imposes "either the Wrath of God on one Hand, or the Wrath and Cruelty of the Clergy on the other. . . ." Furthermore, makers of creeds, Trenchard and Gordon argued, were the opposite of what English gentlemen aspired to be. These "Faith-Makers," as they are called, "had not the common Qualifications of Gentlemen: They were governed by Passion and led by Expectation."[52] Clearly such assertions as these would be doubly attractive to an aspiring gentleman who was also given to the subjective elements of pietistic spirituality.

A key characteristic of Pietism in general is its tendency to bypass creedal formulations for a plain, straightforward interpretation and practical application of the scriptural text. Moreover, the Protestant principle of the priesthood of every believer was carried one step further in pietistic circles giving laymen unprecedented roles in biblical interpretation, thus the dominance of lay leadership in pietistic conventicles. Trenchard and Gordon made a similar appeal. ". . . God Almighty, in revealing his Will to Mankind, has always taken effectual Care that it could not be mistaken," they asserted, "and therefore made it so plain, as to need no farther Explanation, in all Things which are necessary for us to know." The Bible is a gift to men to teach them "how to live," not "to

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[52] John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *The Independent Whig*, no. 6: 16-18.

make work for Interpreters. . . ." Scripture is so plain that "all Men have in their Power

the Means to understand it."[53]

This more practical use of Scripture is further supported by Trenchard's and

Gordon's view of conversion. In ancient biblical conversions "sometimes Thousands were

convinced in a Moment, without either *Commentaries*, or *Creeds*, or *Catechisms*."

Besides the notion of instantaneous conversion alluded to in the last statement,

Trenchard's and Gordon's desire for an unencumbered and non-hierarchical evangelism

was potentially attractive to those who would have, for example, supported Whitefield's

methods.

> The Apostles, when they had converted one city, did not stay to establish a
> Hierarchy there only, and to tell the *same Thing* over and over again to those that
> knew it already: No,--when they had planted the Faith in one Place, they travelled
> [sic] to another, and preached the gospel to the unconverted World; leaving those
> already converted, to perform Christian Worship *their own Way*. If they believed in
> Christ, and lived soberly, the Apostles desired no more.[54]

A Lockean blend of reason and revelation underpins Trenchard's and Gordon's

more practical and lay oriented view of Scripture. They, like Locke, argued for reason as

a trustworthy interpreter of revelation. In man's natural state there is no more sure

"Guide" in discovering spiritual truth than reason. And, following Locke's system further,

natural reason's "subordinate Instruments and Spies" are the senses which "bring . . .

Intelligence" to reason. Reason in turn "forms a Judgment, and takes Measures

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[53] Ibid., no. 9: 20-21. It should not be construed that most Pietists shunned creeds. In
fact, mainline pietistic representatives such as Spener and Francke emphasized the
memorization of creeds. The difference between them and non-Pietists was that the
former often allowed and even stressed that the experiential regulated the propositional
elements of faith.

[54] Ibid., 23.

according to the Discoveries which they make." All work in unison "to find out the Will of God." Without the capacity to reason, they argue, we could not begin to know God. "Were we not *rational Creatures*, we could not be *religious Creatures*." Spiritual exercises such as praise to God, evangelization of unbelievers, and discernment of good and evil, all depend on our capacity to reason, a capacity which all sane men have. "The Devotion which he [God] requires, must be *free, rational* and *willing*; and where it is not so, it is *Folly* or *Hypocrisy*."[55]

But like Locke, Trenchard and Gordon draw a distinction between how reason works in the spiritual as opposed to the natural realm. That is, in its religious capacity reason sometimes gives way to revelation whereas in the natural realm it gives way to nothing. Reason, for example, "commands us to believe in God *implicitly*, and obey him *passively*," but it does not "command us to trust to . . . Man without Inquiry," nor does it require us "to submit to . . . Man without Cause." Thus, "what is our Duty in Relation to God, would be Madness in Relation to one another. . . ."[56] In their very defense of reason's indispensable role in the interpretation of revelation, Trenchard and Gordon subtly make room for its suspension in areas that, by their own admission, reason cannot penetrate. This distinction, whether intended or not, created a means by which Pietists could find common ground with country ideology.

Another point of possible pietistic attraction is Trenchard's and Gordon's almost mystical view of reason as it functions in the spiritual realm. Reason places man over "the Beasts of the Field" and gives him a unique "Resemblance with God himself." Reason is,

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[55] Ibid., no. 35: 30-34.

[56] Ibid., 33.

therefore, a "*Divinae particula Aurae; A Ray, or Impulse of the Divinity.*" Man, created

in the image of God, possesses reason "which is a *divine Particle of the GODHEAD. . . .*"

Reason, in this capacity, is not simply natural reason but "*Divine Reason.*"[57] To believe

that man's rationality is the image of God is hardly mystical in itself. Such has been a

commonly held view among some of the most orthodox of believers. But the language

employed here carries a mystical tone, especially the statement that reason "is a *divine*

Particle of the GODHEAD," a resemblance of mysticism's emphasis on the union of the

human and divine. Moreover, the assertion that man's reason is "*A Ray, or Impulse of the*

Divinity" could conceivably be construed by a pietistic reader as a support for immediate

and divine communication.

As presented in *The Independent Whig*, reason's progressive role in spiritual

discovery gives even greater possibilities to a pietistic compatibility. Those outside the

Faith should "judge *for themselves* of the *Reasonableness* of our Religion." And those

who become Christians should be allowed "to judge of our Religion with the same

Freedom, after they are come into it, as they did before they embraced it." Anything short

of this would be "a flat Contradiction to that *Liberty with which CHRIST has made us*

free!"[58] Even though a pietistic tendency may lead away from the "Reasonableness of . . .

Religion," the emphasis here on liberty of religious conscience in a culture of church

establishment, such as existed in mid-eighteenth century South Carolina, would likely be

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[57] Ibid., 32.

[58] Ibid., 33

very appealing to those whose newly discovered pietistic faith could find expression only in so far as those in charge of establishment would allow.

It should not be overlooked that Trenchard and Gordon, like Locke, denied the veracity of actual revelation outside of Scripture. "I think it is generally granted, that Revelations are no more, and that Prophecy hath ceased."[59] While this does not bode well with the more mystical side of pietistic thought, it was not as much a violation of the revivalistic emphasis presented by Whitefield as one might conclude. In fact, although his words often seem to the contrary, Whitefield would not have admitted his visions and communications to be on the level with prophetic Scripture. Granted, the subjective/objective tension that made up Whitefield's religiosity often clouds a clear apprehension of his actual theological perspective, yet one would be hard pressed to find him asserting anything other than a *unique* Holy Spirit inspiration for Scripture itself. This is similar to the modern day Charismatic movement, the adherents of which freely delve into personal and immediate communications from God, yet rarely argue that those communications are inspired in the same sense as the Bible. Pietists have generally been able, if paradoxically, to hold to a final and finished revelation in Scripture on the one hand, and a progressive and personal revelation on the other.

It is important to note further that Trenchard's and Gordon's denial of extra-biblical revelation is not given in the context of a polemic against enthusiasm per se but against High Church creedalism and priestcraft.

> He [God] appeared himself whilst Men were in Darkness; but now that he hath shewn them his *marvellous Light*, he appears no more. His Presence is supplied by his Word; which being addressed to all Men equally, and not to *one Tribe of Men* to

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[59] Ibid., no. 9: 20.

interpret it for the rest, it follows, that all men have in their Power the Means to understand it. *Old Revelation* therefore does not want the Assistance of *New*, nor has the Omnipotent any need of *Prolocutors*.[60]

Thus, the very criticism leveled by men such as Commissary Alexander Garden and Bishop George Lavington against subjective pietistic and mystical forms, is the same given by Trenchard and Gordon against the rubrics of High Church creedalism and priestcraft. This, whatever its specific intention, had the potential, at least in the mind of a pietistic reader, to level the playing field, so to speak, in that what Pietists were being accused of could just as readily be said of their detractors.[61]

Trenchard's and Gordon's distrust of creeds and priests (Catholic and Anglican), and their approbation for a more practically oriented religion based on an accessible and uncomplicated interpretive framework, naturally, as with Spener and Locke, led to a distaste for religious argumentation. In 1721 Thomas Gordon wrote in *Cato's Letters* that religion must inspire "universal Love and Benevolence to the whole" if it is to be considered genuine. God instituted religion, not for himself, but "as the best Means and the strongest Motive" for man's "own [individual] . . . and mutual Happiness. . . ." The personal animosity derived from the "Defense of any Religion," Gordon continued, "is a flat Contradiction" to religion itself and "an open Defiance" to God. To argue over "Belief and Opinions," unless such debate can "produce practical Virtue and social

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[60] Ibid.

[61] This same point can be made in regard to Trenchard's and Gordon's association of High Anglican practices with Roman Catholicism (i.e. priestcraft and creedalism). As examined earlier, Anglican leaders often negatively associated Pietists with Catholic influences such as mysticism. These counter accusations in *The Independent Whig* against High Anglicanism's ties with popery could serve to the Pietists' advantage, especially those such as Wesley, Whitefield, and their followers, who were often accused by fellow Anglicans of being influenced by Catholicism.

Duties," is the same as being "wicked in behalf of Righteousness. . . ." Theological "speculations" cannot be considered "a Part of Religion" unless they "produce the moral Duties of Religion, general Peace, and unlimited Charity, publick Spirit, Equity, Forbearance, and good Deeds to all Men. . . ." True religious worship, moreover, can be identified, at least in part, if "it warms our Minds" in "Remembrance" of God's kindness and "raises and forms our Affections" to imitate God's "divine and unrestrained Goodness. . . ." The practical result of this sensory informed worship is that our "tender" and "beneficent" actions toward one another will be a reflection of God's actions toward us. Such characteristics of worship, Gordon concluded, "are the certain and only Marks" of "true Religion. . . ."[62]

Possibly country ideology's most attractive component for pietistic readers was the general proposition, as expounded by Trenchard and Gordon, that government should ensure liberty of conscience. The type of amiable worship as described above, that downplays religious polemics, and promotes toleration of religious opinion is "opposite to the Essence and Spirit of an arbitrary Government. . . ." When religious establishment is tied to court prerogatives it eventually manifests a "countenance [of] Usurpation and Oppression" and is "as opposite to the Christian Religion, as Tyranny is to Liberty. . . ." Ministers who "speak Court-Language" are "Ministers of Ambition" who "sanctify Falshood [sic] and Violence" under the pretense of "Mercy and Truth." They remain silent if such "Imposture" brings them "worldly Honours;" never mind the painful

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[62] Trenchard and Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, no. 66: 162-163.

"Rewards of Conscience and Piety" others must pay for opposite but genuinely held beliefs.[63]

The country ideal supports the notion that true religious assent, by its very nature, cannot be regulated by government. "Every Man's Religion is his own; nor can the Religion of any Man, of what Nature or Figure soever, be the Religion of another Man, unless he also chooses it. . . ." The freedom of personal choice in religious belief "utterly excludes" a role for magisterial force. Gordon echoed August Francke who argued in *Nicodemus* that the fear of man must not impede the advancement of true religion. "Religion can never come without Conviction, nor can Conviction come from Civil Authority," Gordon wrote. And, since true religion presupposes allegiance to "the Fear of God," it "cannot be subject to Power, which is the Fear of Man." Force cannot manipulate "the free Faculties of the Mind," thus religion "can never be subject to the Jurisdiction of another. . . ."[64] Later he wrote that "no Man's Belief . . . can be in the Power of another." This being the case, if a magistrate tries to force "his Subjects to belye their Consciences, or to act against them" he will likely drive "them out of all Religion" and cause them to conclude that "Christianity is not true," whereby he risks creating a class of "Infidels."[65]

Even though Trenchard and Gordon believed that enthusiastic religion usually led to party strife, they nevertheless believed that for government to hinder man's individual search for truth was far worse than inconveniences to the contrary. In Trenchard's

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[63] Ibid., 165.

[64] Ibid., no. 60: 117.

[65] Ibid., no. 66: 167.

discourse against England's too stringent libel laws he specifically argued for an environment that fostered wide open discourse.

> If Men be suffered to preach or reason publickly and freely upon certain Subjects, as for Instance, upon Philosophy, Religion, or Government, they may reason wrongly, irreligiously, or seditiously, and sometimes will do so; and by such Means may possibly now and then pervert and mislead an ignorant and unwary Person; and if they be suffered to write their Thoughts, the Mischief may be still more diffusive; but if they be not permitted, by any or all these Ways, to communicate their Opinions or Improvements to one another, the World must soon be over-run with Barbarism, Superstition, Injustice, Tyranny, and the most stupid Ignorance. They will know nothing . . . of Religion, more than a blind Adherence to unintelligible Speculations. . [66]

It is not difficult to see how Whitefield or his supporters would heartily agree with Trenchard's belief that libel indictments were too easily handed down. In January of 1741 Whitefield was arrested in Charleston for libel because he helped edit his follower Hugh Bryan's letter for the *South-Carolina Gazette* that was critical of Anglican clergymen. Bryan charged, among other things, the local rectors with causing parishioners to wander "in worse than Egyptian darkness." The "People" were following the "Priests" down the destructive road of greed because of the latter's lack of spiritual acumen. Whitefield later seconded Bryan's criticisms. Those in authority should not abuse "the power which God had put into their hands." Garden wrote the Bishop of London complaining that "the Libel is chiefly aimed at the Clergy of this Province, & more particularly at me." The charge against Whitefield was dropped almost as soon as it was given.[67] But that it was even in

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[66] Ibid., no. 100: 234.

[67] Quoted in William Howland Kenney III, "Alexander Garden and George Whitefield: The Significance of Revivalism in South Carolina, 1738-1741," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 71 (January 1970): 14, 15. See *South-Carolina Gazette*, 8 January 1741, and Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 502-504. For other discussions of this episode see David T. Morgan, "The Great Awakening in South Carolina, 1740-1775," *The South*

the realm of possibility was likely a concern. Some were beginning to believe that, whether by the reading of country ideals or experiencing inward religion, freedom of religious expression, even if unpleasant, was intrinsic to the very concept of freedom itself.

It would, of course, be a mistake to imply that Trenchard and Gordon welcomed the influx of pietistic and mystical religious expression. *The Independent Whig* and *Cato's Letters* are filled with warnings against what they considered enthusiastic religion, a movement especially prevalent in London during the early 1720s. But Anglican Evangelical Pietists in South Carolina were nevertheless attracted to their writings, probably for the same reason denominational dissenters were, because they called for a certain religious egalitarianism that disallowed court or church establishment interference. Also, most Evangelical Pietists would not likely see themselves in Trenchard's and Gordon's description of enthusiasts. In fact, they could easily conclude that their form of subjective, non-polemic spirituality was the answer to some of the religious problems posed in *The Independent Whig* and *Cato's Letters*.

Trenchard and Gordon always associated enthusiasm with division. Their polemic of subjective religion was usually directed at those enthusiasts who were "of an inflamed Imagination, and a sour, bitter, and narrow Spirit," that form of which "there is no Violence nor Barbarity . . . it is not capable of wishing or acting."[68] Possibly Trenchard and Gordon would have considered Whitefield and other Pietists of this stripe, but that

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Atlantic Quarterly 70 (Autumn 1971): 601 and Harvey H. Jackson, "Hugh Bryan and the Evangelical Movement in Colonial South Carolina," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (October 1986): 602-603.

[68] Trenchard and Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, no. 66: 168.

these subjective oriented Christians would not have seen themselves as divisive enthusiasts after Trenchard's and Gordon's description is a foregone conclusion.

Many have generally considered enthusiastic subjective religion and adherence to Enlightenment philosophy as mutually exclusive. This simply is not the case. Pietists, especially radical Pietists, were keenly in tune with Enlightenment generated theoretical models. Modern theologian Donald G. Bloesch aptly explains this point. "In radical Pietism dreams and private revelations . . . became authorities for faith. No longer an objective, universal criterion for truth, Scripture was reduced to an aid in understanding one's own experience of God and reality." And, he continued, "Pietism joined with rationalism in paving the way for the triumph of autonomy over heteronomy." This generally happened because "when authority is made to reside in the inner self, whether this be conscience or feeling, reason ineluctably regains its sovereignty because feeling and experience must finally be interpreted in order to give direction and meaning to life."[69] Thus, if this analysis is correct, one can readily perceive the directive power a Lockean informed, autonomously oriented, country ideal could have over those disposed to pietistic and mystical expressions of faith. This may well have been the case among certain very influential Carolina elites.

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[69] Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 93.

Chapter Four

Evangelical Anglicization and the End of the World: Elite Pietists and
the Changing Face of Establishment

> By our continual and earnest pursuit of a character, a name, a reputation in the
> world, we bring our own deportment and conduct frequently in review, and consider
> how they appear in the eyes of those who approach and regard us. This constant
> habit of surveying ourselves, as it were, in reflection, keeps alive all the sentiments of
> right and wrong, and begets, in noble natures, a certain reverence for themselves as
> well as others, which is the surest guardian of every virtue.
>   (David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*)

It is important to note at the outset what the goal of this chapter is *not*. No

attempt will be made to show Pietism as a direct and certain informant on particular

political decisions that led to harmony. The elusive nature of the concept of harmony

coupled with the even more elusive nature of subjective spirituality does not lend itself to

such an exercise, at least not one that can prove that Pietism led to social and political

consensus. Moreover, the previous chapter has shown that pietistic goals can be couched

in familiar philosophic language, making the identification of motive (spiritual,

philosophical, or practical) even more difficult. The difficulty is also heightened because

there was a hesitancy among genteel elites to express overt pietistic views in their public

and private correspondence. Possibly the fear of being labeled an "enthusiast" helps to

explain this reluctance. Pietism's "oppositive" nature no doubt kept some who were

dependent on acceptance both in the ecclesiastical establishment and the wider secular

world from freely expressing their deeply felt spirituality.

The overall purpose in the *preceding* chapter was to show that Evangelical Pietism was quite compatible with a Lockean styled country ideology, and because of Pietism's transcendent character which produced an almost natural tendency to find common ground in the religious realm, it may well have served as a co-facilitator toward accomplishing political and social harmony in South Carolina. Natural reason and supernatural faith were not, at least in the minds of Pietists, mutually exclusive. The two could work together to produce spiritual, social, and political satisfaction. Moreover, sensory verification, foundational to a Lockean construct, fit well with the pietistic emphasis on spiritual experience as a necessary proof of supernatural intervention. At the very least, the examination calls into question the supposedly deep seated divisiveness that revivalistic religion necessarily created in the lowcountry. That is, the excitement from the First Great Awakening in and around Charleston did not necessarily work against peaceful consensus.

The goal of *this* chapter is first to demonstrate that Evangelical Pietism found a hearing with leading elites in lowcountry South Carolina and that this introduction created the potential for pietistic influence, especially in so far as the pietistic and mystical subjective basis of religious tolerance supported an already existent aspiration toward political and social harmony. In support of this it will be demonstrated further that around the time historians have identified as the height of that harmony's manifestation (1750s), an even more radical form of pietistic expression than that presented by Whitefield found a favorable hearing among some of the most influential elites living in the Carolina lowcountry, a proposition that calls into question the general view that there was an inherent divisiveness in evangelical revivalism. Underlying this argument is an interpretive

framework based on the view that some mid-eighteenth century lowcountry Anglican elites gradually saw Evangelical Pietism as representative of a new wave of anglicized religious tolerance, a wave that they recognized was inevitable and that could possibly help create for them a standing of greater significance within the British world.

First, in order to effectively demonstrate the role pietistic thought may have played in helping to facilitate harmony around the mid-eighteenth century mark and in order to avoid examining the issue in a religious and philosophical vacuum, it will be necessary to briefly describe the often disharmonious political and social atmosphere in the colony leading up to that period.

South Carolina's proprietary history (1670 to 1721) was riddled with faction and discontent. The latter years of that period were marked with strong disagreements between proprietors and provincial leaders over issues such as land reform and the lack of military defense. In 1719 a rebel interim government took control of the colony until it was turned over to the Crown in 1721.

Although the first royal governor, Francis Nicholson, was usually careful not to run roughshod over provincial concerns, and sought as much as possible to maintain a working harmony with the legislature, he did not show the same constraint in the area of religion. He was a very outspoken High Anglican and possessed little tolerance or liking for dissenters. He perceived that dissent was equivalent to independence, thus distrusted anyone outside the established Church. "I think it no very Difficult thing to Prove," he wrote to the Bishop of London, "that all the Dissenters . . . are of Common Wealth Principles both in Church and State and would be Independent to the Crown of Great Brittain [sic] if it were in their Power." Nicholson was successful in requiring dissenter

assemblymen against their wishes to swear formal oaths to the Crown or else give up their

seats. He also sought to bar dissenting ministers from performing marriages, but the

assembly intervened in their favor. Throughout Nicholson's term dissenters feared that he

would possibly resort to actual persecution to force conformity, but he never did. He did,

however, succeed in strengthening establishment, especially through the efforts of the new

acting commissary, Alexander Garden. Garden's dogged style for Anglican superiority

put that church by the mid 1720s in a "flourishing condition," often at the expense of a

growing dissenter population.[1]

The first decade of royal rule saw serious economic set backs. In the early years of

this period economic deterioration due to rice remaining on the enumerated list combined

with production shortfalls due to destructive weather (flooding and drought), left many

provincials in serious financial straits. Parliament's suspension of naval store bounties in

1724 contributed to the growing economic malaise. By the latter part of the decade, the

economic woes were so acute that there was question whether or not the colony would

survive.[2] One private bank began to print money with the image of a sinking man.

Although there were periods of harmony, especially under Governor Robert

Johnson, former proprietary governor who returned in 1730, and who was influential in

the colony's economic recovery, it is generally agreed that the period between 1739 and

1743 was the most important to the establishment of long lasting political and social

harmony throughout much of the remaining eighteenth century. The disastrous leadership

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[1] M. Eugene Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663-1763* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 141-142; Robert M. Weir, *Colonial South Carolina: A History* (Millwood, New York: KTO Press, 1983), 106-107.

[2] Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 132-134, 155; Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 108.

by Johnson's successor, his lieutenant governor and brother-in-law Thomas Broughton, who served from after Johnson's death in 1735 until his own death in 1737, was a motivation for assemblymen to find greater common ground among themselves in order to thwart his intrusions into their legislative affairs. During this two year period the lower house made great strides in its representative prerogatives over the council and governor.[3]

Of the various reasons for the development of lasting harmony after 1739, two of the most important were the Stono slave revolt and the renewed Spanish and French threat, especially after 1739. The Stono Rebellion (1739), though it did not develop into a wide spread insurrection, nevertheless served as a reminder to white provincials that such was not beyond the pale of reality and that being outnumbered by blacks almost two to one required unity of purpose if they were to survive. The prospects of war with Spain or France also caused political factions to bury hatchets and concentrate on their common

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[3] Sirmans, Colonial South Carolina, 183-185. Broughton's reputation for rash impetuosity was well known prior to his becoming governor. While a vestryman in 1724 at St. John's, Berkeley he helped make life miserable for his young S.P.G. missionary rector, Brian Hunt. Even though from all indications Hunt left much to be desired and later met with recommendations for removal by Commissary Garden, the impatience and harsh treatment imposed on him by Broughton is an indication of the latter's forward and uncompromising demeanor. Hunt stated in a letter to the Bishop of London that because of his opposition to the common practice of allowing dissenting attendees to be "church officers," Broughton maligned him. "One Tho[mas] Broughton a Lay Dotrephes opposed me affronted & publickly abused me in ye Church only for proposing this. . . . He has an interest among ye French so chimes in w[i]th them to prejudice of ye Church." Hunt went on to say that Broughton was able to get a number of French Calvinists who were vestrymen and churchwardens to malign him personally. He specifically identified this Thomas Broughton as Robert Johnson's brother-in-law. Brian Hunt to Bishop of London, 20 February 1724/5, Transcripts of South Carolina Records of the Bishop of London (Fulham Palace Papers) in the Lambeth Palace Library, nos. 116-300, 1710-1767, no. 191, microform (hereafter Fulham Papers, Bishop of London, 1710-1767). For the vestrymen's and churchwarden's letter against Hunt to the Bishop of London see St. John's Wardens and Vestrymen to Bishop of London, 3 July 1727, Fulham Papers, Bishop of London, 1710-1767, no. 133.

welfare. With fears that France would ally with Spain, Lieutenant Governor William Bull, who served as acting governor until James Glen arrived in 1743, garrisoned support for an extensive military defense buildup once it was determined that Carolina was extremely vulnerable to attack. With the War of Jenkins Ear between Spain and England in full swing, the reality of a common enemy, even though no fighting ensued on Carolina soil, served as a catalyst to keep factional disputes at bay.[4]

A final reason this period saw greater consensus was Bull's ability to gain support from both the council and assembly. He realized that the lower house had gone far in establishing its supremacy and that his political career depended on a good relationship with that body. Although at first councilors distanced themselves from Bull because of his courtship with the assembly, they too found a compromising spirit in Bull who sought and won their allegiance by not playing one house against the other. Bull succeeded in bringing a degree of balance between the two legislative bodies that no one else had been able to reach.[5] This is not to suggest that no real and deeply felt differences existed, for they did, especially before 1739, but that an unprecedented conciliatory environment dominated the royal provincial government in South Carolina during the latter half of Bull's administration is an established fact.

When James Glen finally came to South Carolina as acting governor in 1743 most of the internal disputes that seemed so much a natural but unhappy part of the colony's social and political persona were dormant. Although several disputes occurred between

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[4] Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 204, 207-214; Weir, *Colonial South Carolina*, 117.

[5] Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 199.

him and the assembly, in the main, he did nothing to upset the existing overall cooperation. Glen presided over a people who were, as far as internal disputes were concerned, relatively at peace. By 1750, the colony had little in the way of leading political factions. As Robert Weir has written, "all available evidence indicates that by the 1750s, if any factions still existed, few contemporaries were aware of them and their influence on political behavior was negligible."[6] Whereas prior to 1743, even under Johnson and Bull, as M. Eugene Sirmans has written, a "cycle of conflict and compromise" seemed to dominate. Between 1743 and 1763, however, a different pattern emerged, one of "enduring internal harmony."[7] This does not mean that political and social rancor and division never again took center stage, for it did. But in comparison to earlier times, South Carolina had gone from a "sinking man" to one whose certainty of survival and unprecedented prosperity became the envy of colonial America.

As mentioned earlier, a major reason given for the solidified harmony by 1750 is that the uproar and division caused by the First Great Awakening, especially as it involved Whitefield's ministry in Charleston, had abated by that time. This point is well taken. Whitefield's non-conformity and zeal were of considerable concern to several in the early 1740s. Nevertheless, the explanation is flawed in that it is based on a too strict view of the years that made up the Great Awakening. It was not as if suddenly the revivalistic zeal no longer attended Whitefield's preaching after 1741. He continued to preach in

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[6] Weir, "'The Harmony We Were Famous for': An Interpretation of Prerevolutionary South Carolina Politics," in Weir, ed., *"The Last of American Freemen": Studies in the Political Culture of the Colonial and Revolutionary South* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986), 22.

[7] Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 223.

Charleston and surrounding areas in the 1750s as well as throughout much of his life. What had happened to the earlier uproar and concern? Could it be that there was less worry over his ministry by the 1750s because of a growing approbation for it? Is it possible that the pietistic elements of transcendence and tolerance which had permeated his ministry from the start were contributing to the calm and conciliatory atmosphere? What had happened to lessen the threat? Possibly the answers to these questions will help to explain why a much more radical form of pietistic preaching was so well received in Charleston in the mid 1750s , and this time the messenger was not an itinerant evangelist but the rector of the prestigious St. Philip's.

One reason revivalistic religion is considered by historians as a facilitator of schism in lowcountry South Carolina is due to that region's generally disinterested posture toward anything other than a genteel and ethically oriented religion. The Charleston Anglican elite of all people shunned evangelical and pietistic alterations of the religious status quo. They were too occupied with wealth and status to concern themselves with spiritual contemplation, especially if it defied accepted norms of church polity and enlightenment rationalism. Charleston's celebrated Baptist minister Oliver Hart lamented more than once over "poor sinful Charles Town," and historians have adopted his words as a sort of mantra signifying the secular malaise that permeated the city.   Admittedly, there are good reasons to believe this assessment of Charleston and its surrounding communities.

For one thing, during the First Great Awakening, Charleston, in comparison to northern cities, Philadelphia and Boston for example, was quiet. Although Whitefield gained a good number of converts in Charleston, his northern campaigns were much more

successful, if the number of meetings and attendees and the measure of emotional response can be considered a standard of success. As for the Charleston elite, since it was "not piety, not spiritual fervor, not theological disquisition" that they sought from their church but rather "sound moral teaching," the prospects of a lasting and dominant evangelical presence was unlikely within their circles.[8]

Although these conclusions have merit, and no doubt were true for a large portion of lowcountry inhabitants, they are misleading in some respects. For one thing, the initial outward emotional manifestation of revivalism is not a reliable measure of lasting evangelical impact. The burnt over district in the upstate New York region that developed out of the Second Great Awakening serves as a reminder of that fact. Second, numbers are not always a reliable standard. True enough, a numerical comparison shows a far greater frequency of large meetings in the North, not only for Whitefield, but also other revivalists such as Gilbert Tennent and Jonathan Edwards, ministers who never came to the lower South. And the impact that they had in the North cannot be diminished. But if one considers that in 1739 and 1740, when Whitefield first attracted large gatherings in the Carolina lowcountry, that there were less than 7,000 inhabitants in Charleston, instead of failure, his ministry there was a resounding success, even in comparison to the more populated northern regions.

Moreover, it is not correct to assume that even most Anglicans looked disapprovingly on Whitefield's ministry. The *South-Carolina Gazette* recorded that his messages received "very general Acceptance," an indication that, even though most of his

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[8] Frederick P. Bowes, *The Culture of Early Charleston* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 29.

preaching was in dissenter churches, many Anglicans attended. Although Alexander

Garden was able to garner clerical support against Whitefield, some of the Anglican

parishes in the region invited the evangelist to preach in their churches regardless. He

preached in Christ's Church Parish, St. John's in Colleton County, and Saint Helena's

Parish in Port Royal. Saint Helena's rector Reverend Lewis Jones, one that Whitefield

said was "more noble than most of his brethren," expressed his disagreement with the

evangelist's view of Justification and his too harsh polemic against Archbishop John

Tillotson. Nevertheless the two developed a very amicable relationship and Lewis offered

his pulpit to him even though, as Whitefield noted, "he was in danger of incurring the

commissary's displeasure thereby." Later Commissary Garden expressed his disapproval

of Lewis' too compromising spirit, but Lewis informed him that "he would have alienated

his congregation had he refused Whitefield use of the church." In Pon Pon Whitefield

met with a man he called "Mr. T.," probably Reverend Thomas Thompson, rector of Saint

Bartholomew's Parish. Whitefield wrote that he was "a church of England missionary,

who refused to preach or sit in judgement against me."[9] Thus, even with the clerical

opposition led by Garden, the blanket conclusion that Anglicans disdained Whitefield's

preaching is not altogether correct. David Morgan's assessment is closer to the truth.

"While most of Whitefield's followers seem to have been dissenters, it is almost certain

that many Anglicans heard him gladly." And, he added, "the Anglicans who believed in

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[9] *South-Carolina Gazette*, 25 July 1740; S. Charles Bolton, *Southern Anglicanism: The Church of England in Colonial South Carolina* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1982), 53; George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 438, 445.

Whitefield's evangelism and ecumenism probably felt closer to Evangelical dissenters than to non-Evangelical Anglicans."[10]

Even for those Anglicans who may not have wholeheartedly adopted Whitefield's message or methods, some were willing, it seems, to give him a fair hearing. One such example was that of Francis Stuart, a wealthy Beaufort merchant originally from Scotland. He possessed standard Anglican texts such as Bishop John Tillotson's sermons, the *Book of Common Prayer*, as well as others directly opposed to Whitefield, such as Bishop George Lavington's *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*. He also owned several of Whitefield's sermons and other sermons by Isaac Chandler, the pro-Whitefield Baptist minister on the Ashley River. Although as Walter Edgar has noted, Stuart's possession of these opposing texts is "somewhat surprising," it is possible that he was simply interested in the theological debate of the day and wanted to keep apace. Given his interest in religion--about one-third of his books were religious--it is possible that he heard the evangelist preach in Beaufort. "If Stuart had been converted by the great awakener," Edgar wrote, "he was not sufficiently moved to destroy or discard any of the books in his library."[11]

Another factor, and in many ways the most important for our consideration of social and political harmony, concerns exactly who was impacted by the revivalistic message. For subjective religion to have sway in the social and political arena, it stands to reason that if vast hordes of people are not the respondents, a number of those that do

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[10] David T. Morgan, "The Great Awakening in South Carolina, 1740-1775," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 70 (Autumn 1971): 602

[11] Walter B. Edgar, "The Libraries of Colonial South Carolina" (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 1969), 118-122 (quotations 121).

approvingly respond must carry a degree of political and social clout. This is key to understanding the overall role of pietistic and mystical Christianity in the lowcountry. Robert Weir's study of southern pre-Revolutionary newspapers suggests that as a general rule, colonial elites had far greater social and political influence than their numbers indicate. He demonstrated in this study that the more prominent members of society, who had greater access to a steady flow from the press and who were on the whole more literate, served not only as purveyors, but as sifts of information to other provincials, and consequently transmitted their own, often Whiggish libertarian slant on the news.[12] Given this potential to shape social and political thinking, it is reasonable to suggest that elites could have a similar influence in religious thought as well.

Charleston area residents had the highest per capita wealth among free whites in all of colonial America. Although Charleston's population was less than that of Boston, Philadelphia, and New York, its per capita wealth (counting slaves) was six times greater than Philadelphia, seven times greater than Boston, and eight times greater than New York. In regional comparison inhabitants in and around Charleston exceeded the wealth of those in the Chesapeake by four times and those in North Carolina by as much as ten times.[13] In 1773 John Quincy, Jr. of Boston visited Charleston and commented that "in

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[12] Weir, "The Role of the Newspaper Press in the Southern Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution: An Interpretation," in Weir, ed., *"The Last American Freemen,"* 192-208.

[13] Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 161-162. For a detailed analysis of wealth comparisons see Alice Hanson Jones, *Wealth of a Nation to Be: The American Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

almost every thing, it far surpasses all I ever saw, or expected to see, in America."[14] Even

twenty years earlier in 1753, as one observer of South Carolina noted, "the Men and

Women who have a Right to the Class of Gentry . . . are more numerous here than in any

other Colony in *North America*. . . ."[15]

As an awakening revivalist, Whitefield's attitude toward wealth adds an interesting

nuance to his ministry in and around Charleston. Although very critical of the misuse of

materialism, he emphasized the compatibility of wealth and Christianity. The story of the

rich young ruler has always been a question mark for some wealthy inquirers into the

Christian Faith. Christ's warning that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a

needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" has undoubtedly caused

some in all ages to have second thoughts about complete commitment to the Christian

message.[16] But for Whitefield, such was a misinterpretation of Jesus' words. In 1739 a

"Madam M-----" inquired of the young Whitefield whether her riches would keep her from

heaven. "It is true, Madam," he replied, "that not many mighty are called; but it is not

your riches [that] shall keep you from heaven if you truly believe on the Lord Jesus."[17]

This attitude was decidedly different than that of some other prominent revivalists. Gilbert

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[14] Quoted in Edgar, *South Carolina: A History*, 162.

[15] George Milligen-Johnston, *A Short Description of the Province of South-Carolina, With an Account of the Air, Weather, and Diseases, at Charles-Town*, in *Colonial South Carolina: Two Contemporary Descriptions By Governor James Glen and Doctor George Milligen-Johnston*, ed. Chapman J. Milling (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1951) 134.

[16] Mark 10:25 (King James Version).

[17] George Whitefield to Madam M-----, 10 November 1739, George Whitefield, *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield*, 6 vols. (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1771), 1: 87 (hereafter *Works*).

Tennent, for example, preached directly against the attainment of riches. Wealth was a

source of evil and an impediment to faith. The rich, Tennent argued, "grow in Wickedness

in Proportion to the Increase of their Wealth."[18]

Whitefield's appeal to aristocracy intensified after 1748 when he became the court

preacher for the Countess of Huntingdon. From this point on he increasingly saw his

ministry as one to the upper classes in Britain and America. His popularity with elites

increased after this time as well.[19] Alexander Hewatt recognized the elite attraction to

Whitefield. ". . . Good policy winked at all his irregularities," he wrote, "as he every

where proved a steady friend to monarchy and the civil constitution."[20] His growing

practice of genteel association, Harry Stout has written, expanded his popular appeal and

"satisfied his craving for recognition among the elite," and, more importantly, "insulated

him from the charge of being an incendiary bent on overturning the social order."[21] If the

Anglican elite in Charleston recognized this evolution in Whitefield's ministry, it is not

difficult to see how he would have found in them a responsive audience.

But some lowcountry elites worried over the perceived incompatibility of wealth

and spirituality. That concern is evidenced in a 1767 letter from Henry Laurens to

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[18] Quoted in Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), 32.

[19] Harry S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 212-215.

[20] Alexander Hewatt, *An Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of the Colonies of South Carolina and Georgia*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for Alexander Donaldson, 1779; reprint, Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1971), 2: 170.

[21] Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*, 98.

Jonathan Bryan. Laurens, whose pietistic leanings will be examined later in this and subsequent chapters, was one of the wealthiest merchants and planters in the lowcountry. Bryan, a Whitefield convert, was also a very wealthy planter who owned plantations in Georgia and South Carolina. After moving his residence to Georgia in 1750, Bryan served on the royal council for a time and was that colony's public treasurer for one year (1755-1756). In his latter years he was experiencing some type of problem to which he confided in Laurens. Although the difficulty was unnamed, it appears from Laurens' response to have been related to a dilemma Bryan had over his continued accumulation of wealth and his future state after death.

> . . . I am truly affected at hearing that now in the decline of Life you have any great difficulties to encounter. If it was in my power I would remove every one of them, & so far as it may be in my power I shall think myself happy in opportunities to Lessen or alleviate them. It has been long a maxim with me, that as Men know they must die, they ought often to think of the certainty of that change & uncertainty of the time. So it is likewise their duty to remember that they may Live & that therefore it is incumbent upon them while they have day to continue working in the Vineyard even beyond the eleventh hour that when the Evening cometh they may receive each Man his penny. Hence it is with pleasure that I reconcile a diligent endeavour [for you] to provide for your family & to keep up a good understanding amongst Men, with your most ardent wishes for an heavenly inheritance, which are by no means incompatible.[22]

Thus, Laurens confidently advised that the continued striving for more material possessions, which not only provided for the family but also helped to ensure the maintenance of a coveted genteel reputation, was entirely compatible with a deeply held Christian Faith.

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[22] Henry Laurens to Jonathan Bryan, 4 September 1767, in Philip M. Hamer, et al. eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, 14 vols. thus far (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968--), 5: 288-289 (hereafter *Laurens Papers*).

The Manigault family is another interesting example of evangelical negotiation with issues of wealth. Gabriel Manigault of Charleston, public treasurer and successful merchant, by some accounts the wealthiest man in the lowcountry, seems a poor candidate for Pietism. And indeed his social and political correspondence does not indicate an overt personal interest in experiential spirituality, especially the style promulgated by Whitefield. Yet it is very likely that he was an Evangelical. While owning a pew in St. Philip's, he also owned one in the French Protestant Church. This by itself does not, of course, make him an Evangelical, but it does indicate a willful association with an avowedly evangelical church. Even though the French Church in Charleston had close ties with the Anglican establishment, it was a willing participant in Whitefield's ministry. Whitefield preached there and enjoyed an enthusiastic approbation from its congregants. Moreover, the French Church had been founded on and continued to espouse a strong evangelical confession of faith.[23] Also, as will be seen later in this chapter, Gabriel Manigault was a member of an ecumenical pietistic religious club with ties to Whitefield and other Pietists. These evangelical and revivalistic associations did not stop the Manigaults from their socialite lifestyle. Gabriel's wife Ann often attended the theater and balls (she rarely mentions whether or not Gabriel went with her), worldly actions resoundingly condemned by Whitefield. But going to social functions condemned by Whitefield did not impede her from attending his revival meetings in Charleston.

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[23] See *The Liturgy, or Forms of Divine Service of the French Protestant Church, of Charleston, S. C. Translated From the Liturgy of the Churches of Neufchatel and Vallagin: Editions of 1737 and 1772*, 4th ed. (Charleston: Walker, Evans & Cogswell, n.d.). Article 18 reads, "Wherefore, we reject all other means of being able to justify ourselves before God, and without presuming on any virtue or merit of our own, we rely

From November 1754 to January 1755, Ann Manigault went to one ball and three plays. Then on 14 February she "went to hear a Quaker preacher," and at the end of February and beginning of March she went to hear Whitefield preach on three separate occasions. After attending the Quaker and Whitefield meetings she does not record going to a ball or play for eight months, until the next November (1755). She went to a horse race the following February and a tavern social for the governor in March. Then a long period ensued of twenty months where she did not attend a ball or play until November 1757. From November 1757 to November 1763 she recorded no attendance at a ball or theater. Then within a six month period (1763-64) she attended eleven plays, only to be stopped, it seems, by a severe fit of gout. In March 1765 she went again to hear Whitefield and did not attend another play for almost a year. The last time she recorded going to hear Whitefield preach was 4 December 1769, one year before his death. In her latter years she naturally went less to social functions, probably due to ill health and possibly the unstable conditions surrounding British occupation in Charleston during much of the Revolution. She died in 1782. These entries do not mean, of course, that her earlier temporary hiatuses from worldly gatherings came as a result of hearing Whitefield. Various reasons such as sickness, play scheduling, etc. may just as well explain her actions. The point to be made here is that she fully participated in both types of events with no seeming compunction against either. Whether or not an occasional spiritual tug-of-war waged in her mind over the two must be left to speculation.[24]

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simply on the obedience of Jesus Christ. . . ." Article 20 reads , "We believe that we are made partakers of this righteousness by faith only. . . ." (218-219).

[24] Mabel L Webber, ed., "Extracts from the Journal of Mrs. Ann Manigault, 1754-1781," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 20 (January 1919): 59-61; 20

If Ann Manigault is representative of other lowcountry elites who had positive connections with Evangelical Pietism, it may be that an interest in deeper spiritual pursuits and full participation in elite social functions held no immediate contradictions. If this is so, it may suggest that a sort of peaceful coexistence had emerged by the 1750s (as opposed to the 1740s) between genteel lifestyles and revivalistic religion, a compromise that would most certainly have been required for both to exist side by side. Christine Heyrman's assessment that "on Sabbath mornings, when the sumptuously dressed gentlefolk seated themselves in the front pews of Anglican chapels, evangelicals were not present to witness the spectacle, but were observing the Lord's day among themselves," and that "neither could evangelicals be found dancing at balls held in the great houses or . . . enjoying the gentry's hospitality," is certainly a correct one for many lowcountry elites, but there were significant exceptions to the rule.[25] Some found a way to satisfy both inward spirituality and outward gentility. That does not mean that Whitefield or those of his stripe altered their views on genteel entertainments such as balls, plays, and horse racing. But for some it seems, Whitefield's growing appeal to aristocracy created a flexible enough atmosphere in which to negotiate religious and worldly relationships as circumstances allowed.

(April 1919): 129-141; 20 (July 1919): 204-209; 21 (January 1920): 16; Frederick Dalcho, *An Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South-Carolina, from the First Settlement of the Province, to the War of the Revolution* (Charleston: E. Thayer, 1820), 174. During Charleston's British occupation beginning in 1780, Gabriel Manigault swore allegiance to the Crown. He died the next year. It is possible that his wife Ann, health permitting, had opportunities to attend balls and plays since such functions continued during the occupation.

[25] Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 17.

George C. Rogers has written that "the Carolina aristocracy was never a caste in the eighteenth century; it was always at the center of power. . . ." Over time, this ruling aristocracy, though part of the landed gentry, tended to be mainly, but not exclusively, merchants, an explanation as to why they did not become an exclusive caste. They were usually churchwardens and commissioners and, almost exclusively, members of grand and petit juries. They were men who took their civic duties seriously and performed them regularly. These men of Charleston and the surrounding regions had become by the eighteenth century "a merchant oligarchy [that] ruled the town and, to a great extent, the province." They descended from what Frederick Bowes called that "aggressive minority that soon emerged to dominate the life of the colony." And it was this group that "became more and more confident of its ability to rule, until finally, in 1776, it threw off the one remaining trammel to its power. . . ."[26] Their influence went far beyond political rule. As Weir has shown most were "devotees of country ideology" and kept "abreast of intellectual developments in the mother country; they were importers of culture as well as material goods. . . ."[27]

Part of that cultural importation included religious anglicization. The importance of the Church of England to lowcountry Anglican elites, even those who were Evangelicals, should not be underestimated. As Robert Olwell has noted, "the church embodied not only Christianity but also the persistence of . . . metropolitan cultural identity in the colonial environment." Participation in that communion was an assertion of

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[26] George C. Rogers, Jr., *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969; University of South Carolina Press, 1980), 24, 22; Bowes, *The Culture of Early Charleston*, 115.

[27] Weir, "'The Harmony We were Famous for,'" 14.

"'Englishness' as well as . . . piety."[28] This may explain the attraction that some of Charleston's leading men had toward Whitefield, who saw himself as a vehicle of religious anglicization. Whitefield's assertions of tolerance, for example, were usually presented with an Anglican gloss. While ministering in Charleston in 1740 he noted the atmosphere of compatibility between "Baptists, Church folks [Anglicans], and Presbyterians." This was particularly evident to him as they "all joined together" while he administered the sacraments to them "according to the Church of England."[29] Possibly dissenters in and around Charleston were like many in England who had informed him that they would become Anglican if only that church would come closer to the evangelical doctrines of Regeneration and Justification by faith alone.[30]

This does not mean, of course, that Whitefield's vision of anglicization included converting all dissenters into Anglicans. Although he was himself committed to the thirty nine articles of the Anglican Church and believed that church to be truest to the biblical form, any notion of bringing a majority of dissenters into the Anglican fold was, he realized, completely unrealistic. But he did believe that his church could be rescued from its growing insignificance by demonstrating the extent to which, along with other denominations, it could rally around a common Evangelical Faith. And this compromise could be done, he believed, without threatening the Anglican establishment.

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[28] Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, & Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), 123.

[29] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 450.

[30] Ibid., 90.

Whitefield's plan to transform the Bethesda orphanage into a college is

representative of this vision. His efforts were resoundingly approved by Georgia's

council, assembly, and governor. The Archbishop of Canterbury, however, would not

agree to support the venture unless the charter stipulated that all school masters would be

Anglican. Whitefield, although he insisted that the school be founded upon "a *broad*

bottom" since American dissenters were the primary financial backers, tried to assure the

Archbishop that no such stipulation of Anglican control would be needed. This because

"by far the majority of the . . . wardens, are, and always will be members of that

communion; and consequently the choice of a Master will always continue to run in that

channel." He added that his "heart's desire" was that an Anglican "may be always and

readily found for that grand purpose."[31] Whitefield, life long criticism of its clergy

notwithstanding, loved the Anglican Church and coveted its approbation and participation

in his ministry, two things he rarely if ever experienced to his satisfaction.

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[31] "The Memorial of George Whitefield" to Governor James Wright and the Royal
Council, 18 December 1764, *Works*, 3: 469-470; "The Address of both Houses of
Assembly in Georgia to his Excellency James Wright, " 20 December 1764, Ibid., 471;
Governor James Wright to the Royal Council and Assembly of Georgia, 20 December
1764, Ibid., 472; George Whitefield to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 16 October 1767,
Ibid., 481; George Whitefield to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 17 June 1767, Ibid., 476.
Some local Anglican leaders in Savannah believed that Whitefield was disingenuous to
Georgia authorities in his college scheme. S.P.G. missionary Samuel Frink reported that
"Mr. Whitefield seems to intimate, that the Governor, Council & Commons House of
Assembly in Georgia favored the erecting a College it is true, but never supposed that it
would ever be established upon any other Foundation, than that of the Established Church
of England." He also said of Whitefield's assertion to English church officials that most
Georgians were anxiously awaiting a broad bottomed school, that he did not know of any
except for his "Brother broad bottom," James Habersham. Frink claimed that Habersham,
as president of the council believed that the college would have to be based on the Church
of England even though he secretly wished otherwise, "for neither of them [Whitefield and
Habersham] are friends to any Establishment, but that of a __ broad bottom __ [.]"

Whitefield's anglicization efforts did not go unnoticed, especially by non-English critics. Swiss born German Reformed and Presbyterian minister and sometime Whitefield supporter John. J. Zubly did not like the idea of replacing the Orphanage with a school. "I am amazed at the project to turn orphans out and erect a college on their ruins. . . ." Just as disturbing was what he believed to be a disingenuous action on Whitefield's part in advertising himself as a dissenter's best friend all the while promoting establishment ends. The proposed Bethesda college "I am convinced . . . is designed as a seminary for Methodists [still a short hand term for Anglican enthusiasts]," and, Zubly continued, "Mr. Whitefield in truth loves church power, and is not that open friend to dissenters that he would be thought."[32]

Whitefield should not be considered a one-way transmitter of anglicization. He also initiated, as Harry Stout has argued, *reverse* anglicization. An underlying twist to Whitefield's American revivals was the potential he saw to "reverse the cultural exchange." America could play a major role in reversing "the direction of anglicization," thus recapturing its original "Puritan errand" for the sake of an irreligious Europe. In the early 1740s Whitefield began to see America as becoming the religious center and England the periphery.[33]

Samuel Frink to the S.P.G., 4 August 1768, The Records of the Society For the Propagation of the Gospel, Letters, Series C, 8: 44, S.P.G. Archives, London, microform.

[32] J. J. Zubly to Reverend Ezra Stiles, 19 April 1769, in George Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, vol. 1 (Columbia: Duffie & Chapman, 1870), 360.

[33] Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*, 88-89, 155; Stout points out that Whitefield also saw Scotland as part of the new religious center, Ibid., 89, 155; Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 386.

The South would be part of the center as well. In June 1740 after returning from the North, Whitefield noticed that many in Savannah had begun to respond positively to his message. The weepings and intense supplications were to such an extent, he wrote, "I never saw the like before." In light of this awakening and the progress of the orphanage, he exclaimed, "Savannah will yet become the joy of the earth." His early successes in Savannah and elsewhere indicated that "an effectual door is opening in America," and, he added, "I trust the time is coming when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."[34] Savannah held a key position as headquarters for his American ministry from which the christianization of the whole world would begin.

Charleston had a significant role as well in the birth of this envisioned and uniquely anglicized world evangelization. Earlier in January 1740, after summarizing his impressions of God's marvelous works in the provinces, he said of South Carolina, "I hear of no stirring among the dry bones." But when he returned there from Savannah in July 1740, even though Commissary Garden, he wrote, "condemned all that followed me," many of the inhabitants waited anxiously to hear him preach, usually in the Independent Meeting House, and they donated large sums toward his orphanage. Whitefield regularly went to St. Philip's for morning worship where he more than once heard sermons warning the congregation to beware of him. On one occasion Whitefield noted that Garden's words against him were so "bitter" that several of the parishioners walked out before receiving the sacraments. He noted that in earlier visits the people of Charleston "seemed

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[34] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 431-432.

to be wholly devoted to pleasure."[35] But by the middle of July 1740 significant changes were afoot.

> A vast alteration is discernible in ladies' dresses; and some, while I have been speaking, have been so convinced of the sin of wearing jewels, that I have seen them, with blushes, put their hands to their ears, and cover them with their fans. But the reformation has gone further than externals. Many moral, good sort of men, who before were settled on their lees, have been awakened to seek after Jesus Christ. . . . Indeed, the Word often came like a hammer and a fire.[36]

On 18 July Whitefield wrote to a friend informing him that "God seems to be carrying on as great a work in Charles-Town, comparatively speaking, as in Philadelphia." And, he added, "surely our Lord intends to set the world in a flame."[37] By August he could say of Charlestonians, "the Lord has made a willing people in this day of His power." "Considerable meltings" spread throughout the congregations. "The audiences were more numerous than ever," and "not less than four thousand were in and about the meeting-house, when I preached my farewell sermon." And one of his most prized visible accomplishments was the "very great alteration . . . made in the life and manners of several of the polite ladies." He was especially proud that "the rooms that were usually employed for balls and assemblies are now turned into [religious] society rooms."[38] The previously hardened soil was now producing real and visible fruit, especially among the elite. Charleston it seems, like Savannah and Philadelphia, had become new "cities on a hill" for all the world to see.

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[35] Ibid., 389, 442, 443, 439-440.

[36] Ibid., 444.

[37] George Whitefield to Mr. I. R-----, 18 July 1740, *Works*, 1: 199-200.

[38] Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 449-450.

If leading Anglican elites in Charleston recognized Whitefield as an importer of anglicization, many would likely have been attracted to him if for no other reason than that by this time they as much as any had long led the way, as Thomas Little has written, for "a systematic attempt to refashion the sociocultural system more and more in the vernacular of idealized British values."[39] Moreover, the prospects of reversing those values back to England and the rest of the world would have been that much more attractive. If as Robert Weir has written, an increasing feeling of non-legitimacy in the wider eighteenth century British world fed the inferiority complex of eighteenth century provincial elites to the point that they "turned to their own kind for reinforcement and validation," and "developed a sense of group loyalty not unlike that of other marginal groups," it is not difficult to see how someone like Whitefield could serve as an additional antidote to their fears of insignificance in the world at large.[40] What greater motivation could present itself for American provincial elites than the prospect of helping to lead the restoration of a culture, religious and secular, so highly valued in their hearts and minds.

The blanket assessment that Whitefield's pietistic message, as Frederick Bowes has written, "had little effect on the local aristocracy" except "to deepen their attachment to the Anglican Church and to make them more satisfied even than before with its moderate precepts and dignified forms" is at best an overstatement.[41] Pietistic transcendence as presented by Whitefield and others may well have been seen by some lowcountry Anglican

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[39] Thomas James Little, "The Rise of Evangelical Religion in South Carolina During the Eighteenth Century" (Ph.D. diss., Rice University, 1995), 145.

[40] Weir, "Who Shall Rule at Home: The American Revolution as a Crisis of Legitimacy for the Colonial Elite," in Weir, ed., *The Last of American Freemen,* 79.

[41] Bowes, *The Culture of Early Charleston,* 28.

elites as a means by which their society could remain essentially British yet enter into what they recognized was the realistic world of diverse religious associations. As will be shown, some of the most important leaders in South Carolina responded approvingly to pietistic spirituality during the mid-eighteenth century, and it is possible that they did so with the belief that not only was it beneficial to their souls, but to their English culture as well. By the 1750s some Anglican elites realized that the old Anglican establishment in South Carolina, as represented by Alexander Garden who resigned in 1753, was a thing of the past. As William Kenney III has written, Garden responded to Whitefield's emphasis on "traumatic conversion experiences and ecumenical associations" as one who in utter frustration and vehemence realized he was "a man whose job and thinking had been passed by." Whitefield's message represented in essence "a standing negation" of the old ways.[42] And some Anglican elites found a way to make that new pietistic message palatable since one of their own denomination was proclaiming it.

A core group of these influential elites, if not as a direct result of Whitefield's early 1740s ministry, but certainly related to it, responded to an even more subjectively oriented pietistic and mystical message that emerged in Charleston in the 1750s. Whatever the extent of Whitefield's direct impact on this group, it is almost inconceivable

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[42] William Howland Kenney III, "Alexander Garden and George Whitefield: The Significance of Revivalism in South Carolina, 1738-1741," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 71 (January 1970): 16. This growing Anglican insignificance perpetuated by the "old ways" was evident elsewhere. In neighboring Georgia, for example, Reverend Bartholomew Zouberbuhler reported in 1763 that out of 4,000 in his Savannah parish, only 800 were members of the Church of England, 1,100 dissenters, 1,800 blacks, and 25 Jews. He added that his "Communicants are 50, constant in their attendance & unbleamable [sic] in their Lives." Reverend Bartholomew Zouberbuhler to S.P.G., 14 March 1763, The Records of the Society For the Propagation of the Gospel, Letters, Series C, 8: 12a.

that the events discussed below would have happened apart from his uniquely anglicized evangelical ministry in the early 1740s. That fact becomes even clearer when one considers the emphasis Whitefield placed on transdenominational religious societies which were for him, as Harry Stout has written, an "alternative religious vision."[43]

In 1761, merchant, planter, assemblyman, and militia colonel Henry Laurens, who was becoming one of the premier members of Charleston's elite power class, while in North Carolina on a militia recruiting tour, visited the Moravian community of Bethabara in hopes of establishing a trading link with members of that pietistic sect. It was clear, at least to one Moravian observer, that his visit entailed more than business.

> We had a visit from Mr. Fohock, our County Clerk, and Mr. Henry Laurens, a colonel and wine merchant from Charlestown. They and their company left on the 19th and Br. Ettwein [a Moravian leader at Bethabara] accompanied them as far as Spachs. The Colonel said that he had not come out of mere curiosity, but that he had heard much about us and wished to know us. He modestly asked many questions about our doctrine and mode of life, and seemed well pleased with all. It appeared that he and others had been awakened by Whitefield, and had formed a religious association or club.[44]

This observation is pertinent to our study for several reasons. First, it indicates that this leading Anglican merchant from Charleston was genuinely and personally interested in the Moravian's pietistic beliefs and practices. Second, he found most if not

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[43] Stout, *The Divine Dramatist*, 203-204 (quotation 203). Stout points out that Whitefield wanted his actual revivals to become alternative "transdenominational" "religious associations." Although Whitefield aspired for conventicles on a larger scale, even larger than the churches themselves, his principle was still the same as that upon which small group conventicles were started, namely, an alternative means of evangelical fellowship apart from, but not necessarily in opposition to, standard institutional structures. It should be pointed out as well that Whitefield often worked closely with small religious societies. He never forgot the impact of his Oxford Holy Club associations.

[44] *Laurens Papers*, 3: 56n.

all of their answers on "doctrine and mode of life" much to his liking. Third, he gave the

impression to this Moravian that "he and others" had experienced a spiritual conversion,

and that Whitefield's ministry had precipitated this awakening. Fourth, Laurens indicated

that in connection with their conversions they "had formed a religious association or club."

The first two observations, by themselves, do not necessarily tell us anything more than

that Laurens was being polite to this religious group he was hoping to benefit from

economically. The last two observations clearly indicate that Laurens was being more

than a polite inquirer.

The Moravian observer interpreted Lauren's demeanor as consistent with one who

had undergone a New Birth conversion through the influence of Whitefield. Whether or

not Laurens had been awakened directly by Whitefield's ministry is uncertain. It is

difficult to determine whether the Moravian simply assumed Laurens had been awakened

by the famous evangelist or if Laurens actually made mention of it himself. Although he

did become acquainted with Whitefield and expressed enthusiastic support for his ministry,

and was closely associated with at least two well known Whitefield converts, William

Hutson and James Habersham, Laurens made no definitive reference to the effect that

Whitefield was directly instrumental in his conversion.[45] Nevertheless, something in

Laurens' words or actions led to this association.

That Laurens and associates had started a "religious association or club" is

particularly important. Granted, the forming of para-church Anglican societies was

nothing new. Such organizations existed aplenty throughout England and America in the

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[45] Henry Laurens to James Habersham, 4 March 1770, Ibid., 7: 241-242.

eighteenth century.[46] Having said that, it should be noted that, at least in the mind of this Moravian observer, Laurens' circle formed this club in response to a personal spiritual awakening among them. The forming of conventicles in response to conversion was common in pietistic circles. The same practice accompanied eighteenth century English pietistic movements as well. Wesley's Holy Club, the many Methodist and Moravian societies in London such as Aldersgate, Fetter Lane, and others are examples of this tendency.

As for Lauren's club, no known records exist revealing the specific content of its meetings. Harriott Ravenel in her 1896 biography of Eliza Pinckney mentioned that the two primary leaders of the club, Reverend Richard Clarke (rector of St. Philip's) and Reverend William Hutson (of Charleston's Independent Church) "stimulated the gentlemen to read and discuss the books with which they were supplied from the bookshop of Robert Wells, who for twenty-five years . . . imported 'regularly and early' the new publications." Interestingly, included in the books Wells advertised in June of 1758 (*South-Carolina Gazette*) were titles by Thomas a` Kempis and William Law.[47] David Ramsay referred to the club as a "religious and literary society." He further stated that the meetings were held monthly in various members' homes. One of the several ministers, including dissenters, opened in prayer whereupon "they then discussed some

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[46] For a comprehensive study of Religious societies in Continental Europe and Great Britain see F. W. B. Bullock, *Voluntary Religious Societies, 1520-1799* (St. Leonards on Sea, Sussex: Budd & Gillatt, 1963).

[47] Harriott Horry Ravenel, *Eliza Pinckney* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896; reprint, Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1967), 228. Hennig Cohen, *The South Carolina Gazette, 1732-1775* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), 143; see 16 June 1758, *South-Carolina Gazette*.

literary or religious topic which had been previously agreed on. . . ." Important from a

pietistic perspective was that the "previously agreed on" topic did not require the meeting

to be "so strictly confined to it." Rather, members always made provision for "other

matters not inconsistent with the intention of the meeting . . . [to] be introduced." What

the "other matters . . . introduced" were, can only be left to the imagination.[48] Yet, an

examination of some of the ministerial and lay members provides important information as

to the club's likely direction.

As mentioned above, one of the principal leaders of this society was the Reverend

William Hutson, minister of Charleston's Congregational Independent Church, commonly

known as the Circular Church. In the early 1740s the Circular Church congregation along

with their Harvard trained minister, Josiah Smith, were probably the most enthusiastic

supporters of Whitefield's ministry in South Carolina. When Garden banned Whitefield

from his St. Philip's pulpit, Smith opened up his. In sermons and the public press Smith

had no hesitation in defending the young evangelist's methods and content. It is not

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[48] Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina from its First Settlement in 1670 to the Year 1808*, 2 vols. (Newberry, South Carolina: W. J. Duffie, 1858; reprint, Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1959, 1971), 2: 251; there is no direct evidence that the club referred to by Laurens' Moravian observer was the one mentioned by Ramsay. Yet, all indications are that they were one-in-the-same, especially given the time frame and the strong evangelical connections both had. John Brinsfield has written that this club debated typical Whig topics such as "'whether it be permitted to resist a lawful Ruler if the government cannot be otherwise saved?' , a topic that had been debated at Harvard as early as 1738." John Wesley Brinsfield, *Religion and Politics in Colonial South Carolina* (Easley, South Carolina: Southern Historical Press, Inc., 1983), 61-62. If this type discussion engaged the club members it fits nicely with my earlier assertion of the compatibility country ideology had with pietistic thinking. It also may help to explain Henry Laurens' and Christopher Gadsden's (both members of the club) spiritual rendering of their roles in the American Revolution, as will be discussed in chapter six. I have been unable, however, to concretely verify the club's discussion of these matters as presented by Brinsfield.

surprising, therefore, that the Circular Church would eventually call a Whitefield convert as its minister

Hutson was born in England in 1720. After discovering his distaste for the law profession for which he had been reading, he sailed for New York in 1740 to embark on an acting career. While there he attended one of Whitefield's meetings, possibly drawn by the evangelist's remarkably honed theatrical skills. But, just as in the fourth century when the young rhetorician Augustine attended the famed preaching of Ambrose, mainly to gain tips to enhance his chosen profession, Hutson also received more than he had bargained for. He, like Augustine, converted to Christianity and chose a life wholly different than any previous plans had anticipated. He eventually moved to South Carolina and became a private tutor for Hugh Bryan's children and slaves. After that he served for a time at Whitefield's Orphanage in Georgia.[49]

In 1743 he received a call to his first pastorate. Hugh and Jonathan Bryan, after their evangelical conversions, eventually decided to leave the Anglican Church and become Presbyterians, whereupon they founded the Stoney Creek Independent Presbyterian Church in St. Helena's Parish. They issued a call to Hutson to be the founding pastor. He accepted and served there until 1756 whereupon he accepted a call

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[49] William Maine Hutson, "The Hutson Family of South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 9 (January 1908): 127; Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, 1: 244. Ramsay states that Hutson met Whitefield in England and came over with him in 1740. See Ramsay, *The History of the Independent or Congregational Church in Charleston South Carolina, from its Origin Till the Year 1814* (Philadelphia: J. Maxwell, 1814), 17. But Whitefield stated that he met Hutson in New York. "By my advice, they [the Bryans] have resolved to begin a negro school. A young stage player, who was convinced [converted] when I was at New York last, and who providentially came to Georgia, when Mr. Jonathan B. was there, is to be

from Charleston's Independent Circular Church. In that same year his first wife, who was the widow of the wealthy Isaac Chardon, died. A year later he married Hugh Bryan's widow Mary. Both marriages brought him considerable wealth. Richard Waterhouse has listed William Hutson as among the wealthiest individuals in South Carolina between the years 1736 and 1775. He died in 1761.[50]

Hutson's ministry in Charleston, though short, was very successful. Under his leadership the congregation increased in number to the point that in August of 1759 the sanctuary had to be enlarged. His ministry was not confined to Charleston. He recorded in his diary frequent preaching trips to various places in the province including churches in Dorchester, Wando Neck, and to his former congregation at Stoney Creek. He also preached occasionally in Beaufort, James Island, and Pon Pon. Like Whitefield, Hutson did not confine his ministry to any one sect or denomination. In Charleston, his congregation, along with several others in the city, set aside the first Friday of each month as a public day of prayer.[51] Both Hutson and the St. Philip's rector Richard Clarke delivered weekday lectures to their congregations. The two ministers worked in concert and made sure not to give the lectures on the same day so that they could hear each other. And they did this so that "an opportunity of attending both might also be afforded to such

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their first master." Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 450. See also Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, 1: 248.

[50] Hutson, "The Hutson Family of South Carolina," 127; Ramsay, *The History of the Independent or Congregational Church in Charleston, South Carolina*, 17; Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, 1: 264; Richard Waterhouse, "South Carolina's Colonial Elite: A Study in the Social Structure and Political Culture of a Southern Colony, 1670-1760" (Ph.D. diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 1973), 165-166.

[51] Howe, *History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina*, 1: 265.

of their respective congregation as desired it." Clark even allowed Hutson to preach at St. Philip's.[52] Whatever parallel one might draw from these actions of religious unity, one thing is certain, such would never have been allowed under Alexander Garden's watch.

The most obvious point to be made of Hutson's leadership in this pietistic Anglican/dissenter club is that he was, in a sense, an extension of Whitefield's ministry. This sort of extra-church, transdenominational fellowship was at the core of Whitefield's vision for Christian renewal. It is possible that Hutson's leadership in the club, seeing he was Whitefield's convert and disciple, explains the connection made by the Moravian observer in Bethabara that Laurens and his associates had been converted by Whitefield. Although there is no record to substantiate it, it is highly probable, given his keen interest in such associations, that Whitefield would have visited their club during any one of his visits to Charleston in the 1750s and 60s. That Hutson was Hugh Bryan's hand-picked minister and the husband of Bryan's widow brings another interesting dimension of the extent to which he may have exposed the religious club members and others to pietistic forms.[53]

It appears that the one most responsible for forming and leading the club, however, was the Reverend Richard Clarke, rector of St. Philip's. A brief examination of Clarke,

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[52] Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, 2: 251; Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, 92.

[53] It should be stressed that like Whitefield, Hutson was a committed Calvinist. He probably adhered to much of the Westminster Confession of Faith, which, if closely followed, leaves little room for subjective pietistic forms. Yet, it appears, at least by his close association with Whitefield, the Bryans, and mystic Richard Clarke, he may have developed a medium, as did Whitefield (and Hutson's predecessor Josiah Smith), between subjective and objective forms.

who had a profound impact on several of the club's members, will shed light on the group's likely pietistic and even mystical bent. In 1753 Alexander Garden resigned his rectorship at St. Philip's in Charleston for health reasons. In the farewell letter signed by churchwardens Henry Laurens and William Stone, as well as several other vestrymen and parishioners, Garden is praised for his "able, constant and unwearied diligence in the Ministry." The letter further stated that due to Garden's circumspect care for his parishioners one could "with great Reason and Justice, expect the Propagation of true Religion and Virtue amongst" them.[54] Little did Garden or these dedicated parishioners know what different form the "Propagation of true Religion" was to take at St. Philip's. Through the influence of Benjamin Smith, soon to be Speaker of the Assembly (1755-1763), Garden's successor was Oxford graduate and rising Anglican theologian, the Reverend Richard Clarke.

Clarke could not have been more different than Garden. The Commissary had been known for his anti-enthusiasm supported by a strict and methodical attendance to church form, doctrine, and discipline. And, whereas Garden, in his great distrust of enthusiasm, stressed a strict adherence to reason apart from any notion of an experiential conversion, Clarke stressed the opposite.[55] Evidently, during the last few years of Garden's ministry attendance at preaching had diminished, possibly due to the rector's failing health, but according to Peter Manigault, there was more to it than that. Andrew Rutledge, who had been Whitefield's counsel in the 1740 ecclesiastical trial, wrote to

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[54] *Laurens Papers*, 1: 244.

[55] Lyon G. Tyler, "The Gnostic Trap: Richard Clarke and His Proclamation of the Millennium and Universal Restoration in South Carolina and England," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 58 (June 1989): 147-148.

Peter Manigault in London, that "Rector Mr. Clarke affords his Hearers great Entertainment as well as Instruction, indeed I have seldom heard a better Preacher."[56] After learning that Clarke and his assistant had been so well received at St. Philip's, Manigault wrote to his father Gabriel in Charleston: "It gives me too very sensible Pleasure that the two Clergymen are approved of, as People have a good Excuse to keep from Church when they have but indiffer[en]t Preachers."[57]

Clarke's more evangelically oriented ministry in Charleston had a profound impact on the prestigious St. Philip's parish. He particularly attracted "persons of taste" with his "eloquence." "When he preached," David Ramsay recorded, "the church was crowded, and the effects of it were visible in the reformed lives of many of his hearers, and the increased number of serious communicants."[58] Included in that increased number was Governor William Henry Lyttelton. On 7 December 1756 St. Philip's churchwardens reported to the vestry that the governor was requesting a pew "for his sole use." Vestrymen arranged for him to occupy the pew "under the reading Desk." They also

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[56] Andrew Rutledge to Peter Manigault, [c. late 1753], Manigault Family Papers, 1750-1900, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia. Even though Rutledge's letter is undated, it is clear that he wrote it in late 1753 or early 1754 since Manigault responded to it in a February 1754 letter. Although Clarke did not become the official rector until later in 1754, he arrived in Charleston in October 1753 and evidently began his preaching duties immediately.

[57] Peter Manigault to Gabriel Manigault, 26 February 1754, in Mabel L. Webber, ed., "Peter Manigault's Letters," *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 32 (October 1931): 277.

[58] Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, 2: 251.

reserved a pew "for the use of His Majestys Officers Military & Navy."[59] "Enthusiastic"
religion had entered the most prestigious parish church in the South, and the results were
becoming impressively visible.

Another stark difference between Clarke and Garden was the former's mystically
oriented millenarian tendencies. In 1755, Carolina authorities searched the sea chest of a
sailor who had recently died in Charleston. Among his belongings was a prophetic tract
written by a seventeenth century English Presbyterian minister, Christopher Love.
Believing that the newly appointed Oxford graduate and St. Philip's rector would be the
most qualified to interpret this tract, the Chief Justice of the province turned it over to
Clarke. In the tract Clarke found that Christopher Love made various seemingly correct
predictions concerning the fall of Oliver Cromwell and other events. Love prophesied of
coming earthquakes in 1756, great wars between the colonies and Germany in 1757, fall
of the Papacy in 1758, wandering stars and the moon becoming blood in 1761, the
trembling of America, Africa, and Asia in 1762, and a world wide earthquake in 1763.
After these events, Love prophesied, God would initiate a period of unprecedented
universal peace.[60]

The extent to which Clarke had been drawn to this millenarian motif of
sensationalistic interpretation prior to his accepting the rectorship of St. Philip's in

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[59] St. Philip's Churchwardens to the Vestry, 6 December 1756, Minutes of the Vestry of
St. Philip's, 1756-1774, 11, South Carolina Department of Archives and History,
Columbia, microform.

[60] Tyler, "The Gnostic Trap," 151. According to Clarke, Oliver Cromwell had
Christopher Love beheaded in 1651. For a short evaluation of Love's views see Clarke, *A
Series of Letters, Essays, Dissertations, and Discourses on Various Subjects in Two
Volumes* (London: R. Hawes, n.d.), 331-334. Though the title indicates two volumes, a
second was never published.

Charleston is not certain. One thing is certain, however, the tract by Christopher Love threw Clarke into a life long obsession with prophetic predictions, a practice often associated with radical pietistic and mystical groups. This work by Christopher Love, Clarke later wrote, "first awakened my attention to the Signs of the Times in the Numbers scattered in the Prophets, and in the Revelation. . . ."[61] In 1759 he published one of his early prophetic works. Its title demonstrates the flavor of Clarke's theological direction at this time: *The Prophetic Number of Daniel and John Calculated: In Order to Show the Time When the Day of Judgement for the First Age of the Gospel, Is to Be Expected; and the Setting up of the Millennial Kingdom of Jehovah and his Christ.*[62] After returning to England in 1759 he published two other similar works which were most likely written while still in Charleston. They further demonstrate Clarke's obsession with this method of determining end time prophesy.[63]

This type of biblical interpretation has historically been used by those given to pietistic and mystical subjectivism. A mixture of subjective inward impressions with

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[61] Clarke, *A Series of Letters, Essays, Dissertations, and Discourses on Various Subjects,* 331.

[62] Clarke, *The Prophetic Numbers of Daniel and John Calculated In order to shew the Time, when the Day of Judgement for this First Age of the Gospel, Is to be expected; And the Setting up the Millennial Kingdom of Jehovah and his Christ* (Charles Town: Peter Timothy, 1759).

[63] See Clarke, *A Spiritual Voice to the Christian Church and to the Jews in an Explanation of the Sabbatical Year of Moses by the gospel of Jesus Christ in which the Approaching Millennium is Supported and the Different Durations of Future Punishments are Proved and Confirmed by the Two Revelations of God* (London: J. Townsend, 1760); also see *A Second Warning to the World, by the Spirit of Prophecy. In an explanation of the mysteries in the Feast of Trumpets on the first day of the seventh month. Wherein is shewn the approaching manifestation of our Lord, etc.* (London: J. Townsend, 1760).

creative calculations to mine the hidden meanings of apocalyptic Scriptures is standard

fare for the more radical proponents of pietistic and mystical thought. In the preface of a

later work, Clarke explained his decision to adopt a subjectively directed mystical

hermeneutic. He approvingly quoted Dr. Robert Gill in defense of his system of

interpretation.

> WHEN we meet with seeming unfruitful Scripture, which affords not much matter in
> the *letter*, we may then judge, that according to the manifold Wisdom of GOD, there
> is a ground of some more *notable* meaning of the *Spirit*; as where rich Mines are,
> there the surface of the Earth yields not much Fruit; and if we will search the
> Scriptures . . . as for hidden treasures . . . , we shall not take offence [sic] at the
> surface of the Letter, though more barren; but, from that occasion humbly and
> docibly inquire into the true Treasure of the Spirit hidden under that poor and
> beggarly element[.][64]

Clarke's subjective interpretation of Scripture came in part from his emulation of the

mystical Jewish Kabbala. These "wiser Hebrews," Clarke wrote, "compared the Letter of

the Law to *water*, and the *spiritual* sense to *wine*; so much they thought the *Mystery* to

excel in dignity the mere History."[65]

Another difference between Garden and Clarke was the latter's more ecumenical

spirit. Whereas for Garden one's "profession of religion" must be "regulated in all

respects by the prescribed forms of the church," Clarke saw his role as an Anglican

minister in a more inclusive context. His influence was undoubtedly a key reason there

was, as Ramsay has written, "so great . . . harmony between ministers of different

denominations in Charlestown." The dissenting minister membership of the religious club

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[64] Clarke, *A Discourse on the Third Day of the Gospel, compared with the Seventh Day of the Law* (London: Printed by R. Hawes, n.d.), iv-v.

[65] Ibid., vi.

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is evidence of this more cooperative spirit. Along with William Hutson were John Zubly of the Independent Church in Christ's Parish, and Philip Morison, a Scots Presbyterian minister. Clarke and Hutson's cooperation has been mentioned. Clarke wrote a highly commendatory preface to a work by Zubly entitled *The Real Christians Hope in Death* (1756). Baptist minister Oliver Hart at times went to hear Clarke preach and on at least one occasion Clarke, due to sickness, asked Hart to deliver a funeral message at St. Philip's. On that occasion, Hart remembered, Clarke encouraged "free Liberty, to speak in my Own way. . . ." Such a gesture exemplified to him a true "Catholick Spirit" in the Anglican rector. And, he exclaimed, "Oh that all Bigotry was rooted out of the Earth; then would there subsist a greater Harmony between persons of all persuasions. . . ."[66]

Richard Clarke took his catholic spirit further than most of the ministers in his circle of fellowship. While in Charleston he began to show evidence of universalism. Universalism is the belief that all men everywhere will be finally saved. William Law, among others, influenced Clarke toward a universalist belief. As seen earlier, Law had a profound impact on Wesley and Whitefield. One particular tenet, however, that neither Wesley nor Whitefield adopted from Law was universalism. Clarke, on the other hand, found Law's presentation of universalism much harder to resist and well within the scope of his ever growing mystical approach to the Faith.

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[66] Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, 2 : 256, 251; *Laurens Papers*, 3: 18n; J. J. Zubly, *The Real Christians Hope in Death or an account of the edifying Behaviour of several Persons of Piety in their last Moments*, with a Preface by Richard Clarke (Germantown, Pennsylvania: Zubly, printed by Christopher Sower, 1756); Rogers, *Charleston in the Age of the Pinckneys*, 92; Tyler, "The Gnostic Trap," 148-149; Hart quoted in Loulie Latimer Owens, *Oliver Hart, 1723-1795: A Biography* (Greenville: The South Carolina Baptist Historical Society, 1966), 14.

Law believed that since God was pure love, authentic wrath could not possibly reside in his being. References to God's wrath in the Bible were not given to show God as one who punishes evil but as one who heals or restores it. In his work *The Spirit of Love* (1752) he wrote that "to say . . . that Vengeance is to be reserved to God, is only saying, in other Words, that all the Evils in nature are to be reserved and turned over to the Love of God, to be healed by his Goodness." In another treatise he wrote that the "glorious Extent of the *Catholic Church* of Christ, . . . takes in all the World." And "as sure as . . . [man] is born of *Adam*, [he] has a Birth of the Bruiser of the Serpent within him, and so is infallibly in Covenant with God through Jesus Christ."[67] As a memorial to Law upon his death in 1761 Clarke penned the following which aptly illustrates his own affinity for Law's religious dynamic.

> Farwell [sic], good Man! / Whose great / and heavenly mind / In Love embrac'd the whole of human kind . . . / . . . Bound to no Sect, to no one party tied, / To Sons of God, in every clime allied.[68]

Although Clarke was a universalist, his position should not be confused with later universalism derived from German rationalist thought. The distinguishing mark of many

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[67] William Law, *The Spirit of Prayer and the Spirit of Love*, ed. Sidney Spencer (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. LTD., 1969), 227, 43. There has been considerable debate as to whether or not Law actually taught universalism. It is true that in his earlier writings he did not. Yet, after beginning a systematic study of Jacob Boehme's works in 1735, Law began to adopt universalist teaching. For an examination of this transition see Ibid., Introduction, 9. For works that argue against Law as a universalist see Tyler, "The Gnostic Trap," 167; Erwin Paul Rudolf, *William Law* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 75-76. A. Keith Walker admits that Law did become a universalist but sees the evidence as sketchy. See his *William Law: His Life and Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1973), 222. In my view, there is enough evidence to conclude that the transition to a universalist position took place.

[68] Clarke, *A Series of Letters, Essays, Dissertations, and Discourses on Various Subjects*, 347.

Christian universalists in the eighteenth century, including Clarke, was a more

evangelically oriented restorationism. This type of universal restorationism held that all

would eventually be saved by the all sufficient atonement of Christ and not due to any

absence of original sin or subsequent self-righteousness. It is not altogether clear when

Clarke first adopted universal restorationism. Reverend Charles Martyn, rector of St.

Andrew's parish, indicated in a letter to the S.P.G. that Clarke did not begin preaching

universalism in Charleston until around 1758.[69] But Clarke indicated in a 1777 letter to

philosopher Adam Smith that he had held to universalism for over thirty years, which

would be around a decade prior to Clarke's arrival in Charleston.[70]

After the death of philosopher David Hume in August 1776, Clarke wrote to

Hume's friend and colleague Adam Smith criticizing Smith for his praise filled eulogies

written upon Hume's death. This letter from Clarke to Smith, David Ramsay has written,

"was extensively read and much admired," presumably by Carolina residents.[71] Smith had

written, among other things, that Hume, well known for his rejection of supernatural

Christianity, approached "as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man, as

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[69] Reverend Mr. Martyn to the S.P.G., 24 February 1759, Gertrude Foster, "Documentary History of Education in South Carolina As Revealed in the Manuscripts of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and Other Learned Societies," vol. 9, 1st pagination, "S.P.G. Journals Photostats, vol. 14" (Ph.D. diss, University of South Carolina, 1932), 9. Foster's thirteen volume dissertation (consisting mostly of whole primary documents) has several volumes with cyclical pagination for each section within a given volume, thus the need to specify individual section titles and page numbers.

[70] Clarke, *A Series of Letters, Essays, Dissertations, and discourses on Various Subjects,* 5.

[71] Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina,* 2 : 252.

perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit."[72] Clarke, though distressed over Smith's

approbation for the unbelieving Hume, nevertheless affirmed his belief that the late

philosopher would be in heaven. Clarke wrote to Smith,

> I have written and preached in defense of the *Restoration of all men*, for thirty years
> and more . . . but whatever you, and his admirers may think of his superlative virtues
> (which have placed him on the highest pinnacle of moral perfection) he cannot be
> saved, but through the same blood, in which you and I must be washed clean from
> all filthiness of flesh and spirit.
>   . . . I see the time, when this enemy of our common Saviour must stand before
> him, clothed with white rayment and a palm in his hand; yet what stripes divine
> justice shall apportion to him for his constant and malevolent opposition to *Christ*, I
> presume not to say. I leave him as *Joseph's* brethren, to his kinder brother; and to
> that Blood which speaketh better things than the blood of *Abel*; which though
> despised by him, will work for his salvation, as it does for yours and mine.[73]

Clarke was also heavily influenced by continental mysticism. Radical German

mystic Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) had a profound impact on his thought. Probably one

notion in particular that Clarke drew from Boehme was the possibility of direct inspiration

from God. Just as Boehme claimed direct inspiration in his writings, Clarke asserted that

his essay on Daniel and John came "by a supernatural light, altogether new and

extraordinary to me."[74]

One of the clearest evidences of Clarke's imitation of Boehme was his association

with the Philadelphian sect. After returning to England in 1759 Clarke seemed to become

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[72] Adam Smith to William Strahan, 9 November 1776, David Hume, *Essays Moral,
Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty *Classics*, 1987), xlix.

[73] Clarke, *A Series of Letters, Essays, Dissertations, and Discourses on Various Subjects*,
5, 18. There are two letters in this work addressed to Adam Smith, both polemics against
him for his comments on Hume's death. The first letter was printed in the *Public Ledger*
on 17 May 1777; the second, from which the quotations are taken, has no date listed but
was probably written in the same year since it was a follow-up to the earlier letter.

[74] Quoted in Tyler, "The Gnostic Trap," 157.

increasingly radical in his spirituality. Laurens, who sent his sons to study under Clarke, complained that the former rector had stopped requiring the boys to read their Bibles, a notion not uncommon with mystical contemplation. Eventually, Clarke associated himself with the Philadelphian sect, a group essentially formed to propagate the mysticism of Jacob Boehme. It was consistent for Philadelphian associates to remain within their respective denominations. Although he remained in the Anglican Church, Clarke prided himself in being named a Philadelphian bishop. He wrote that "Dr. Hurd [a Philadelphian leader] has done the Author the honour of advancing him to the HEADSHIP (or BISHOPRIC) of the PHILADELPHIAN Church." And, he added, "this is a station of great eminence" to serve in a church that has the "privilege of being beloved and commended above all Churches, for NOT denying the Name of JESUS , the SAVIOUR." In his latter years Clarke signed his works "Philadelphos."[75]

Also like Boehme, Clarke seemed to have a tendency toward gnosticism. This is especially evident in his millenarian writings. Gnosticism is sometimes related to prophetic prediction because of the former's emphasis on secret knowledge (*gnosis*). Gnosticism has historically come in many forms.[76] There are, however, two common components in historic gnosticism. First, it has always stressed the need to attain secret knowledge, and gnostics who adopted Christian teaching, or at least added that teaching to their system, interpreted the attainment of that knowledge within a semi-biblical framework. Second,

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[75] Clarke, *A Series of Letters, Essays, Dissertations, and Discourses on Various Subjects*, vi (at end of book); Tyler, "The Gnostic Trap," 158.

[76] For a helpful discussion of ancient gnostic thought see Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), 128-140. The following section on gnosticism is derived largely from this work.

gnostics believed in the general proposition that all things material are evil, and good can only be found in the spiritual realm. In this context, gnostics interpreted salvation as the freeing of the spirit from the body. Since the spirit of man has fallen to earth and been captured by the material body, its only chance of freedom from matter is through attaining the *gnosis*. This knowledge comes, not so much by reading Scripture or empirical observation, but is a mystical vision that reveals what we once were in our pre-incarnate form so that we can return to it and be finally saved.

Gnostics generally taught that between the highest deity and man was an elaborate digression of beings (aeons). The Old Testament Jehovah, for example, was considered by many early gnostics as an inferior aeon, and his creation of the material world was a result of his own pride. Christ, to some early gnostics, was one who had perfectly understood the *pleroma* (fullness of the aeon hierarchy), and by virtue of his knowledge, was qualified to help us to attain ultimate freedom from the material world.

It is not clear to what degree Richard Clarke can be considered an actual gnostic. I am not aware of any evidence, for example, that he adopted the idea that the Old Testament Jehovah was inferior or that there was a definite progression of aeons from God to man. He did, however, show certain characteristics consistent with gnosticism.

For Richard Clarke, it seems that biblical numerology was a means by which he could discover, and in his own mind had discovered, the secret *gnosis* revealing when Christ would return to earth and establish his kingdom. Once Clarke had determined the time of the second coming of Christ, he could no longer keep it from his Carolina parishioners. Indeed, he went beyond the church walls and made the streets of Charleston

his extended parish. They too needed the secret knowledge. On 24 February 1759, Reverend Charles Martyn wrote and informed S.P.G. authorities in England of Clarke's growing radicalism. He communicated that

> a most grievous Blow has been lately given . . . by one from whom it might have been expected a principal Support, namely Mr. Clarke of Charles Town. His abilities as a Divine were so great, and his Piety so strict, that he gained over many to the Church of England, and even induced many averse to Religion in general to become hearty espousers of it; but Vanity and Singularity have of late so possessed him, that he now soars beyond all bounds; about a twelvemonth ago he first broke out by asserting absolute universal redemption and limiting future punishments to a certain number of years; after this he proceeded to level all his artillery against the Calvinists, then against our best Divines, and at last represented all the Commentators on the Scriptures, as ignorant or Impostors; about a Month ago, he declared in one of his Sermons that he was directed "by the Spirit of God, to acquaint Mankind, that the Day of Judgment was to happen in less than five Years"; and he has accordingly since published his Calculations, . . . and the confusion occasioned by them is very great; he has now gone for England and has resigned the Rectory of St. Philip's. . . .[77]

On 1 September 1759 Governor Lyttelton gave this astonishing account to the Lords of Trade concerning the rector of Charleston's most esteemed parish:

> In the month of February last the Reverend Mr. Clarke, Rector of one of the parishes in this town, a clergyman of much learning but of an overheated imagination, preached some sermons in which he asserted that the world wou'd very soon be at an end, and that in this month of September some great calamity wou'd befall this province. At length this enthusiasm rose to such a height that he let his beard grow and run about the streets crying, Repent, Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, but on the 25th of March he resigned his Benefice and embarked for England.[78]

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[77] Reverend Mr. Martyn to the S.P.G., 24 February 1759, Foster, "Documentary History of Education in South Carolina As Revealed in the Manuscripts of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and Other Learned Societies," vol. 9, 1st pagination, "S.P.G. Journals Photostats, vol. 14," 9. The S.P.G. annotated Martyn's letter and entered it into the manuscripts on 18 May 1759. The above quotation is from that annotated entry.

[78] Quoted in Rogers, *Evolution of a Federalist: William Loughton Smith of Charleston (1758-1812)* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1962), 33.

There is an important point that needs to be made to which Reverend Martyn's entry calls attention. It appears that as Clarke's millenarian visions intensified, his catholicity waned. Perhaps Clarke illustrates the point made by Frederick Bullock that even though Pietism offers a considerable leverage for tolerance up to a point, if allowed to go to seed, so to speak, it can become a very intolerant and sectarian affair. Pietists, especially those of the "second and third generations," often became "increasingly narrow and limited in their attitude to life." And, Bullock added, "some became very fanatical, especially those who developed extreme chiliastic views."[79] This assessment is applicable to Clarke. Throughout the rest of his life he seemed to grow in antagonism toward those who disagreed with his views.[80]

But it does not appear that Clarke's preaching or radical actions in Charleston were as shunned by his parishioners as Martyn's statement implies. The very opposite seems to be the case. If Clarke had become an embarrassing schismatic "against our best [Anglican] Divines" as claimed, it certainly was not something that distressed the vestrymen, churchwardens, or the majority of parishioners. The mysterious circumstances surrounding his resignation are almost as intriguing as the parishioners' desire to keep him. Clarke informed the vestrymen on 2 October 1758 of his intention to resign due to "Several reasons in my own Breast which I have long weighed and Considered, . . . and

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[79] Bullock, *Voluntary Religious Societies*, 91.

[80] Clarke once wrote in 1772 that "as long as Calvinism in any shape exists, the gospel is trod under foot . . . Calvin's doctrines are the Dragon's mouth with a lamb's face, and an abomination that maketh desolate the whole human race." Quoted in Tyler, "The Gnostic Trap," 159.

for which I only am answerable."[81] On the 16th of the same month vestrymen reported that "a great Number" of St. Philip's parishioners had sent them a letter to be delivered to Mr. Clarke.[82] Although the contents of this letter are not recorded in the vestry minuets, it is clear from Clarke's answer that the people wanted him to be more specific as to his reasons for leaving, and, it may be inferred, their outpouring of interest is indication that they genuinely wanted him to stay. "I am much obliged to you for the Letter Returned in Answer to mine," Clarke wrote, "and I am Sorry that I can make no other Reply" other than what has been stated. "I assign no Reasons, because they are Sufficient to me. . . ." And, he added, "they are also of such a Nature, some of them at least, that it is not in your power to remove," and "I cannot alter my Purpose of leaving you."[83] He resigned 9 February 1759 and once in England took a position as the Stoke-Newington lecturer at St. James' Aldgate, London.[84]

Clarke had a loyal following among the Charleston elite after his departure. Henry Laurens read Clarke's and William Law's works and in 1762 passed them on to his Moravian friend Reverend John Ettwein. Though Laurens passed no value judgments one way or the other on the writings, it is likely that he had been influenced through Clarke's positive recommendation. "I send you together with his [Richard Clarke] Prophetic Numbers another treatise published by him, The spiritual Voice &ca." The three tracts by

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[81] Richard Clarke to the St. Philip's Vestry, 2 October 1758, Minutes of the Vestry of St. Philip's, 1756-1774, 36.

[82] Minutes of the Vestry of St. Philip's, 1756-1774, 37.

[83] Richard Clarke to the St. Philip's Vestry, 16 October 1758, Ibid., 37-38.

[84] Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, 2: 452.

William Law were entitled *The Spirit of Love* (1752), *An Humble, Earnest, and Affectionate Address to the Clergy* (1761), and *A Collection of Letters on the most interesting and important Subjects, and on several Seasons* (1760).[85] Ettwein was enthusiastic about Law's works commenting on the "many Pearls & very essential Truths in them." "Tho' I am quite a Novice to Mystic Luanguage [sic]," he wrote, "the love of God &cc and these Scripture Truths, I eat with Delight." As for Clarke's writings, Ettwein simply stated, "I wish he had remain'd a Preacher of Jesus Christ and think he would thereby have more wrought in the Vineyard of the Lord, than by his Writings."[86] Although Moravians were generally more mystically inclined than the above statements suggest, Clarke's strong mystical and millennial elements were, it would appear, too radical even for Ettwein. Laurens, on the other hand, at least at this stage in his spiritual journey, did not show the same degree of reservation.

The works of Clarke and Law supported Laurens' long held universalist tendencies. Lauren's early childhood impressions indicate his natural bent for a more

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[85] Henry Laurens to John Ettwein, 7 April 1762, *Laurens Papers*, 3: 93. In January of 1762 Henry Laurens' brother James imported a shipment of "good books" "to sell cheap." All of them (seven) were by "the late pious Mr. Law. . . ." Hennig Cohen, *The South Carolina Gazette, 1732-1775* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1953), 145; see 30 January 1762, *South-Carolina Gazette*. The copies that Henry sent to John Ettwein were likely from this shipment. The following is an example of Law's pietistic emphasis from *A Collection of Letters on the Most Interesting and Important Subjects*. ". . . The Kingdom of God is said to be within us, and not to come with outward Observation, but to be in us, as a secret, living Seed of the incorruptible Word; since our Hearts is [sic] our whole Life, and we are said to live, and move, and have our being in God, it [Scripture] is directly telling us that we are to turn inwards, if we would turn to, and find God." William Law, *The Works of the Reverend William Law, M. A., Sometime Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.* 9 vols. (London: Printed for J. Richardson, 1762; reprint, Setley: G. Moreton, 1892-93), 9: 113. *An Humble, Earnest, and Affectionate Address to the Clergy* is also in volume nine of this collection.

[86] John Ettwein to Henry Laurens, 24 June 1762, *Laurens Papers*, 3: 103.

inclusive view of salvation. The Athanasian Creed, which insisted on "unmerciful Doctrines" and "intolerant damnatory tenets, as essential to Salvation," was especially loathsome to Laurens. "When I was a Boy . . . I . . . heard my Father & my Mother & many other good old People profess that Creed with great warmth of Devotion," he said in 1775. "I, at the same time inwardly exclaiming_ this can't be true_ I cannot beleive [sic] it. . . ."[87] In 1773 he wrote of one of Christianity's most ardent critics, the ailing Francois Marie Arouet, better know by his pen name, Voltaire, that his "passage" of death, "be his Errors in Judgement what they may, must be Smoothe, and, I have too much Charity if it does not also prove, Safe." And, he added, "the mistakes of the most brilliant Reptile fancy, cannot defeat the Schemes of unerring Wisdom."[88] In other words, Laurens believed that Voltaire would go to heaven.

Henry Laurens and Benjamin Smith, former Speaker of the Assembly, sent their sons to England in the early 1770s to be educated under Clarke, further demonstrating the extent of elite approbation for the mystical rector.[89] This vote of confidence is remarkable considering the circumstances surrounding Clarke's departure. Although after a while Laurens became very disillusioned with Clarke, he nevertheless kept a certain if strained affinity for him and continued to purchase his writings. While in England in 1773 Laurens went to hear Clarke preach. Afterwards he wrote to his friend Dr. Alexander Garden (the

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[87] Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 4 June 1775, Ibid., 10: 176, 177; Laurens enclosed his 1775 Test Oath speech with a letter to his son John. The statement quoted is from that speech.

[88] Henry Laurens to Richard Oswald, 31 May 1773, Ibid., 9: 57.

[89] See *Laurens Papers*, 8: introduction xiii, 2n, 19, 27, 35n.

scientist) expressing his approbation that Clarke had seemingly become less radical in his millennial views yet maintained his ability to awe his hearers, even without a particularly good sermon. "Our Dear Friend Mr. Clarke is now certainly more like the Man whom you & I remember in 1757, than like him whom we knew & pitied in 1759, . . . everything about him seems to Soar above the common Atmosphere of this Terrestrial Globe." The sermon, Laurens continued, was "the least applausable that I had ever been Witness of, but so uncommonly excellent from that Pulpit, it commanded the most Reverential Silence." And, he continued, "Every Eye was fixed upon him, every Heart was affected & their Collecting Plates were filled with Gold instead of Silver."[90]

Two observations need to be made concerning Laurens' statement. First, it shows the clear fascination he had for the man and his preaching. Clarke possessed a certain heavenliness in his spiritual deportment that Laurens craved. In spite of his past excesses, Clarke continued to hold a certain sway over Laurens. Second, Laurens' words clearly show the selectivity of his retrospection. His statement that in 1759 he pitied the man, hardly coincides with his actions immediately after Clarke's departure that same year, since he continued to purchase Clarke's works, took subscriptions for them, and sent two of his sons to study under him in England. Neither does his recollection match the belief of the St. Philip's vestrymen. ". . . Rev. Richard Clarke, who has performed the duties of Rector of St. Philip's Church in Charles-Town, South-Carolina, for upwards of five years," the vestrymen certified, "has behaved himself with gravity, diligence and fidelity

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[90] Henry Laurens to Alexander Garden, 13 February 1773, Ibid., 585-586.

becoming his office and character."[91] Granted, it may have been commonplace to speak well of a departing minister, even if his behavior was less than desirable. But this statement is consistent with the balance of the evidence in the vestry minutes which indicates a deep sorrow felt by all over his departure. Thus Laurens' and others' actions and words in relation to Clarke upon and immediately after his departure makes the hindsight description of pity unconvincing.

It is true that Clarke, over time, greatly disappointed Laurens. There were two reasons for this. First, he was displeased with Clarke's performance as a schoolmaster for his sons. He believed that Clarke was not academically strict enough with his boys, and that because of this laxity they were in danger of wasting away vital formative years. He also, as noted earlier, expressed particular concern over Clarke's neglect of the Bible as a tool for his son's instruction. In 1772 Laurens bemoaned to his brother James that Clarke "used to impress the necessity for reading the Bible upon his particular friends as a Book containing the History of All men & of All Nations, & even as a necessary part of a polite Education" but now neglected and even disallowed "the reading of the same Book in his family & to his Pupils. . . ."[92] Possibly, as Laurens approbation of Clarke's sermon a year later (1773) may indicate, the mystic Clarke had, for a time at least, gone back to the Bible as an objective basis for his preaching.

But a second reason for Laurens' disappointment with Clarke became evident in 1774. Laurens, who, it seems, placed some stock in the validity of Clarke's prophesies,

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[91] Dalcho, *An Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South-Carolina*, 180-181.

[92] Henry Laurens to James Laurens, 19 August 1772, *Laurens Papers*, 8: 427.

became disillusioned over their repeated inaccuracies. He wrote to his son John, now studying in Geneva, "our old freind [sic] Mr. Clarke is publishing a New prognostic of Some grand Event" to occur in 1777. "I Shall enquire [sic] for the work. In the mean time I remark, that there are as graceless Bankrupts in Divinity as in Commerce." And, he added, "our freind [sic] failed in his former Capital of prophesies."[93]

Thus, Laurens did not necessarily disapprove of Clarke for his initial millenarianism per se, and certainly not for his mystical and pietistic spirituality that surrounded the prophetic utterances. Laurens' falling-out with Clarke came later over a practical matter of his sons' education and the obvious inaccuracy of his predictions. Notwithstanding these expressions of disillusionment, Laurens greatly esteemed Richard Clarke during his ministry at St. Philip's, even after his more radical ways evidenced themselves on the Streets of Charleston. And he was not alone. Several within the elite circle associated themselves with Clarke, a fact that suggests the pietistical and mystical approbation to which some were inclined. And, for our purposes, an identification of certain of these influential men, whether club members or other of Clarke's circle, will further elucidate the point that Evangelical Pietism's transcendent inclinations helped to facilitate religious consensus, which in turn aided the advancement of political harmony.

As for Clarke's and Hutson's religious club, the lay membership reads like a who's who of South Carolina's important colonial leaders. Anglican members of the club included Henry Laurens (1724-1792)--vestryman and churchwarden (St. Philip's), merchant and planter, assemblyman, council nominee (declined), and future President of the Continental Congress; Christopher Gadsden (1724-1805)--vestryman (St. Philip's),

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[93] Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 17 January 1774, Ibid., 9: 228-229.

assemblyman, military leader, ardent republican, and future member of the Stamp Act and First Continental Congresses; Gabriel Manigault (1704-1781)--vestryman (St. Philip's), merchant and planter, public treasurer, council nominee (declined twice), and assemblyman; Benjamin Smith (1717-1770)--vestryman and churchwarden (St. Philip's), planter and merchant, council nominee (declined), assemblyman, and Speaker of the Assembly (1755-1763). Presbyterian members included Daniel Crawford (d. 1760)--assemblyman, justice of the peace, and Commissioner of Fortifications for Charleston; John Rattray (d. 1761)--lawyer, planter, notary public, assemblyman, Vice-Admiralty Judge, Commissioner of Fortifications for Charleston, council nominee (died *pre facto*). David Ramsay noted that there were "several others whose names are not now distinctly remembered."[94]

On 8 December 1759 a notice appeared in the *South-Carolina Gazette* listing the names of those who would be designated receivers of subscriptions for a forthcoming two volume set of sermons by Richard Clarke. It has been suggested that the names listed in this notice likely included other club members that Ramsay could not recall. Whether or not this is the case, their role as subscription receivers for Clarke indicates their continued interest and possible approbation of his work. In addition to Gabriel Manigault, Benjamin Smith, John Rattray, and Henry Laurens (all listed above as pietistic club members), the following names appear in the subscription notice: Hector Berenger de Beaufain (1697-

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[94] *Laurens Papers*, 3: 18; David Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, 2: 251; Walter B. Edgar and N. Louise Bailey, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives*, vol. 2, *The Commons House of Assembly, 1692-1775* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 390-394, 259-262, 428-430, 625-628, 171-172, 548-549.

1766)--immigrant from France, pew renter at St. Michael's, assemblyman, councilor,

justice of the peace; James Mickie (Michie) (d. 1760)—vestryman (St. Philip's),[95] lawyer,

planter, assemblyman, Speaker of the Assembly (1752-1754), councilor, Vice-Admiralty

Judge, Chief Justice; Sir Egerton Leigh (1733-1781)[96]--vestryman (St. Philip's),

assemblyman, councilor, Surveyor General, Vice-Admiralty Judge, Attorney General,

Judge of the Court of Chancery; David Rhind--physician; John McQueen (d. 1762)--

vestryman (St. Philip's and St. Michael's), merchant and planter, assemblyman; Robert

Smith--Anglican priest (succeeded Clarke as rector at St. Philip's), future patriot, first

Episcopal bishop of South Carolina after the Revolution; John Moultrie, Sr. (1702-1771)--

vestryman and churchwarden (St. Philip's), physician, planter, assemblyman; John Murray

(d. 1774)--physician, assemblyman; Alexander Garden--physician, famed botanist, future

fellow of the Royal Society of London (1772); Peter Timothy (1725?-1782)--pew renter

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[95] For Michie's listing as a St. Philip's vestryman see 23 April 1744 and 20 July 1747, St. Philip's Church Records, Warden Accounts, 1725-1751, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston.

[96] As for the harmony that may have emanated from this pietistic group, there were, as with any human relations, exceptions on the individual level. Egerton Leigh and Henry Laurens became bitter enemies over personal and political differences. Leigh developed a particular dislike for what he believed to be Laurens' overt display of pietistic religious expression, a point that will be examined in more detail later in the study. If with less personal disdain, real differences existed between Henry Laurens and Christopher Gadsden. The two had been life long friends (born the same year in Charleston), but that friendship waned as political differences between them grew starting in 1761 with disagreement over Cherokee peace negotiations and the next year over the Gadsden election controversy. Their differences notwithstanding, Laurens' and Gadsden's political positions once the Revolution started were in the main not all that different. Both were patriots and inclined toward eventual religious disestablishment, Gadsden, if more vigorously than the ever cautious Laurens.

at St. Philip's, printer, owner of *South-Carolina Gazette*, friend and associate of Benjamin Franklin, assemblyman.[97]

In both groups listed above, of the thirteen men who were assemblymen, eight were serving in that capacity during the time Clarke and Hutson led the club.[98] One was serving his last year as Speaker of the Assembly during Clarke's first full year in Charleston; another served as Speaker during the rest of Clarke's tenure at St. Philip's; another had recently resigned his seat on the council (1755), and another moved from the assembly to the council during Clarke's last year. These do not necessarily include other important offices of public service these club members or associates held before, during, and after this period.

The important point here is that this religious club, whose members, if Laurens' Moravian observer was correct, held evangelical conversion in common, and who, by all indicators, were given to or at least compatible with a pietistic and mystical bent, was comprised of some of the wealthiest and most influential men in the eighteenth century Carolina lowcountry. Moreover, their association therein calls into question the common assumption that the Charleston aristocracy ignored and besmirched Evangelical Pietism. At the very least the men listed above defy that common assumption. For the Anglican

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[97] *Laurens Papers*, 3: 18; Edgar and Bailey, *Biographical Directory of the South Carolina House of Representatives*, 2: 65, 452-453, 396-399, 451, 483, 489-490, 672-675; the identification of John Murray is uncertain seeing there were at least five others by the same name, one of whom served in the assembly as well (490); Bolton, *Southern Anglicanism*, 79, 95; Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, 2: 251, 256-257.

[98] It is not clear when the religious club meetings actually began. It was some time prior to Clarke's departure in 1759, but the number of years prior to that time is not certain. Ramsay's account seems to indicate that during much of Clarke's tenure (1754-1759) in Charleston, the club was in operation. See Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, 2: 251.

members especially, their association in such an ecumenical and pietistic conventicle is even more remarkable since, for many of them, Alexander Garden had been their life long rector. His warnings had fallen on deaf ears.

It should be stressed that belonging to the club and taking subscriptions for pietistic works do not necessarily mean that these men personally adopted Evangelical Pietism. Although, some clearly did. And the inward spiritual reasons for doing so should not be diminished by looking for some dominant political motivation. But beyond the spiritual, certain political and social motivations as alluded to throughout this chapter inevitably come into the picture. In this regard, the point is not so much whether they were themselves converts to Evangelical Pietism or believers in Clarke's millenarian predictions as was their open willingness as men of authority in the church and government to give a favorable hearing to pietistic and mystical forms which had just years before been officially condemned by the Anglican establishment. Moreover, the potential for those subjective forms to cross previously impassable denominational divides did not likely escape their thinking. Whatever might be said of the Anglican members of this club, it seems they recognized that in an Erastian society with an ever growing dissenter power base, establishment must positively respond to or initiate overtures of religious conciliation if harmony is to continue. Evangelical Pietism was at least one means by which such responses and overtures could be made.

Chapter Five

"An Inconsiderable Evil": Evangelical Pietism and the
Sanctification of Slavery

> I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds: Which in
> time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me: Whom I
> have sent again: thou therefore receive him, . . . Not now as a servant, but above a
> servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in
> the flesh, and in the Lord[.] . . . If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as
> myself.
>
> (The Epistle of Paul to Philemon 10-12, 16)

During the antebellum era, southern Evangelicals progressively used Christian

doctrine to justify chattel slavery. By the 1850s a biblical pro-slavery polemic was wide

spread and deeply entrenched in the culture. That the slave was a dependent family

member within a Christian covenantal system became a principal defense for the

righteousness of the institution. The nineteenth century christianization of slavery went far

in differentiating that era's improved humanitarian treatment of slaves from that of the

early colonial period.[1] Although in the colonial era covenantal theology had long been

applied to the master/slave relationship among New England Puritans, the same had not

permeated thinking in the southern Anglican lowcountry. As Jon Butler has pointed out,

the early Anglican tradition stressed more "a broad doctrine of obedience" and

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[1] That slaves were less expendable in most of the antebellum era was due in large measure
to higher prices and no overseas slave trade (after 1808). These factors encouraged over
time a greater emphasis on increasing the slave population by natural birth, resulting in
more stable and concentrated family units within the slave population. These, along with
greater humanitarian sensibilities born of an increased emphasis on covenantal relations,
made the slave's existence in the antebellum years more tolerable.

consequently failed to develop "an effective doctrine of limitations that might have

prevented slave mistreatment in the way traditional legal customs restrained British

husbands, masters, and kings."[2]

The mental journey a society would likely travel from viewing the slave as an

expendable object to a familial and spiritual being would naturally uncover a host of

complications along the way. During the colonial period, evidence that a strong sense of

dilemma dominated the slaveholder's thinking emerges again and again whenever

Christian ministers stressed the need to christianize slaves. The reply that christianization

would create a lazy and proud labor force, hinder productivity, and most importantly,

endanger the right of ownership itself, consistently echoes throughout the sources.[3] As

early as the first decade of the eighteenth century South Carolina Anglican minister

Francis Le Jau saw the necessity to accommodate slaveholders' fears by incorporating into

the slave baptismal formula the following promise: "*that you do not ask for the holy*

baptism out of any design to free your self from the duty and Obedience you owe to your

Master while you live[.] . . ."[4]

Peter Kolchin has noted that the religious attitude of blacks and whites was one of

the most pronounced differences between the colonial and antebellum periods. And the

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[2] Jon Butler, "Enlarging the Bonds of Christ: Slavery, Evangelism, and the Christianization of the White South, 1690-1790," in *The Evangelical Tradition in America*, ed. Leonard I. Sweet (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1984), 105.

[3] Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery, 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), 54-55; Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), 134-135.

[4] Francis Le Jau to the S.P.G., 20 October 1709, in *The Carolina Chronicle of Dr. Francis Le Jau*, 1706-1717, ed., Frank Klingberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), 60.

change came, Kolchin noted, when "a serious movement to bring Christianity to the slaves . . . gathered force in the middle of the eighteenth century. . . ."[5] John Boles has also credited the period of Pietism's entrance into the South as key to understanding this change. He wrote that "the half-century following 1740 was the critical period" that started the transformation. It was the time when "some whites broke down their fears and inhibitions about sharing their religion with the slaves. . . ." Although "few at first," blacks consequently began "to find in Christianity a system . . . that was genuinely attractive."[6]

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the role Evangelical Pietism played in transforming the relationship between Christianity and slavery in the lowcountry during the colonial period. It certainly was not the only force that facilitated change. Other entities within Anglicanism were attempting similar measures. But it did play a vital role, not only in its appeal to the slaves, but also in the flexibility it afforded Christian slave owners who were able to find some escape from the otherwise spiritually paradoxical confines in which they found themselves. Those in this mold who could not bring

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[5] Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 54.

[6] John B. Boles, ed., *Masters & Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 5. For a probing examination of the Great Awakening's impact on slavery see Winthrop D. Jordan, "The Souls of Men: The Negro's Spiritual Nature," chap. in *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968; W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), 179-215; also see Michael A. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 246-263; for a concise treatment of the convergence of African religion with Christianity in slave worship see Charles Joyner, "'Believer I Know': The Emergence of African-American Christianity," in *African-American Christianity: Essays in History*, ed. Paul E. Johnson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 18-46.

themselves to abandon slavery needed some sort of spiritual compensation to balance out the inequities they knew existed within the system. Slavery as a necessary evil was not good enough for an Evangelical slaveholder, it needed to be, on some level, a positive good. The search for this balance involved, as Eugene Genovese has shown for the later antebellum period, a slow and carefully crafted paternalistic trade off between slaves and masters.[7] Even though in the process of this exchange there existed a host of real paradoxes that had to be worked out in the minds of Christian masters, some were able to do so without compromising wealth or faith.

Underneath these pietistic endeavors, however, existed an ironic twist. The wedding of slavery and spirituality involved mutual advancement. That is, if slavery was to be seen as a positive spiritual good, and if it could aid in the advancement of the Christian message, then it needed to be strengthened where it existed and expanded where it did not. This is exactly what happened. "When evangelical Christianity was transformed from a competing ideology to a supporting exponent of the dominant order," Alan Gallay has explained, "the path was cleared of obstacles for its spread through the South."[8] Thus, slavery became a tool for the furtherance of the evangelical message and a means by which evangelical slave owners could fulfill their spiritual obligations to the heathen entrusted to their care. To advance this notion of a christianized slavery,

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[7] See Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Random House, 1972; Vintage Books, 1976), 3-7.

[8] Alan Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite: Jonathan Bryan and the Southern Colonial Frontier* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 164.

paradoxical assertions of humanitarian treatment and tightened control had to somehow find common ground.

George Whitefield uniquely embodied this two sided approach in that he was a spokesman for the advancement of pietistic and humanitarian sensibilities toward slaves as well as a spokesman for the very system that enslaved them, all, as with everything he did, for the sake of propagating the gospel. The Stono Rebellion began on 9 September 1739 while Whitefield was crossing the Atlantic for his second trip to America. On 30 October he landed in Pennsylvania, just under two months after the insurrection. After a series of meetings he set out by land toward the southern lowcountry. Three days outside of Charleston on 2 January he and his company encountered a "hut full of negroes" who, upon request for directions, claimed to be "newcomers." Immediately Whitefield and his companions worried that "these negroes might be some of those who lately had made an insurrection in the province, and had run away from their masters." They fled the area "expecting to find negroes in every place." Upon reaching a plantation house, they learned that the blacks were not runaways. The news, Whitefield recounted, "afforded us much comfort , after we had ridden nearly threescore miles, and, as we thought, in great peril of our lives."[9]

This experience likely added to the already weighty and troublesome thoughts Whitefield had recently been churning over in his mind concerning slavery. During this most recent trek through the southern colonies he took note of the harsh and unchristian treatment some slaves were receiving at the hands of their masters. The problem was

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[9] George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), 383.

especially acute, he believed, in South Carolina. Just days after arriving in Savannah he addressed these concerns in a formal letter for publication entitled "A Letter to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina."

He opened the letter with expressions of genuine concern. "As I lately passed through your provinces, in my way hither, I was sensibly touched with a fellow-feeling of the miseries of the poor negroes. . . ." He then asserted that "God has a quarrel with you, for your abuse of and cruelty" to them. Whitefield even went so far as to question the Christian's right to own slaves. "Whether it be lawful for christians to buy slaves, and thereby encourage the nations from whence they are brought to be at perpetual war with each other, I shall not take upon me to determine. . . ." He was sure, however, that it was "sinful . . . to use them as bad as, nay worse than brutes. . . ." Your slaves are worked more extensively "than the horses whereon you ride," and while "your dogs are caressed and fondled at your tables," your slaves "are scarce permitted to pick up the crumbs" that fall from them. He acknowledged eyewitness accounts where, "upon the most trifling provocation," slaves were "cut with knives, and had forks thrown into their flesh . . . [and some masters] have ploughed upon their backs, and made long furrows, and at length brought them even to death itself." Such ill treatment by some slave owners prompted Whitefield to wonder why there had not been more slave insurrections. "And though I heartily pray GOD, they may never be permitted to get the upper hand; yet, should such a thing be permitted by providence," he concluded, "all good men must acknowledge the

judgment would be just." If masters continued to ignore the physical needs of slaves, especially in the withholding proper raiment and food, God would intervene in judgment.[10]

But it was not physical cruelty and neglect that concerned Whitefield the most. The want of attention to spiritual matters outweighed any temporal mistreatment. "Enslaving or misusing their Bodies, would, comparatively speaking, be an inconsiderable evil, was proper care taken of their souls. . . ." He surmised that most slave owners "on purpose" kept their "negroes ignorant of christianity." Whitefield re-assured those who feared christianization "would make them proud, and consequently unwilling to submit to slavery," that nothing in Christianity "has the least tendency to make people forget their relative duties [.]" Conversely, the reason so many are insubordinate, he argued, is "because so little Care is taken to breed them up in the nurture and admonition of the LORD."[11]

Whitefield was not alone in the push for christianization of the slaves. Such was the original mission of the S.P.G. True, at its inception in 1701 the S.P.G., as Frank Klingberg has observed, "based its program on an acceptance of slavery and racial inequality of status." But over time the Society "became convinced, . . . that, though the program would be slow of realization," Klingberg continued, "the Negro in slavery could

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[10] George Whitefield, "A Letter to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina," in Whitefield, *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield*, 6 vols. (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1771), 4: 37-39 (hereafter *Works*).

[11] Ibid., 39-40; see Ephesians 6: 4.

be Christianized and educated, in order that he could assume his proper role in the social structure."[12]

In May 1740 Alexander Garden, although highly critical of Whitefield's unsettling letter, was undoubtedly prompted by the awareness it raised to unveil his plans for a negro school.[13] He proposed that the S.P.G. purchase two "Home Born Male Slaves, not under the age of twelve, not exceeding that of Sixteen Years, and who shall appear to be of Sober docile Dispositions. . . ." The course of study, which he would personally lead, involved instruction "in the Principles of the Xtn Religion as contained in the Church Catechism, [in learning] to read the Bible, and [how] to make use of the Book of Common Prayer. . . ." Once the young boys were qualified, they could teach other slave children from many plantations, who would upon returning to their homes, educate other slaves, including adults, on the various plantations. For Garden this was a long term strategy that "would bring in at least a Dawning of the blessed Light amongst them. . . ." Over time "as a Sett or two of those children grew up to Men and Women, [they] would gradually diffuse and increase into open Day." He believed that if his plan were implemented, within

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[12] Frank J. Klingberg, *An Appraisal of the Negro in Colonial South Carolina: A Study in Americanization* (Washington, D. C.: Associated Publishers, 1941; reprint, Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1975), 123.

[13] Alexander Garden responded to Whitefield's controversial letter stating that his words "may endanger the Peace and Safety of the Community." He also argued against Whitefield's conclusions of slave's general mistreatment in South Carolina. Slave's "Lives in general are more happy and comfortable in all temporal Respects (the Point of Liberty only excepted) than the Lives of three fourths of the hired *farming* Servants, and Day Labourers, either in *Scotland, Ireland,* or even many Parts of *England,* who not only labour *harder,* and fare *worse,* but have moreover the Care and Concern on their *Minds* how to provide for their Families; which *Slaves* are entirely exempted from, their Children being all provided for at the *Owner's* Charge." Alexander Garden to George Whitefield, 30 July 1740, in Garden, *Six Letters to the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield,* 2nd ed. (Boston: T. Fleet, 1740), 51, 52.

the space of twenty years "the Knowledge of the Gospel 'mong the Slaves . . . would not

be much inferior to that of the lower sort of white People, . . . either in England or

elsewhere. . . ."[14]

But this was not the type of christianization Whitefield had in mind. To those he

anticipated would say that slaves "taught Christianity" were "remarkably worse" than

those who were not, Whitefield asked, "But what christianity were they taught?"

Learning how to "read and write" and being baptized did not bring them any closer to the

"kingdom of GOD," and, he added, "there is a vast difference between civilizing and

christianizing a negroe." He challenged his readers "to produce a single instance of a

negroe's being made a thorough christian, and thereby made a worse servant. . . ." His

answer to the challenge was simply, "It cannot be."[15]

Whitefield believed that education, even religious education, that did not attend to

man's heart, would indeed lead to pride and impudence and would hinder future attempts

at conversion. In Whitefield's *Law Gospelized*--his own revamping or evangelicalizing of

William Law's work *Serious Call*--he addressed the same problem. He, with Law, wrote

that "modern education," even the kind that "children generally receive from virtuous and

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[14] Quoted in Klingberg, *An Appraisal of the Negro in Colonial South Carolina*, 106-107; Garden's plan was implemented. Two boys, Harry and Andrew, were trained personally by Garden. Andrew never attained the measure of intellectual prowess Garden required and was eventually sold. Harry taught slave children until his death in 1764, whereupon the school closed. The school particularly flourished under Richard Clarke's guidance. The 1756 S.P.G. report was that the school was "full of children and well attended;" and upon Clarke's departure in 1759 his successor at St. Philip's, Robert Smith, reported that the school was "in a very flourishing State, there being 50, or 60 Negro Children. . . ." Ibid., 111, 119-121.

[15] Whitefield, "A Letter to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina," 40.

sober parents, and learned tutors and governors," tends to "puff up their minds with a

sense of their own abilities." Such training is an "obstruction to a devout life," and is the

reason "true piety . . . [is] so seldom seen." The humility that naturally attends Christian

conversion will temper the less desirable elements of modern education. "'Resist,

therefore, and look up to CHRIST for a conquest over every thought of *self-pride* and *self-*

distinction. . . .'" Thus, "'aspire after nothing but an interest in the righteousness of JESUS

CHRIST; and as a consequence of that, your own purity and perfection.'"[16]

This differentiation in the means of christianization is crucial in understanding

Evangelical Pietism's role in the reshaping of slavery. It is not that pietistic principles are

contrary to literacy or to a creedally oriented religious education. As seen earlier in this

study, the Halle Pietists championed educational advancement probably more than any

other religious group of their day. Whitefield also stressed education at his Bethesda

orphanage. But to him this was not the means by which one was made a "thorough

Christian." For Whitefield and other revivalists, time was of the essence. That is, one did

not wait over a period of years, as Garden proposed, for a gradual "Dawning" and

"diffuse" of the gospel. Rather than using children to educate children in hopes that adults

would slowly be nurtured into the kingdom, Whitefield proposed in his letter that "as for

the grown negroes, . . . whenever the gospel is preached with power amongst them, . . .

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[16] Whitefield, "Shewing that the education which men generally receive in their youth,
makes a devout life difficult to be practised [sic]; and the spirit of a better education
represented in the character of Paternus," chap. in *Law Gospelized; or, an Address to All
Christians Concerning Holiness of Heart and Life: Being An Attempt to render Mr.
Law's Serious Call more useful to the Children of God, by excluding whatever is not truly
Evangelical, and illustrating the subject more fully from the Holy Scriptures*, in *Works*, 4:
414, 408, 407, 412, 413; the last two quotations are Paternus speaking to his son.

many will be brought effectually home to GOD."[17] In other words, instantaneous

conversion was the means of christianization. There was nothing gradual about it.

Although Whitefield was in favor of the conversion of children, his wider preaching

ministry was to adults, who, in the proper order of things, would ideally propagate the

message to their families. This was, after all, the covenantal way.[18]

In the context of evaluating the various approaches to slaves' religious education,

Carter G. Woodson concluded that pietistic sects in colonial America, as opposed to

Anglicans, represented what he called "Religion without Letters." That is, the

pedagogical process for learning the Christian faith came through oral rather than literary

tradition. Consequently, the later Methodists "came, not emphasizing the observance of

forms which required so much development of the intellect," Woodson observed, "but

laying stress upon the quickening of man's conscience and the regeneration of his soul."[19]

Although "Religion without Letters" inadequately describes Whitefield's overall method, it

goes far in illustrating the different approaches toward christianization, especially as to

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[17] Whitefield, "A Letter to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina," 40.

[18] This does not, of course, mean that Whitefield was uninterested in the early conversion and training of slave children. He wrote the following in his journal in 1739 after hearing two black children repeat prayers after him: "This more and more convinces me that negro children, if early brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, would make as great proficiency as any white people's children. I do not despair, if God spares my life, of seeing a school of young negroes singing the praises of Him Who made them, in a psalm of thanksgiving. Lord, Thou hast put into my heart a good design to educate them; I doubt not but Thou wilt enable me to bring it to good effect." Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*, 379.

[19] C. G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861: A History of the Education of the Colored People of the United States from the Beginning of Slavery to the Civil War*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D. C.: The Associated Publishers, Inc., 1919; reprint, New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1968), 179, 181.

how such a process should begin. In fairness, it should be noted that Whitefield believed that conversion could not be separated from some degree of theological learning and assent (i.e. essentials of the gospel). He also believed that some conversions, though instantaneous at the threshold of repentance and belief, often times required the travail of "birth pangs." Notwithstanding these exceptions, Whitefield believed that christianization could not even begin apart from an instantaneous conversion experience. And one did not need to be able to read, write, memorize the catechism, or be baptized to have such an experience.

Later in his letter on slavery, Whitefield asserted that South Carolina, for its physical and especially spiritual neglect, was already under God's wrath. God "has been in a remarkable manner contending with the people of *South-Carolina*: their houses have been depopulated with the small pox and fever, and their own slaves have risen up in arms against them." Also, he added, "a foreign enemy [Florida Spaniards] is now threatening to invade you. . . ." He reminded Carolinians that "GOD first generally corrects us with whips," and if the correction is ignored, "he must chastise us with scorpions." But if they would repent, he assured, "the sons of violence" would not harm them, and their sons and daughters would exceedingly prosper. In sum, he concluded, "'Then shall the LORD be your GOD.'"[20]

If this letter were all Whitefield wrote on the subject, one might conclude that he was a champion for slaves' rights and a prototype of later Christian abolitionism. Modern Evangelicals commonly see Whitefield as a towering figure in this area of social reform.

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[20] Whitefield, "A Letter to the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina," 41.

For example, one writer in *Christianity Today* magazine stated in 1970 [two hundred year commemoration of Whitefield's death] that Whitefield "is imperishably engraved on the scroll of the world's greatest evangelists. But his influence was more than evangelistic. The great social reforms of the nineteenth century were byproducts of the Gospel he preached."[21] More recently, referring to pietistic awakenings in general, theologian Donald Bloesch wrote that "it was out of the Pietist and evangelical awakenings that the social conscience of the nations was stirred so that finally action was taken against the slave trade, child labor, animal cruelty, gambling and a host of other evils."[22] As true as this may be for Pietism in other places and other times, it is not altogether true of Whitefield. Three years after writing his scathing letter to southern slaveholders he wrote an anonymous sermonic letter to recently converted slaves which, though it demonstrates some of the same qualities of humanitarian sensibility as in his earlier letter, nevertheless places him squarely within the pro-slavery camp.

The evidence for Whitefield as the author of this letter is circumstantial but very strong. The internal evidence suggests similarities with Whitefield such as sermonic style and theological content. The letter's title suggests his authorship: "A Letter to the Negroes Lately Converted to Christ in America, And Particularly to Those, lately Called out of Darkness into God's marvellous Light, at Mr. Jonathan Bryan's in South Carolina. Or A Welcome to the Believing Negroes, into the Household of God" (1743). It was signed, "By a Friend and Servant of Theirs in England." The association with Jonathan

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[21] *Christianity Today* 15 (9 October 1970): 31.

[22] Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 93.

Bryan strongly suggests that Whitefield wrote it, especially considering their close friendship and known mutual efforts to convert slaves.[23] Also, earlier while in England in 1742 Whitefield received letters from Bethesda informing him that several slaves had been converted on Jonathan Bryan's plantation. He responded thus: "I find there has been a fresh awakening among them. I am informed, that twelve negroes, belonging to a planter lately converted at the Orphan house, are savingly brought home to Jesus Christ."[24] Also, at the turn of the twentieth century, Jonathan Bryan's biographer, J. H. Redding wrote of "a copy of a letter he [Bryan] received from Mr. Whitefield" she found "in the old South Library, Boston" that bore the title "A letter to the negroes lately converted in America. . . ."[25] This was the same anonymous letter. Thus, even though Whitefield's name has not been directly connected with it, the evidence that this letter was from his hand is very compelling.

Whitefield greeted his "very Dear Brethren" welcoming them "into CHRIST's Fold." Though at one time strangers, they were now in "*the Household of God.*" He reminded them that their acceptance in God had no basis in their own merits. "No verily; it was nothing but his own *free, rich, infinite Love,* that put him [Christ] under a

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[23] Stephen J. Stein, "George Whitefield on Slavery: Some New Evidence," *Church History* 42 (June 1973): 243, 251; All quotations from the letter are taken from this article. Stein used a copy from the Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut; [George Whitefield], "A Letter to the Negroes Lately Converted to Christ in America, And Particularly to Those, lately Called out of Darkness, into God's marvellous Light, at Mr. Jonathan Bryan's in South Carolina. Or A Welcome to the Believing Negroes, into the Household of God," (London: Printed by J. Hart, 1743).

[24] Quoted in Stein, "George Whitefield on Slavery," 251.

[25] Ibid.

Covenant-Necessity to bring you to himself, and unto God by him." He marveled that "even you despised Negroes" have a place in God's family. They were welcomed into "our *House of Defence* [sic], our House of *Store* . . . [where] Provision . . . [and] no Want of *Safety*, no Want of *Supply* . . . [and] a full and everlasting *Security*" awaited them. Whitefield transferred their recognized physical lack into spiritual desire. "*Come in then* you hungry, thirsty Souls, that want *Abundance of Grace*; there's *all* in CHRIST ready prepar'd, to satisfy your longing Appetites, and infinitely exceed your largest Desires." In the Lord's house are "rich Provisions, [and] Royal Danities [sic]," and there is no withholding of them, for they "are dispens'd *Freely!*"[26]

But with heavenly blessings come earthly responsibilities. Whitefield admonished them, in light of their great and new position in God's family, to "*go to work for God*; do all that you are concern'd in, in *Obedience to God*, in *Love to him*, with an *Eye to his Glory*." Do not succumb to the temptation of insubordination. Christ will be grieved if you falter upon this important point. "It is better to *suffer*, than *sin*; to *die*, than *sin*." Resolve to "be valiant for the Cause of your Royal MASTER, and *endure Hardness, as good Soldiers of JESUS CHRIST*." Keep in mind, he stressed, that being in God's spiritual family does not remove you "from *the Service of your Masters according to the Flesh*." Therefore, he added, "*serve him* in *serving them*, in obeying all their lawful Commands, and submitting to the *Yoke* his Providence has placed you under." The "Yoke" that you bear "is CHRIST's *yoke now*." It has been placed upon you "by your REDEEMER's *Hand*, . . . [and] his *Love*, his *Law*, calls you, binds you to wear" it. And then he exhorted, in his well known sermonic fashion,

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[26] Ibid., 252-253.

Oh *take it on you freely*: The *Love* of CHRIST will make it so *easy*, that it will not *hurt your Necks*; and by your chearful [sic] and constant *Obedience, put to Silence the Ignorance of foolish Men*, of your nominal *Christian Masters*; who having never felt the constraining Power of Christ's Love in their own Souls, have thought, and said, "That if you, their *poor Slaves*, were brought to *Christianity*, you would be no more *Servants to them*." Oh never let this Calumny be cast upon Christ's Holy Religion, by the disagreeable Behaviour of any of you *believing Negroes*! [27]

There are several points to consider in light of these admonitions for securing the slaves' responsible Christian behavior. In one sense, Whitefield may be seen as a transmitter of the mystical *vita activa* into their spiritual experience. Whether one sees this as a Protestant ethic or as a Taulerian mystical concept, the result is largely the same. Labor is a means to advance the spiritual life. Thus, Whitefield employed what he knew was a present physical burden and turned it into a spiritual benefit. Also, his stress on the inevitability of suffering and the spiritual blessings related to it is reminiscent of his own cravings to suffer for the faith, an impulse enlarged in his thinking by August Francke's work *Nicodemus*. His presentation of the slave masters, even the nominal Christians, as divine surrogates is particularly interesting. Obedience to them, even to the point of suffering and death, was a principal means of demonstrating obedience to God. The master's commands, therefore, embodied the will of Jehovah.

The statement that Christ's love would make the yoke of slavery "so *easy*, that it will not *hurt your Necks*" is on one level nothing more than a metaphor suggesting the relative benefit of suffering in a Christian context. On another level Whitefield is clearly hinting, as some pietistic and mystical interpreters have, at the possibility of actually reversing certain physical results of the original curse on sin. It will be recalled from the

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[27] Ibid., 254.

book of Genesis that a principal judgment that followed on the heels of man's sin was the curse of hard physical labor. And just as the toiling by the "sweat of the brow" was a wage of sin, so too could its reversal, at least in lessening the harshest levels of drudgery and pain, occur at the point of faithful obedience. Compare the following statement by Spanish mystic St. John of the Cross (1542-1591). If one who's "lower and sensual part" along with their "higher . . . part" reaches spiritual union with God, he can become "tranquillized with respect to sense and spirit, in accordance with the state of innocence that was enjoyed by Adam."[28] That is, in the reclaimed state of innocence and union, the sensory elements become so enmeshed with the spiritual, all cumbersome and weighty elements lose their force. Although it is almost certain that if pressed Whitefield would not have taken curse reversal in as literal a sense as did St. John of the Cross, he obviously held the same notion on some comparable level. He became even more specific on this point. Although slaves "have a *special* Part of this *Toil about the Ground*, that came in by the Curse," Jesus Christ "has taken away the *Curse* out of all your Pain and Grief, your Toil and Labour."[29]

Whitefield hedged on the physical benefits of curse reversal later in the discourse. In doing so he presented the slaves' unfortunate lot of forced labor as a result of original sin, a position, though, that would make their future world that much better. Christ's deliverance will come quickly for you "*poor Slaves*," and you will be freed "from all that *Bondage* which came in by *Sin*." By-and-by God "will take down your *mortal Bodies*,

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[28] St. John of the Cross, *St. John of the Cross: The Dark Night of the Soul*, trans. Kurt F. Reinhardt (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1957), 220-221.

[29] Quoted in Stein, "George Whitefield on Slavery," 254-255.

that now are subjected to Pain and Slavery, and lay them for a while in the Dust, to rest as in a perfum'd Bed, by Virtue of his own lying in the Grave for you." But until then, "the *lower* you stoop for Christ now," he added, "the *higher* will he advance you, when of the freest Grace, he comes *to give Rewards unto his Servants according to their Works.*"[30] The level of grandeur their heavenly rewards would reach was contingent on how faithfully and hard they worked in the earthly fields.

These converted slaves took on possibly the heaviest responsibility in becoming caretakers of Christ's good name. Attempts to escape or not faithfully work at their assigned tasks would be a disgrace to their new found faith. Their misbehavior would cause "Calumny [to] be cast upon Christ's Holy Religion." Thus, they were not only obligated to be obedient servants for their own spiritual well being, but for the reputation of Christianity itself. Obedient Christian slaves were employed as the examples of how those in the worst of circumstances should conduct themselves. They were to be, in essence, evangelists by their submissive lives.

In that same decade Whitefield had the opportunity to move his evangelically informed pro-slavery position beyond sermonic discourse into public policy.[31] Almost from the beginning of Georgia's existence, an influential group of malcontents had tried to change that colony's labor policy which had been formalized in a 1735 law prohibiting slavery. Patrick Tailfer and company argued that the province's very survival depended on the legalization of slavery. But opponents of slavery in the province argued among

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[30] Ibid., 255.

[31] For a discussion of Whitefield's role in bringing slavery to Georgia see Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite*, 47-54.

other things that Georgia's situation was unique in that it faced an ever growing threat of direct Spanish invasion. Fear that the Florida Spanish would conspire with slaves to disrupt the colony's security or provide a haven for slave runaways was always a concern. The 1739 slave uprising in South Carolina brought considerable credibility to Georgians' fears since the Stono insurrectionists believed St. Augustine to be a place of refuge. But after Oglethorpe's decisive defeat of the Spanish at the Battle of Bloody Marsh in 1742, threats of Spanish interference were largely moot. Also, once Oglethorpe departed the colony in that same year, his strong anti-slavery stance was no longer an impediment to those who wanted change.[32] Some South Carolina planters "dangled carrots" hoping to elicit change. William Stephens noted in March of 1745 that "several Gentlemen from Carolina . . . came ashore" informing that they and others "would soon flock hither . . . and be glad to obtain Lands, when they saw once a door open to let in Negroes. . . ." Stephens added that "Our Carolina Neighbors have of late been pretty much addicted to such kind of Talk. . . ."[33] By 1749 that "kind of Talk" from within and without pressured the reluctant Trustees to explore a possible repeal of the 1735 law. George Whitefield played no small role in helping to apply the pressure.

Since 1746 Whitefield had owned slaves on his own South Carolina plantation. Both the slaves and plantation were "through the bounty of my good friends," Jonathan and Hugh Bryan. The purpose of this plantation was primarily to supply Bethesda with food. In time, however, it became clear that without more help than this venture could

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[32] Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia, 1730-1775* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), 8-9, 77-78, 82.

[33] E. Merton Coulter, ed., *The Journal of William Stephens, 1741-1743*, vol. 2 (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1959), 202-203.

provide, the orphanage might not survive. Finally in December of 1748 Whitefield wrote

to the Georgia Trustees hoping to persuade them toward allowing slavery. "I need not

inform you," he wrote, "how the colony of Georgia has been declining for these many

years last past, and at what great disadvantages I have maintained a large family in that

wilderness. . . ." The Bethesda tracts were unproductive "entirely owing to the necessity I

lay under of making use of white hands." He explained that "had a negroe been allowed"

there would be "a sufficiency to support a great many orphans. . . ." He compared the

relative productivity of his South Carolina plantation with the Bethesda tracts, and

concluded that even though at present he had only eight slaves on the former, "there will

be more [productive crops] raised in one year, and with a quarter the expense, than has

been produced at *Bethesda* for several years last past." In light of such a comparison,

"Georgia never can or will be a flourishing province without negroes are allowed."[34]

Whitefield had more in mind than just reminding the Trustees of the need for a new

labor system. He gave subtle threats of possible withdrawal from the province if

something was not done.

> My chief end in writing this, is to inform you, honourable gentlemen, of the matter of
> fact, and to let you know, that I am as willing as ever to do all I can for *Georgia* and
> the Orphan-house, if either a limited use of negroes is approved of, or some more
> indented servants sent over. If not, I cannot promise to keep any large family, or
> cultivate the plantation in any considerable manner. My strength must necessarily be
> taken to the other side.[35]

The above statement would have been of great concern to the Trustees. After all,

Bethesda employed more people than any other one entity in the province. With the

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[34] George Whitefield to the Georgia Trustees, 6 December 1748, *Works*, 2: 203-204.

[35] Ibid., 209.

already depressed state of the colony, that ministry's withdrawal "to the other side" of the

Savannah river into South Carolina would be devastating.[36]

On the other side of the negative threat was a positive incentive. If the Trustees

would allow for slavery, efforts would be made "to make the Orphan-house not only a

receptacle for fatherless children, but also a place of literature and academical studies."

As anyone knew, "such a place is much wanted in the southern parts of *America*; and if

conducted in a proper manner, must necessarily be of great service to any colony." He

added that he could "easily procure proper persons to embark in such a cause" and that he

knew "several families [who] would go over" provided there would be "a probable

prospect of . . . support upon their honest industry."[37]

Five months after the writing of this letter, the Georgia Trustees put into motion

the repeal of the 1735 law prohibiting slavery. On 1 January 1751 slavery was legalized in

Georgia. Whitefield was elated. He rejoiced that not only would Georgia profit

financially but, more importantly, the slaves would profit spiritually. "I think now is the

season for us to exert our utmost for the good of the poor Ethiopians," he wrote to

Johann Bolzius, Halle Pietist minister to the Salzburgers. He even surmised that the

allowance of slaves into the province might be the actual fulfillment of Old Testament

prophesy. "We are told, that even they [Ethiopians] are soon to stretch out their hands

unto GOD." "And," he added, "who knows but their being settled in *Georgia*, may be

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[36] Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite*, 50. Although Whitefield does not specifically say that "the other side" refers to South Carolina, it is, as Gallay indicates, the most likely interpretation (50).

[37] George Whitefield to the Georgia Trustees, 6 December 1748, *Works*, 2: 209.

over-ruled for this great end?"[38] Bolzius had long been an opponent of bringing in slaves

to Georgia. His misgivings were more for fear of what a black presence would do to his

people's spiritual morals than for any humanitarian reasons held.[39] Although Bolzius had

yielded to the inevitable and agreed to the new system, he probably had lingering doubts

as to the wisdom of the decision. Whitefield appealed to Bolzius' intense evangelical side

to allay those fears, or at least to put them within the perspective of a greater good. "By

[the slaves] mixing with your people [Salzburgers], I trust many of them will be brought to

Jesus. . . ." And when one keeps in mind "this consideration, as to us [Evangelicals]," we

know that it "swallows up all temporal inconveniencies [sic] whatsoever."[40]

But mixed with his joy was a hint of doubt. For all the good he perceived slavery

could do, there were still lingering questions in his mind. Much of his letter to Bolzius

was, it seems, an attempt to rationalize the correctness of his chosen course. That the

patriarch Abraham had slaves and that New Testament Apostles seemed to justify the

institution's existence, led him to accept with "no doubt" the "lawfulness of keeping

slaves. . . ." For whites born in freedom, "liberty is a sweet thing," but for "those who

never [k]new the sweets of it, slavery perhaps may not be so irksome." Even with these

attempts to convince himself that bringing slavery to Georgia was justified, he was clearly

uncomfortable with playing a role in the decision, even to the point of claiming no role at

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[38] George Whitefield to Mr. B[olzius], 22 March 1751, *Works*, 2: 404. Whitefield's
Ethiopian reference was taken from Psalm 68: 31.

[39] For an excellent discussion of the Salzburger's position on the slavery question see
Wood, "The Salzburgers and Slavery, 1734-1750," chap. in *Slavery in Colonial Georgia*,
59-73.

[40] George Whitefield to Mr. B[olzius], 22 March 1751, *Works*, 2: 405.

all. Either a humble disposition or a selective memory led him to tell Bolzius, "you know, dear Sir, that I had no hand in bringing them into *Georgia*; though my judgment was for it. . . ."[41]

The most pressing problem Whitefield had with slavery was the trade itself. Slaves "are brought in a wrong way from their own country, and it is a trade not to be approved of," but, he added, "it will be carried on whether we will or not. . . ." Moreover, if he "could purchase a good number of them, in order to make their lives comfortable, and lay a foundation for breeding up their posterity in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," he would consider himself "highly favored."[42] Thus, he reasoned that the end result of bringing the heathen into the house of God's love would surely cover a multitude of sins. He later expressed the same sentiment from the slave's perspective in a piece he wrote entitled *A Prayer for a poor Negroe*. In this prayer, the slave praises God for the middle passage to America. "Blessed be thy name, for bringing me over into a christian country. O LORD, let me not come in vain."[43]

For a while, Whitefield's view of slavery, which almost reached the level of a Christian sacrament, helped to create a more humanitarian ideal in Georgia's version of slavery than could be found in any other colony. The first slave code drawn up by the Trustees, for example, was not so much a regulation on slaves as it was on the owners. Betty Wood has written that the Trustees "main concern was with whites who maltreated their black workers" and thus emphasized "the duties and responsibilities of the white

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[41] Ibid., 404-405; see Gallay, *The Formation of a Planter Elite*, 50.

[42] George Whitefield to Mr. B[olzius], 22 March 1751, *Works*, 2: 405.

[43] Ibid., 4: 474.

community. . . ." Essentially it "amounted to a rigorous code of behavior for Georgia's

whites." Physical "chastisement," the code stipulated, "endangering the Limb of a Negroe

or Black," carried substantial fines for the first offense, "not less than the Sum of Five

pounds Sterling," and even greater for subsequent offenses, "not less than . . . Ten pounds

of like Money. . . ." If a white murdered a slave, "the Criminal [shall] be tried according

to the Laws of Great Britain," an indication that the full penalty of the law could be

imposed. The only carefully stipulated punishment for slaves had to do with

miscegenation. But even then, the white offender could be subject to the same "Corporal

Punishment."[44]

Of major import was the code's requirement for the christianization of slaves.

Whites were not allowed to work their slaves on Sunday and were required to ensure that

they received religious instruction on that day. The master had a civil and Christian

obligation to care for the spiritual welfare of his slaves.

> . . . If any Person or Persons shall not permit or even oblige his or their Negroe or
> Negroes Black or Blacks to attend at some time on the Lords Day for Instruction in
> the Christian Religion in such Place and Places as the Protestant Ministers of the
> Gospel within the said Province shall be able to attend them contiguous to the
> Residence of such Negroe or Negroes Black or Blacks such Person or Persons shall
> for every such Offence [sic] forfeit the Sum of Ten pounds Sterling Money. . . .[45]

Certainly Whitefield was not the only influence for a more humanitarian treatment

of slaves. Trustees and other officials had long believed that fair treatment would

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[44] Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia*, 84; Allen D. Candler, ed., *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, vol. 1 (Atlanta: The Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, 1904), 58-60.

[45] Candler, ed., *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, 1: 59; see Wood, *Slavery in Colonial Georgia*, 85.

minimize any threat blacks might bring. Also, with the code's built-in ratio of no more than four blacks for every white, the Trustees believed, as the malcontents had long argued, that overt insubordination would be rare, lessening the need for strict rules regulating slave behavior.[46] The Trustees' own motivations notwithstanding, just as sure as Whitefield's influence helped persuade them to allow slavery, it also figured into the relative humanitarian nature of its initial establishment in the province.

The code itself lasted only five years. With the influx of South Carolinians after legalization, their influence began to be immediately felt on the colony. Several were able to secure places in the Georgia Commons House of Assembly, and through their influence, that elected body replaced the first code with a less benevolent one.[47] But despite this drawback from Whitefield's ideal, the long term impact that his pietistic principles initiated advanced the paradoxical reality of a more tolerable if more entrenched system of slave labor.

Once the system was in place, Evangelicals in high places who were connected with Whitefield's circle, both in England and America, further engaged in evangelically motivated pro-slavery polemics. William Knox played this role as fully as anyone.[48] Knox had come to Georgia in 1756 as provost marshal, and soon took his seat on the royal council. He also purchased sizeable tracts of plantation land. He eventually left for London in 1762 after being appointed as Georgia's London agent. His support of the

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[46] Wood, Slavery in Colonial Georgia, 85.

[47] Ibid., 87.

[48] For an examination of William Knox's and James Habersham's role in defending slavery see Leland J. Bellot, "Evangelicals and the Defense of Slavery in Britain's Old Colonial Empire," *The Journal of Southern History* 37 (February 1971): 19-40.

Stamp Act eventually led to the severing of official ties with the province. While in

Georgia Knox developed a very close relationship with James Habersham, who looked

after Knox's American affairs upon his return to England.[49] By the eve of the Revolution

he had attained 8,400 acres and 122 slaves. In 1770 he took the position of

undersecretary of state in the American Department under a fellow Evangelical, Lord

Dartmouth. Knox served in that position until 1782.[50]

Although he stressed that he did not support the "wild enthusiasm of methodism,"

Knox was nonetheless an outspoken Evangelical.[51] Denial of the eighteenth century taboo

"enthusiasm," much more "wild enthusiasm," was nothing new for Evangelicals or even

Pietists. Few enthusiasts admitted as much. As seen earlier in this study, the term was

used and is still used in such a pejorative manner, its utility for historians is somewhat

limited. For Knox, it does appear that his denial is credible. He was an evangelical

Anglican whose lineage was more from a Calvinistic Scotch-Irish tradition than from

English Methodism or Continental Pietism. Nevertheless, his actions do show a great deal

of sympathy with pietistic and even mystical expressions. For example, in 1775 James

Habersham reported to the Countess of Huntingdon that Knox had recently "sent over

two Moravian Brethren, both Germans, to instruct his Black People" in Georgia. This

action in itself demonstrates a tilting toward pietistic forms. That one of the Moravians

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[49] Bellot, *William Knox: The Life and Thought of an Eighteenth-Century Imperialist* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), 39-40; James Habersham, *The Letters of Hon. James Habersham, 1756-1775*, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, vol. 6 (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1904), 97n.

[50] Bellot, "Evangelicals and the Defense of Slavery," 26.

[51] Quoted in Bellot, "Evangelicals and the Defense of Slavery," 27n.

did not speak English lends even more weight that Knox looked favorably on subjective religion. As we have seen, pietistic and mystical expressions generally placed less emphasis on objective verbal and creedal formulations and more emphasis on the illuminative and emotional. Of course Evangelical Pietists such as Whitefield and others demonstrated a dual subjective/objective adherence and, thus, cannot be placed entirely within one or the other. Knox seems to fit into this dual category as well.

Habersham's response to these Moravians sent by Knox illustrates well the extent to which an Evangelical Pietist could trust in the subjective elements of faith. He liked both men, but especially the less educated one who spoke little English, a layman (taylor by trade) around forty five years old. His way with the slaves impressed Habersham.

> [He] cannot speak English well enough to be understood, altho' he reads it Tolerably. He is now settled at my, Plantation, and I have given orders that he may be properly provided for, and have free access to all my People at Convenient Times, and I have great Expectations, that the Lord will bless his Labours, as he appears to be a most simple-hearted, devoted Soul, but in other Respects, he seems to be an improbable Instrument of doing good, from his present Incapacity of speaking to the Negroes, hiwever [sic] I care not for that, as I do not depend on him but the Grace of God speaking in him to be of use.[52]

Thus, Habersham, and one would assume Knox, adopted a classical pietistic notion that spiritual understanding could be transmitted apart from an objective, propositional conveyance of truth. The non-Pietist believes that the "Incapacity of speaking" made one "an improbable Instrument of doing good." But to the Pietist the lack of objective communication was not necessarily a hindrance. In fact, dependence on words conveyed to the understanding showed a lack of dependence on God. Filial feelings and emotions

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[52] James Habersham to the Countess of Huntingdon, 19 April 1775, Habersham, *The Letters of Hon. James Habersham*, 241.

were enough to ensure that "the Grace of God" was indeed "speaking *in him*" [emphasis mine]. Theirs was a "Religion without Letters."

Whatever the extent of Knox's pietistic beliefs and endeavors for his own slaves, his most noted contribution lies in his efforts to formulate one of the earliest formal pietistic defenses of slavery. As Leland Bellot has written, he represents "one of the earliest attempts of an evangelical slaveholder to justify and to resolve the tension between Christian equality and human bondage." Knox also serves as a corrective to the notion expressed by David Brion Davis and others that Christian defenders of slavery were motivated more by economic than religious reasons. Knox, Whitefield, and Habersham were deeply religious men who would not have easily violated their Christian principles for temporal ends. This is not to suggest that economic concerns did not play a role, for they certainly did. But it does suggest that satisfaction of slavery's positive religious and evangelical good had to be ensconced in their minds before they would ever argue for its establishment and expansion. From Knox's perspective, Bellot added, "slavery was justifiable as a positive good because it provided the only means--in an era prior to European penetration into the African interior--for bestowing the blessings of salvation upon black men."[53]

After leaving America, Knox became an advisor to the S.P.G. concerning its Barbadian Codrington plantations. The Codrington properties, two sugar plantations deeded in 1710 to the S.P.G. in Christopher Codrington's Will, essentially became

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[53] Bellot, "Evangelicals and the Defense of Slavery," 21, quotations 29; see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 387-388.

experiment stations where Christian principles could be applied to slaveholding. By mid-century, however, leaders from within Anglican circles were beginning to publicly question any type of Christian justification for slavery. One of the principal anti-slavery spokesmen was Bishop of Gloucester William Warburton who had delivered a sermon in 1766 to the S.P.G. proclaiming it a sin for the Society to encourage the slave trade by purchasing slaves, implying therefrom the sin of slave ownership itself. He preached that the trade was in violation of "divine and human Law" and that "*Nature* created man, free," and even more alarming he added, "*Grace* invites him to assert his freedom."[54] Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Secker asked Knox to write a Christian pro-slavery response to Warburton's assertions. From that challenge came Knox's *Three Tracts Respecting the Conversion and Instruction of Free Indians and Negro Slaves in the Colonies* (1768). His goal in this work was, as Bellot has explained, "to secure from Anglican authorities a *positive* affirmation of the divine and human sanctions for slavery."[55]

Knox's first tract on converting free Indians is instructive to understanding the following two tracts on converting black slaves. Indians had both innate dispositions and developed cultural characteristics that hindered their Christian conversion. Although the Indian possessed "natural good sense," long held cultural oddities and more recently developed notions of dishonesty (through contact with dishonest traders), made clear apprehension of Christian doctrine difficult. If any effort was to be successful in Indian

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[54] Quoted in J. Harry Bennett, Jr., *Bondsmen and Bishops: Slavery and Apprenticeship on the Codrington Plantations of Barbados, 1710-1838*, University of California Publications in History, ed. Theodore Saloutous, et al., no. 62 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958; reprint, Millwood, New York: Kraus Reprint, 1980), 89, 90.

[55] Bellot, "Evangelicals and the Defense of Slavery," 27, 29.

evangelization, one must take into account these dispositions and work from them to a point of eventual understanding and conversion. Free Indians had, in contrast to slaves, a "jealous" love for "their liberty and independency" and an attachment "to their customs and nation, with more than Spartan pride and tenacity."[56] All this had to figure into a successful endeavor to christianize them.

Although Knox disapproved of the eventual outcome, he believed that much could be learned from the Jesuit's subjective missionary methods which were almost wholly absent any objective doctrinal requirements of allegiance. Done largely for political control, the Jesuit's mystically oriented subjectivism allowed for an almost indistinguishable intermixture of Christian and heathen tenets, even to the point that the "missionary becomes the Indian conjurer, before he discloses his purpose" of making them members of the Roman Catholic Church. From there Christ is presented as "the great Conjurer, who cured all the world on the other side [of] the great water. . . ." Though driven by a deplorable political motive that left the Indians still unconverted, the Jesuit's method, Knox believed, was nevertheless one which aroused their curiosity and won their confidence. The old Protestant method was too intellectually and doctrinally oriented in that it naively taught "the most mysterious doctrines of Christianity" in preparation for baptism. Such impracticality, Knox believed, made the Catholic method "more successful."[57]

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[56] William Knox, *Three Tracts Respecting the Conversion and Instruction of the Free Indians and Negroe Slaves in the Colonies. Addressed to the Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in the Year 1768*, A New Edition (London; Printed for J. Debrett, 1789), 4-6 (hereafter *Three Tracts*).

[57] Ibid., 6-7.

This admiration for the Jesuit method seems to have been connected to Knox's employment of Moravian missionaries on his Georgia plantations. Knox's childhood rector and intimate spiritual mentor, Dr. Philip Skelton, an evangelical Anglican, from whom Knox often sought advise in his adult life, disapproved of the Moravians because of their similarity to the Jesuits. A letter he wrote to Knox illustrates Leland Bellot's observation that when consulted, "Skelton readily obliged with candid criticism of his former pupil's career and writings."[58] After having received some information on Moravian missions from Knox, Skelton wrote,

> Thank you for the Moravian missions. They look extremely like those of the Jesuits. This resemblance perhaps was made necessary by the nature of things, but I, in no sense a novellist, am not apt to be carried away by novelties in religion. These odd enthusiastic heats are a kind of comets, which rise and set, come and go, without doing much good. Much harm they certainly do, and the Moravians, in particular, are charged with many very ugly excentricities [sic], which their adversaries extract verbatim from the writings of Zinzendorf and others of the sect. . . . However, if the Moravians can but block out Christians in America it is well. . . ."[59]

Although Skelton obviously disagreed with the Catholic mystical tenets of the Moravians, he believed that they could be useful in America to "block out Christians," presumably by influencing them toward pacifism and eventual submission to English prerogatives.[60]

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[58] Bellot, *William Knox*, 8.

[59] Dr. Philip Skelton to William Knox, 25 July 1774, in Great Britain, The Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of Captain Howard Vincente Knox (From Volume VI of "Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections")*, with an Introduction and Preface by George Athan Billias (Boston: Gregg Press, 1972), 444.

[60] In another letter to Knox, Skelton called northern Americans who were resisting Parliament "downright rebels." Dr. Philip Skelton to William Knox, 26 October 1774, Ibid.

Possibly one reason Knox used Moravian missionaries was to instill the same submissiveness in his Georgia slaves.

This same tendency to employ a more subjective, less doctrinal approach to Indian conversion demonstrates Knox's belief in the usefulness of pietistic forms. Because the Indians have no concept of the Judeo-Christian doctrine of substitutionary sacrifice and expiation of sin, it would "be impracticable in the beginning, to make them comprehend the necessity for Christ's suffering, or to convince them of the benefits derived to them through his blood." Knox opted for an experiential approach that first established camaraderie and a certain spiritual kinship between the missionary and Indian. Doctrinal instruction, even the most fundamental, was beyond their comprehension and should not be the starting point. Missionaries should, like the Jesuits, slowly lead the Indians into a feeling of oneness with them until they see the Christian God as their own *great Spirit*." Granted, Knox hoped that this would lead to "further instruction." But his admonition that *"nothing is to be pressed upon them*," reveals in some measure his trust in a certain subjective force apart from doctrinal instruction to attract them into the faith. ". . . Their own desires must move foremost, and those will always carry them to ask as much as they can receive."[61] Knox applied a similar approach to black slave conversion.

Rather than directly entering into his view to the slaves' most plausible method of conversion, Knox first had to deal with the pressing problem of whether or not slavery itself was consistent with the Christian message. Christianization could hardly be an authentic or laudable goal if the messengers were in stark violation of Christianity itself.

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[61] Knox, *Three Tracts*, 11-13

Christian slavery was necessary because of black ignorance. Whereas the Indian had "natural good sense," Knox wrote, the black was plagued with "indolent stupidity." Due to their intellectual limitations, blacks should be enslaved for their own good, if for nothing else than to see to it that they were lifted from the lowest degrees of ignorance and heathenism. Even the slave trade itself was a blessing, delivering them from a much harsher lot under their African masters. But as long as influential detractors such as Bishop Warburton argued against the institution itself, and as long as "the [Christian and civil] lawfulness of continuing these people in perpetual servitude" remained in doubt, "it will be in vain," Knox asserted, "to expect that our American planters will permit their Negroes to be instructed, much less contribute toward their instruction." To do so would place into the slaves' minds a contradiction between established religion and established civil law. Knox hoped his writing would "lead to a humane and christian system, for the civil government and religious instruction of those unhappy people." That is, he wished to somehow perpetuate harmony between the efforts of those concerned with controlling slaves ("civil government") and those who wished to christianize them. Thus "the civil and religious regulations respecting these wretches must go together."[62]

Fundamental to Knox's argument for a christianized slavery system was his belief in the unique anglicized legal structure of slavery itself. While the slave owners' "property in their Negroes is legal," it is "not absolute and unconditional." Masters must recognize that they "have no other than a legal property in them, and legal authority over them, and the same laws which make them slaves, give them rights." British law did not allow "the life of the slave [to be] left in the power of the owner. . . ." And if slaves were

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[62] Ibid., 25, 21-23, 29, 32.

subject to "cruel usage, or insufficient nourishment," they had "a remedy similar to that of apprentices in England. . . ." Slaves were subjects of the Crown and thereby had legal recourse. Oddly enough, Knox partially blamed the slave's inherent ignorance for not asserting civil rights in the face of cruel treatment. ". . . From the ignorance of the Negroe, and the partiality of the magistrates, . . . the tyranny of the planter is much seldomer punished in America. . . ." Knox readily agreed that from the white perspective the slave's English rights were far too often an ignored reality left floating in the realm of legal theory. But once the correct legal standing of slaves "in their particular capacity and circumstance" was universally recognized and enforced as part of the orderly English system, and once "an impartial dispensation of the laws" were enacted based on that statutory footing, then the way would be cleared for masters to freely christianize their slaves apart from any concern that they would someday be required to give up their rights of ownership. English law worked both ways; it protected both owners and slaves.[63] Having established the divine and civil justifications for owning slaves, Knox presented his method for their conversion.

His advise to the Society focused on practical expediency, a function for which flexible pietistic forms were well equipped. Of great concern to many masters, was the use of religion to teach slaves reading and writing. But writing is not "at all requisite for their religious instruction," and furthermore, "even reading does not seem indispensably necessary for that purpose. . . ." Most people in England were illiterate prior to the Reformation, but "were capable of being taught all that was necessary for their salvation

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[63] Ibid., 32, 30, 31.

[.]" Moreover, wrote Knox, echoing the standard fear of masters, "the knowledge of letters, even in the lowest degree, is too often supposed to carry with it a sort of qualification for an easy life, and an exemption from a laborious one. . . ." And if a literary emphasis attends religious instruction, black slaves might "seek some desperate means for ridding themselves" from their "lot." Although normal Anglican worship rightly required a certain level of literacy, it should allow for "a more simple mode of religious worship and instruction . . . better adapted to their capacities and condition."[64]

Knox argued that the common method used to teach religion to slaves was wholly unproductive. The catechism "is too long, and too difficult to be got by heart by the Negroes in the little time the missionary can spare to each, or their owners can be without their service. . . ." Owing to the missionary's time constraints, laymen should be employed to minister on the plantations. Knox not only saw this as a practical alternative, he believed that "laymen would probably be more zealous . . . than ordained missionaries" in fulfilling the assigned task. He also feared that the dignity of the educated and ordained might be offended having to "stoop to make use of such low, not to say absurd imagery, as would be necessary to convey his ideas to them." Any type of creed formulated for their understanding "would . . . be either shocking or ridiculous."[65]

Another problem inherent in a slave ministry was the undignified necessity to adapt "a dialect peculiar to those Negroes who have been born in our colonies. . . ." This too is better addressed by laymen since "nothing could be more uncouth to the pronunciation of a man of science," and "it would be less difficult for . . . [a layman] to bring himself to

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[64] Ibid., 32-33.

[65] Ibid., 34-35.

study what they said to him." And, he added, making crystal clear his approbation of pietistic methods, "enthusiasm is only equal to such undertakings, and none could be fitter for the employment, than those lay preachers who are now in such numbers [Moravians?, Methodists?] offering themselves to the Society."[66] The above statement goes far to explain Knox's purpose in later sending the Moravians, especially the layman, to his own slaves in Georgia.

No matter if these lay enthusiasts are untrained in doctrine, "I would confine them to a very short summary of religion." They should know and teach in the simplest manner possible: there is one eternal, all knowing, all seeing, creator God; he judges evil either in this life (often with cruel masters) or in the next; he rewards good by making masters kind and eventually by offering future bliss in giving "all good Negroes rest from all labour, and plenty of all good things." Once the slave comprehends these basic elements he "would acquire an appetite to know somewhat more." Then the evangelical doctrine of Christ's substitutionary sacrifice which satisfied God's demands apart from good works may be taught. It should, however, be adapted to the slave's own peculiar circumstance of suffering.

> . . . God Almighty was very angry with all the world, and said he would kill them all, and that none of them should be happy after their death. Upon which Jesus Christ, God's only Son, said he would take their faults upon himself, and that God might punish him for them; and accordingly Jesus Christ came down from heaven and suffered himself to be whipped and tortured, and at last killed, and so made it up between his Father and the world.[67]

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[66] Ibid., 35.

[67] Ibid., 37-38.

Whatever can be said for Knox's suggestions, one thing is clear; there is more here than just a practical adaptation to circumstances. Knox had in mind to somehow establish a balance between spiritual instruction to slaves and the assurance of perpetual and legal control over their lives. This balance needed to allow for heartfelt and life changing conversion, even if based on the shallowest of doctrinal apprehension, and at the same time it needed to disallow any pretense on the slave's part for egalitarianism, a prospect that masters commonly feared might result from their becoming Christian. In essence, Knox anchored every facet of his argument on what he believed to be the slaves' inherent ignorance. Everything from why they should be enslaved, to why they were mistreated without redress, to how they should be converted--all hinged on the intellectual vulnerability of the slaves. It was to this vulnerability that pietistic spiritual expression could most readily adapt. Pietism's subjective flexibility allowed the Christian message to meet the subjects where they were, or at least where the facilitators of that message perceived them to be. The message believed (or felt) would transform their souls while re-establishing their physical lot as the literal bondservants of Jesus Christ. This was the desired outcome from his brand of sanctified slavery.

Knox's perception of the slave intellect reminds us of the debate that waged in slave historiography forty years ago. Stanley Elkins argued in 1959 that due to harsh treatment in a concentration camp-type environment, antebellum slaves were reduced to the lowest ebb of intellectual vulnerability, and that the perception of the ignorant and pliable Sambo was a regrettably correct assessment. Prodded by that uncomfortable thesis, other scholars argued that, among other explanations, the Sambo personification was a clever and conscience act on the slave's part to deflect overbearing responsibilities

that might otherwise be imposed. That is, slaves took the master's perception, which they helped to create in his mind, and turned it to their own advantage. John Blassingame argued in 1972 that Sambo was largely existent only in the white mind, an imagined stereotype by nervous slave owners who desired "to relieve themselves of the anxiety of thinking about slaves as men."[68]

Whatever the reason, William Knox clearly perceived the average slave as a Sambo-type being. He was not certain if that characteristic emerged from heredity or harshness. "Whether the Creator originally formed these black people a little lower than other men, or that they have lost their intellectual powers through disuse, I will not assume the province of determining. . . ." Whatever the cause, he was convinced that the average black was "a complete definition of indolent stupidity."[69] And based on their unfortunate lot, a pietistic presentation of the Christian message best suited their circumstances.

Ironically, the more simplified and experience oriented means by which slaves began to convert to Christianity created in some cases the very opposite outcome than originally intended. Among slave converts, some perceived that they too could become lay promulgators of experiential religion, often with their own altered interpretations. Thus, a relatively new and sometimes troubling figure emerged on the southern landscape--the black preacher.

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[68] See Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968); John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 230. For a concise discussion of this phase in slave historiography see Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 134-138.

[69] Knox, *Three Tracts*, 14.

Possibly the most valuable contribution of modern slavery scholarship is the insistence that slaves and free blacks must be viewed as active rather than passive subjects. This historiographic understanding is especially pertinent to the study of black preachers. Viewing the southern black preacher in the colonial era as a broader representative of the slave's response to Evangelicalism is admittedly an exercise in micro-history. That would even be true, if less so, for the antebellum period. While the antebellum era provides a more accessible and informative analysis of the black preacher's role on the plantation and beyond, his colonial counterparts offer insightful examples on the extent to which some attempted to breach jealously guarded norms. One area in particular involved incorporating pietistic and even mystical elements into a unique hermeneutical interpretation which applied Old Testament and apocalyptic imagery to the slave's natural desires for freedom. They did so largely in support of their ever growing attempts to gain a spiritually sanctioned empowerment. It did not take whites long, however, to realize that slave and free black preachers represented potential powder kegs of unrest, the very opposite result they had been told pietistic christianization would produce. Two such preachers, connected to familiar figures in this study, will suffice to illustrate this point.

In September 1759 South Carolina's royal governor Henry Lyttelton reported that a free black man named Philip Johns had prophesied that "he had seen a vision, in which it was revealed to him, that in the month of September the White People should be all under ground, that the Sword should go through the land, & it should be no more White King's Governors or great men but the Negro's should live happily & have Laws of their own." This millenarian prediction was believed by at least two other blacks (one free, one slave)

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who, along with Johns, faced charges for "promoting and encouraging an insurrection of the Negroes against the white people." Interrogation of witnesses revealed that Johns had developed these prophesies from a "written paper" and that he had told them "that God almighty had given much for them to do. . . ." The witnesses testified that Johns had informed them "that the 1st day of June was fixed upon for killing the Buckraas [Whites]" but later advised them to wait. He also told them "that the Justices . . . had taken his paper from him but he did not care if the devil had it for he had another and would go to Charles Town with it and would do the work God Almighty had set him about" to do. The witnesses explained that Johns predicted "that in six weeks time all the Buckraas would be killed." When authorities first seized this "written paper" from Johns they whipped and released him. When his alleged plans for insurrection were later discovered he was arrested a second time and paid for his enthusiasm with his life.[70]

There is little doubt that Philip Johns' prophesy was a spin from the previous millenarian predictions promulgated in February of that same year by St. Philip's rector Richard Clarke who claimed that his own calculations from Scripture revealed that South Carolina would encounter dire judgments in the month of September leading up to the eventual apocalypse. The "written paper" used by Johns may have been Clarke's booklet *The Prophetic Numbers of Daniel and John Calculated* . . . just published that year in Charleston and making its circulation in the bookstores.[71]

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[70] Quoted in Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, & Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), 136-137.

[71] Richard Clarke, *The Prophetic Numbers of Daniel and John Calculated In order to shew the Time, when the Day of Judgment for this First Age of the Gospel, is to be*

A similar episode occurred, again in Charleston, sixteen years later, this time with less tragic results. David, sometimes called "Blackman David," a converted slave at Bethesda belonging to Lady Huntingdon, who had assumed ownership there after Whitefield's death, showed such promise that Lady Huntingdon arranged to bring him to England to receive training as an evangelical missionary. Even before David left Bethesda, however, James Habersham perceived that he "had shown some impudent Airs."[72]

Returning to America, David and his party stopped in Charleston where he was asked to preach "to several white People and Negroes, who had collected together to hear him."

> David in the Course of his exhortation, dropped some unguarded Expressions, such as, that he did not doubt; but "God would send Deliverance to the Negroes, from the power of their Masters, as He freed the Children of Israel from Egyptian Bondage."

These words caused a considerable stir among the listeners. Bethesda minister, Mr. Piercy, reported from Charleston that the town gentry were "so possessed with an opinion that his [David's] designs" were toward leading a rebellion and that they were "determined to pursue, and hang him if they can lay hold of him." Habersham arranged to have David shipped back to England in order to prevent his demise. "Upon the whole," Habersham wrote, "I am rather glad David is going, as I think he wou'd have done more harm than good to her Ladyships Negroes" at Bethesda. David's problem was that he did not have "the spirit of a true missionery [sic] amongst the Heathen." He had not learned that "his Business was to preach a Spiritual Deliverance to these People, not a temporal one. . . ."

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expected: And the Setting up the Millennial Kingdom of Jehovah and his Christ (Charles Town: Peter Timothy, 1759).

[72] James Habersham to Robert Keen, 11 May 1775, Habersham, *The Letters of Hon. James Habersham*, 243.

Part of his disruptive spirit came from England. ". . . I must say it's a pity, that any of these People should ever put their Feet in England, where they get totally spoiled and ruined, both in Body and Soul, through a mistaken kind of compassion because they are black. . . ." Whatever caused David's disappointing turn, Habersham sighed, "I have done with him, I have done all I can for him. . . ."[73]

Lowcountry residents had long feared the potential outcome of such enthusiastic preaching. With the Stono rebellion in their recent memory, the lively slave revivals on Hugh Bryan's plantation in 1742 had caused considerable unrest. Bryan's slaves, it was reported, claimed "to see visions, and receive Revelations from heaven and to be converted by an Instantaneous Impulse of the Spirit." They were, one observer concluded, "among Mr. Whitefield's followers."[74] During this period a renewed resolve emerged to prevent large gatherings of blacks in any location, especially gatherings charged with the energy of evangelical preaching. Bryan did not assuage those fears when in early 1742 he made two separate trips to Charleston to warn of God's impending judgment on the region. Slaves would play a part, Bryan insisted, in that divine action. As Eliza Lucas Pinckney recorded, Bryan "came to town--60 mile-- twice" and warned the people and governor that "Charles Town and the Country as farr as Ponpon Bridge should be destroyed by fire and sword," and that this divine decree would "be executed by the Negroes before the first day of next month." In March, after hearing what he thought were audible instructions from an "infalible spirrit," Bryan spent "several days in the

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[73] Ibid., 243-244; see also Jordan, *White Over Black*, 209-210.

[74] Quoted in Gallay, "Planters and Slaves in the Great Awakening," in *Masters & Slaves in the House of the Lord*, ed., Boles, 29.

woods barefooted and alone and with his pen and Ink [began] to write down his

prophecies. . . ." Under the same spirit's direction he made "a wan[d] to divide the

waters" insisting that if he did not heed the spirit's instructions he would "die that night."

Thus, in obedience he personified Moses the emancipator and tried to part the waters of a

river on his plantation, the only result of which was his near drowning. Needless to say

the Carolina authorities took this attempted Hebrew exodus seriously. Bryan, it must have

been perceived, was trying to carry out God's judgment. After he confessed that the

invisible spirit that led him to part the river's water was demonic, and confirmed his

allegiance to the colony's welfare, the matter was eventually dropped. The episode,

according to one critic, exemplified "the Workings of Whitfieldism [sic] in its native

Tendency."[75]

Eliza Pinckney illustrates how much of the slaveowning community must have

perceived Bryan's actions. The fear was not so much of the religious enthusiasm itself as

the extent to which such enthusiasm might find its way into slave communities and be

translated into action.

> . . . Mr. B[ryan] is come to his sences [sic] and acknowledges with extream [sic]
> concern he was guided by a spirit of delusion which carried him the length he has
> lately gone under a notion of inspiration. Poor man! with what anguish must he

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[75] Elise Pinckney, ed., *The Letterbook of Eliza Lucas Pinckney, 1739-1762* (Chapel Hill:
The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 30; Harvey H. Jackson, "Hugh Bryan and
the Evangelical Movement in Colonial South Carolina," *William and Mary Quarterly* 43
(October 1986): 606-609 (quotation 609). For a intimate look at Hugh Bryan's spiritual
trials and ecstasies see Hugh Bryan and Mary Hutson, *Living Christianity Delineated in
the Diaries and Letters of two Eminently Pious Persons Lately Deceased, viz. Mr. Hugh
Bryan, and Mrs. Mary Hutson, Both of South Carolina* (Boston: Hastings, Etheridge and
Bliss, 1809). For a discussion of the combined motifs of slave conversion and exodus see
Albert J. Raboteau, "African-Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel," in Johnson,
ed., *African-American Christianity*, 1-17.

reflect on making the spirrit of God the author of his weakneses [sic], and of disturbing the whole community, who tho' they knew him to be no prophet dreaded the consiquence [sic] of his prophecys coming to the ears of the African Hosts, as he calls them. I hope he will be a warning to all pious minds not to reject reason and revelation and set up in their stead their own wild notions.[76]

White fears of slave enthusiasm being translated into rebellion did not stop with Hugh Bryan's humble acknowledgment of demonic deception. The problem kept recurring in one form or other, such as with Philip Johns and Blackman David. From the slaves' perspective, it is not difficult to understand how attractive the prospects of divine judgment and a coming better age would be, especially if they could help to initiate it in concert with God's apocalyptic plans. Thus, among other things, pietistic and mystical forms were for some blacks an important means of egalitarian expression. As Winthrop Jordan has stated concerning the Great Awakening in general, it, for some at least, "re-emphasized the axiomatic spiritual equality of Negroes with white men." And, he added, "it demonstrated once again the staying power and profound influence of the equalitarian strain in Christianity."[77]

If this is the case, though, why did not subjectively driven millenarianism incite more actual uprisings? Most of the unrest that occurred in the cases mentioned above were in the white imagination. Eugene Genovese has written of the antebellum era that the reason there were few "sustained revolts" in the South was because a "revolutionary millennial thrust" never materialized in slavery religion since African religious sentiments were "decidedly life-affirming rather than otherworldly." When slaves converted to

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[76] Eliza Lucas Pinckney to [Miss Bartlett], March 1742, in Pinckney, ed., *The Letterbook of Eliza Lucas Pinckney*, 29.

[77] Jordan, *White Over Black*, 214.

Christianity they did not, he continued, give up their West African belief that time was "cyclical and eternal," thus making it difficult for an apocalyptic motif to dominate their thinking. There were, of course, as Genovese also pointed out, other more obvious reasons why slaves did not rebel in mass. That "the regime was too pervasive, too strong, too stable," may be more adequate in describing why antebellum slaves were passive, but it is certainly applicable to the colonial period as well. Even if they did adopt a millenarian impulse, "once deliverance became a political question the slaves . . . had no confidence in each other in this realm." [78]

It is true that cases such as Philip Johns and Blackman David are in the minority and that no significant uprising occurred during the colonial period as a result of blacks adopting pietistically driven millenarian views. But however much West African religion, and the oppressiveness of slavery may have stayed revolt, they are only part of the reason. It may be that the reason does not lie so much in African religious ideals as in Pietism itself. The vast array of radical sects that emerged from the impulse of pietistic Christianity speaks volumes to the different ways in which subjective religion could be taken. An apocalyptic motif translated into present circumstances resulting in disruption

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[78] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 276, 275, 274, 273; Genovese's too generalized view does not take into full account the African warrior traditions that could have latched on to a millenarian driven revolt. Michael Gomez has recently observed that although "the New World slaveocracy presented serious constraints to the continuation of a warrior tradition," which was more prevalent among the Bambaras in Louisiana, it is true that "Africans from all ethnic groups displayed varying degrees of defiance" as a result of retaining elements of that tradition. Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks*, 52. It is interesting to note that Denmark Vesey's millenarian insurrection in Charleston (1822) was an intermixture of Christian and traditional African beliefs, including African magic. Genovese noted that "Vesey seems to have come closest to formulating a flexible religious appeal based on the folk religion and both African and classical Christian ideas and appeals." Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 594.

was only one of many avenues of response available. On the other end of the spectrum was a decidedly pacifistic but no less pietistic stance as illustrated by the Moravians and Quakers. With possible exceptions, nothing was further from their minds than the use of religion as an impulse to violence. But then they were not held in slavery. Even still, one would be hard pressed to show from Nicholas Zinzendorf or George Fox or any of their principal leaders any circumstance in which the use of violence for any purpose, especially religious, would be tolerated.

Genovese has recognized the variant responses slaves could manifest in their adoption of pietistic religion. ". . . Afro-American Christianity, like all Christianity, would be unthinkable without messianic and millenarian impulses, however politically quietist; and these," he added, "always retain some potential political danger."[79] Thus, while Evangelical Pietism carried seeds of radical millenarian response, it at the same time carried a contemplative element that fostered patience and calm as an alternative to violence. As seen earlier in this study, pietistic and mystical forms commonly bore a similar dichotomy. Some mystics such as Tauler stressed *vita activa* as the vehicle of union while others such as Molinos saw *vita contemplativa* as the more sure means of attaining it. However far removed this may be from slave responses to Pietism, it at least suggests the possibility that the complexities attending any form of mystically oriented belief can be manifested in completely opposite ways.

The reason slaves did not in great numbers use millenarianism to rebel may lie in the most obvious of reasons. And that reason is not so much a part of Pietism per se as in the way it was uniquely presented to the slaves. For one thing, slaves were often told that

reception of the evangelical message was intricately connected to temporal obedience. That is, Whitefield, Knox, and others made submission to the slave owner part-and-parcel to spiritual salvation. A slave with notions of insurrection could not expect to have assurance that he had experienced an authentic conversion. Serving the master was the way to serve God. Granted, this dilemma did not occupy the minds of most slaves since most did not even believe, at least not during the mid-eighteenth century, in the Christian gospel. But for those who did believe the message couched in these terms, such as the slaves belonging to the Bryans or Knox or Whitefield, it may well explain why they did not translate the freedom ethos of the gospel into the physical realm.

For white Christian slaveholders the intersection of Pietism and slavery carried its own complexities. South Carolina authorities intervened to stop Philip Johns who had derived his predictions from one of their very own and highly popular Anglican clerics. Charleston elites had for some time been hearing and reading Richard Clarke's millenarian discourses concerning the end of the world. David Ramsay surmised concerning Clarke's early published prophetic works that "the substance of a considerable part of them was preached in Charlestown." [80] And as seen in the previous chapter, some very influential people, several of whom owned many slaves, took his predictions seriously. At least for these, some of whom were part of the system that eventually executed Johns, the question as to the overall accuracy of his apocalyptic scenario must have crossed their minds. And for those who believed in the possibility of a coming apocalypse, their role as slave owners

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[79] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 276.

[80] David Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina from its First Settlement in 1670 to the Year 1808*, 2 vols. (Newberry, South Carolina: W. J. Duffie, 1858; reprint, Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1959, 1971), 2: 252.

in God's millenarian designs would have been of concern. Consistent with this paradox, pietistic slaveholders confronted both spiritual and humanitarian concerns for themselves and their slaves, but did so under the assumption that in order for those concerns to be resolved within a Christian context, the institution of slavery itself, as seen earlier with Whitefield and Knox, had to be strengthened and, if possible, expanded.

Henry Laurens embodied the paradoxes attendant with Christian slaveholding as fully as anyone in the lowcountry. Recent attention has been given to Laurens' slavery ideology.[81] The general consensus is that Laurens, who expressed his dislike for slavery, did so with little sincerity since he never relinquished his right to own slaves. Moreover, he seemed to enjoy his paternalistic role. His slaves were, he wrote in 1773, "poor Creatures who look up to their Master as their Father, their Guardian, & Protector, & to whom their [sic] is a reciprocal obligation. . . ."[82] In a 1785 letter to Alexander Hamilton he stated that his principles of benevolence had placed his slaves in a

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[81] For an examination of Laurens' ambivalent position on slavery see Gregory D. Massey, "The Limits of Antislavery Thought in the Revolutionary Lower South: John Laurens and Henry Laurens," *The Journal of Southern History* 63 (August 1997): 495-530. Massey attempts to explain Laurens' paradoxical concerns. Interestingly, Massey places emphasis on Laurens' adherence "to the Lockean tenet that private property was sacred," thus his right to own slaves (528). Also see Robert Olwell, "'A Reckoning of Accounts': Patriarchy, Market Relations, and Control on Henry Laurens's Lowcountry Plantations, 1762-1785," in *Working Toward Freedom: Slave Society and Domestic Economy in the American South*, ed. Larry E. Hudson, Jr. (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1994), 33-52. Olwell does not discuss Laurens' ambivalence. An article is forthcoming in the *South Carolina Historical Magazine* by Daniel Littlefield that concludes Laurens' was less than sincere in his expressed dislike for slavery since he did not take measures to cease ownership.

[82] Henry Laurens to Lachlan McIntosh, 13 March 1773, in Philip M. Hamer et al., eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, 14 vols. thus far (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968-), 8: 618 (hereafter *Laurens Papers*).

greater advantage than the "Peasantry in Europe," and, he added, "there is not a Beggar among them nor one unprovided with food, raiment & good Lodging, they also enjoy property; the Lash is forbidden. . . ." He took special pride in his "Substitute" for the whip: "'If you deserve whipping I shall conclude you don't love me & will sell you, otherwise I will never sell one of you. . . .'" His slaves produced for him well, he told Hamilton, and "at the same time they are my Watchmen and my friends; never was an absolute Monarch more happy in his subjects than at the present time I am. . . ."[83]

That he enjoyed the responsibilities attendant with being a slave owner is obvious. But the view that this attitude proves that his concerns over the institution of slavery were insincere is a misunderstanding of the religious dimension so prevalent in Laurens' thinking. In my view, his dislike for the institution as a whole was genuine and was in part due to his pietistic convictions. On the other hand, that same faith gave him the justification he needed to be an authentic Christian and a slaveholder. It also provided joy in knowing his position was for the ultimate spiritual good of the slaves. But this assurance and exuberance was not so evident earlier in his career.

The first indication that Laurens questioned the morality of slavery came with his abandonment of the slave trade. Early in his career he began to curb his involvement in slave trafficking. By 1769 he had made a clean break. This was no small decision since his merchant firm had been one of the largest transporters of slaves to the lowcountry. Later, when Laurens and his relative by marriage Vice Admiralty Judge Egerton Leigh were at odds over the seizure of vessels belonging to Laurens, Leigh, with revenge in

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[83] Henry Lauens to Alexander Hamilton, 19 April 1785, Harold C. Syrett et al., eds., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 27 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-

view for Laurens' criticism of his complicity in the seizures, called attention to the merchant's somewhat radical and pietistic religious impulses, impulses he believed prompted Laurens to begin his break with the slave trade.[84]

In the late 1760s during the height of the legal battle between Laurens and Leigh, the exchange of public statements on the matter eventually reached a fevered pitch. In his most elaborate and protracted published defense entitled *Man Unmasked* (May 1769), Leigh resorted to an outright personal invective against Laurens. In every way conceivable he portrayed Laurens as the most hypocritical villain known to humanity. In one section of the diatribe Leigh "examines" the evolution of Laurens' thoughts on slavery within the context of what Leigh saw as enthusiastic notions of religion. The volatile nature of this document warns the reader to proceed with utmost caution in making any concrete historical conclusions. Yet, there are some very interesting and consistent observations that may well shed light on certain of Laurens' actions. After all, in order for Leigh to maintain any level of credibility, he would likely include traits that others had also observed in the well known and powerful merchant. It will be instructive for our purposes to first examine Leigh's criticism of Laurens' religious life in general as a segue into his criticism for withdrawing from the slave trade. When reading the following, one should keep in mind that the two men were or had been members and vestrymen at St. Philip's, were interested in the apocalyptic teachings of Richard Clarke, and likely attended the

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87), 3: 606-607.

[84] For an examination of Leigh's career see Robert M. Calhoon and Robert M. Weir, "'The Scandalous History of Sir Egerton Leigh,'" in Weir, ed., *"Last of American Freemen': Studies in the Political Culture of the Colonial and Revolutionary South* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986), 33-61; see the article by the same title in *William and Mary Quarterly* 26 (January 1969): 47-74.

aforementioned pietistic club together.[85] But time had passed, and many hard feelings had

emerged since those more amiable days.

Leigh noted the "outward and visible signs" that Laurens was "pleased to stile his

inward and spiritual grace. . . ." He had a *"formal cast, plain attire, demure aspect* and

clouded brow, . . . with sometimes an *uplifting*, and now and then a *downcast eye*. . . ."

All of which were part of" his grand aim, for many years, . . . directed to a pious and

religious end. . . ." Leigh berated Laurens as "like the *Jews* of old, . . . deep read in the

ceremonials of religion, and well versed in *ritual* and *unsubstantial* service; every thing he

does, must be seasoned with a *sprig of piety*. . . ." In formal worship he was

"transcendently moved" during the repetition of the Litany. "Every feature pays its

adoration," Leigh continued, "and all the man is swallowed up in sublime and heavenly

contemplation!" All of this was to Leigh calculated hypocrisy since in his estimation

Laurens' "constant aim [was] to *seem religious*." Laurens makes a show with "outward

gestures and strong professions" and is "carried away captive, by irregular and unruly

passions. . . ." Leigh assured his readers that he did "not profess to be one of his disciples,

or a friend to many of his doctrines," but would, "for charity's sake, endeavour to find out

(if possible) some excuse for the extraordinary conduct of this unhappy man." He

concluded that in essence Laurens carried "about with him a litle [sic] *mantle* of religion . .

. [which] serves to colour and disguise, and delude poor souls into an opinion of his

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[85] To illustrate the various experiences (baptisms, burials, etc.) Leigh and Laurens shared
as regular members of St. Philip's see D. E. Huger Smith and A. S. Salley, Jr., eds.,
Register of St. Philip's Parish, Charles Town, or Charleston, S. C. 1754-1810 (Columbia:
University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 42, 69, 74, 87, 289, 291, 294, 313, 321, 328,
332.

inward grace."[86] It is clear that Leigh's design in *Man Unmasked* was to establish that

Laurens was disingenuous in all his dealings by suggesting overt hypocrisy in the one area

that Laurens cherished most--the religious.

Leigh criticized Laurens for his unorthodox interpretation of Revelation chapter

18, which he, Leigh claimed, believed condemned the present slave trade. This biblical

passage concerns merchants of "all nations," who in concert with Babylon's riches,

eventually participate in her destruction at the end of the age. One of the identifying

marks of the doomed merchants was that they trafficked in slaves (verse 13). "He reads

the Revelations," Leigh wrote, "which speak of divers articles of merchandize, and finding

that *slaves* and the souls of men are also in . . . the enumerated list, swears that St. John

meant, in his *vision*, the pernicious practice of the *African trade*; he therefore withdrew

himself from the horrid and barbarous connection. . . ." Leigh played upon what he

perceived to be the paradox in which Laurens lived. He retained "to himself, a few of

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[86] Egerton Leigh, *The Man Unmasked: or, the World Undeceived in the Author of a Late Pamphlet, Intitled, 'Extracts from the Proceedings of the High Court of Vice-Admiralty in Charlestown, South-Carolina,' &c with Suitable Remarks on that Masterly Performance* in *Laurens Papers*, 6: 465, 482-483, 523, 526, 528. Leigh made another accusation that possibly sheds more light on Laurens pietistic bent. He criticized Laurens for his disavowal of establishment norms by his engagement in lay preaching to a militia regiment. "I have been told (though I by no means assert the thing as fact) that he whimsically became a *pluralist* some years ago, by serving the province in the two-fold capacity of a *colonel* and *chaplain* to the regiment, that he now and then *preached*" to them prior to marches. He then alluded to Laurens' pietistic actions by stating, "whether the *motions* of the spirit in the *colonel*, were considered as orthodox and regular by the *men*, or quickened their bodily operations, are *researches* rather too deep for me to fathom. . . ." Whatever the outcome, Leigh sarcastically added, "he proceeded on his way with a slow and solemn pace, no doubt persuading himself, that *he* and his party trod on *holy ground*. . . ." Ibid., 528-529.

those *jewels* [slaves] which he had heretofore amassed, some of the *wages* of this *abominable trade. . . ."[87]

In *Appendix to the Extracts* (August 1769), Laurens responded to the accusations. Concerning Leigh's assessment on the slave matter he wrote, "What Benefit is it to the Public to know the Motives and Principles from which I quitted the African Branch of Commerce?" Leigh's "insinuations" are "false, calumnious and foolish. . . ." It is important to note that even with his growing distaste for the slave trade, Laurens was always careful not to offend his colleagues in relation to their participation in the trade. Possibly he feared, with the publication of his alleged personal biblical assessment in *Man Unmasked*, that such an offense was forthcoming, especially if his friends concluded that he considered them under divine condemnation. He reassured the reader that his reasons were practical rather than spiritual.

> I had several Reasons for retiring from that Trade. . . . I had no Partner, and was not disposed to engage one; therefore seeing that I could not do that Justice to my Constituents which they had a Right to expect . . . about six Years ago, in the midst of many very *generous*, very *inviting* Offers, from my Friends in England, I relinquished the gainful Commissions arising from the Sale of Negroes: I could have resigned them into the Hands of young Men, whom I wished very well, and who would gladly have shared the Profits with me, but I refused . . . *"to retain such Jewels;"* I consulted therefore *solely* the Interest of my good Friends, and transferred their Business into the Hands of Gentlemen who could transact it to the greatest Advantage. . . .[88]

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[87] Ibid., 528. It is interesting to note that Leigh claimed to have listened to Laurens discuss the meaning of apocalyptic passages in detail. Possibly discussions of the book of Revelation came up in the aforementioned pietistic club. Such would likely have been the subject of discussion with Richard Clarke present.

[88] Henry Laurens, *An Appendix to the Extracts from the Proceedings of the High Court of Vice-Admiralty in Charlestown, South-Carolina, &c, Containing Strictures upon, and Proper Answers to, a Pamphlet Entitled, "The Man Unmask'd,"* in *Laurens Papers*, 7: 99-100.

Whatever one might conclude from this exchange, it seems clear that Laurens had developed a reputation for pietistic proclivities and that his negative feelings concerning slavery were perceived by some as connected with those religious views. Certainly Leigh magnified the negative elements he believed would give advantage to his own position. That notwithstanding, it is unlikely that he pulled these accusations out of thin air. Laurens' pietistic notions were becoming more noticeable and Leigh capitalized on them. Even if Laurens did not quit the slave trade because of his fears of what Revelation 18 meant, it is difficult to believe that the spiritual had nothing to do with his decision. But this cannot go beyond conjecture. He denied Leigh's account, and there it must rest.

What we do know is that Laurens had a growing dislike for the general institution of slavery. His much lauded 1776 anti-slavery letter is proof enough of that. "I abhor Slavery," he wrote to his son John (who had also come to oppose it and who would later make a more defined stand against it), and "I found the Christian Religion & Slavery growing under the same authority & cultivation__ I nevertheless disliked it. . . ." He believed that it was in some ways a violation of "the Golden Rule." Laurens saw a certain hypocrisy in people trusting God for national liberty on the one hand and denying the same to "thousands who are as well intitled [sic] to . . . freedom as themselves." "I shall appear to many not only of strange but of dangerous doctrines," he concluded, and "it will therefore be necessary to proceed with caution. . . ."[89] Proceed with caution he did. To anyone who is familiar with the remaining years of Henry Laurens, the paradox of his

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[89] Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 14 August 1776, *Laurens Papers*, 11: 224-225.

position is evident, evident because he never relinquished his right to purchase and own slaves.[90]

Even though his misgivings did not translate into action, it does not necessarily follow that his expressions of dislike were disingenuous as some have maintained. There is nothing uncommon about someone participating in occupational endeavors who dislike the institutional structures in which they are a part. For example, there are socialist ideologues who work in and even own capitalist companies. They dislike the capitalist system but take advantage of its offerings every day. What may appear as hypocrisy on one level may be seen by the participant simply as making the best of a less than equitable situation. Benefiting from capitalism does not mean that a socialist does not genuinely hold to his ideals of collectivization. The same may be said of men like Henry Laurens or Thomas Jefferson, men who simply had a genuine dislike for slavery, but who could not find a way to rid themselves of it.

There are hints as to how Laurens dealt with this paradox. In the above letter he expressed part of his dilemma. Slavery and Christianity had grown up together "under the same authority and cultivation." Even with Christianity's sanction, he added, "I

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[90] It should be noted that Laurens did offer freedom to some of his slaves. Not all took him up on the offer. "Some of my Negroes," he wrote to Alexander Hamilton in 1785, "to whom I have offered freedom have declined the Bounty, they will live with me, [and] to some of them I already allow Wages, to all of them every proper indulgence. . . ." One such slave was his trusted companion George. While in Philadelphia just before embarking for Europe, Laurens offered him his freedom. George decided rather to go with Laurens over seas. He "returned long before I came home," Laurens wrote, and "is now about my house and says he does not want to be more free than he is." Laurens also told Hamilton that he had promised his slaves, "'I will never sell one of you, nor will I ever buy another Negro, unless it shall be to gratify a good Man who may want a Wife.'" Henry Laurens to Alexander Hamilton, 19 April 1785, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 3: 606, 607.

nevertheless disliked it." Here was at least part of his problem. He found himself at odds with something he believed Christianity, or at least the then dominant Christian institutions, approved of. But as is often the case, the point of paradox is also the point of solution. If Christianity approves of the institution, then there must be a greater good that out weighs personal opinion. Like Whitefield and Knox, this may have been Laurens' reasoning as well.

Christianization of his slaves was the way in which Laurens appears to have sought resolution to his dilemma. Robert Olwell has demonstrated the extent to which Laurens saw himself as the patriarchal head of an extended slave family. And because of Laurens' view of himself as a patriarch, Olwell rightly argues, he found justification and satisfaction as a slave owner. But the implication drawn from Olwell's study is that Laurens had little or no compunction over the institution of slavery itself. Conversely, he reveled in the opportunities and benefits it afforded, not only in wealth but also in personal feelings of superiority and power.[91] However true this assessment may be, it is only part, and maybe a small part, of the whole picture. Laurens' self perception as patriarch was intricately connected to his belief in the obligation incumbent upon him to christianize his slaves. After all, "patriarch" is a covenantal term. Its implication not only justified his role as a slave owner, it also gave him as a Christian some sense of ministry and even importance within a system he may have personally disliked. Positioning himself in such a role, he believed, was the one way in which he could provide for his family, maintain a genteel lifestyle, and fulfill his Christian duty.

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[91] Olwell, "'A Reckoning of Accounts,'" 32-52.

In the summer of 1775, Laurens, as president of the Council of Safety, defended a Scottish born preacher named John Burnet who had been accused of attempting to incite a slave insurrection on a plantation in St. Bartholomew parish. The Committee for St. Bartholomew Parish turned Burnet over to the Council of Safety in Charleston upon the accusation that he "had often appointed Nocturnal Meetings of the Slaves under the Sanction of Religion," and in those meetings "repeatedly inculcated such doctrines" that led some "Several of the Slaves in the neighborhood" toward "exciting & endeavouring to bring abt. a General Insurrection." As a result of the affair, St. Bartholomew authorities executed a slave preacher named "George" who was believed to be a ring leader of the incident.[92]

The allegedly planned insurrection was based primarily on the testimony of another slave preacher named "Jemmy." He had testified that he, George, and fourteen other slaves from various plantations had become preachers and had been preaching "'to Great crouds of Negroes in the Neighborhood of Chyhaw, very frequently. . . .'" John Burnet, it seems, had inspired these men into entering the ministry for, Jemmy stated, he "'hath been a long time preaching'" to them "'& many others very frequently, . . . In the Woods_ and other Places. . . .'" Out of one of these meetings a planned insurrection developed that was designed "'to take the Country by Killing the Whites, but that John Burnet was to be Saved as their Preacher. . . .'" Jemmy further testified that George had told him "'that the old King [George II] had rece[ive]d a Book from our Lord by which he was to Alter the World (meaning to set the Negroes free) but for his not doing so, was now gone to Hell, & in Punishm[en]t-'" and "'That the Young King, meaning our Present One, came up with

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[92] Thomas Hutchinson to Council of Safety, 5 July 1775, *Laurens Papers*, 10: 206-207.

the Book, & was about to alter the World, & set the Negroes Free [.]'" Before George

was executed he "was heard by many to say that the Story of the Book was communicated

to them by Burnet_ & further that Burnet had said to them, that they were equally intitled

to the Good things of this Life in common with the Whites_ [.]"[93]

When the evidence came to the Council of Safety, that body did not account

Jemmy's testimony sufficient, presumably due to his status as slave. Laurens stated to the

St. Bartholomew Committee that Burnet's "own Narrative and Confession were the only

Grounds upon which the Council could judge. . . ." Laurens argued, that, in agreement

with the young preacher's previous testimony, "his Guilt consisted in a strong Tincture of

Enthusiasm which had led him many Months ago to read and pray to Negroes in the

woods and in private Places without the Knowledge or Permission of their Masters" but

that he "had never anything more in View than the Salvation of those poor ignorant

Creatures. . . ." Laurens was convinced that Burnet "had never a thought of exciting them

to Insurrection, on the Contrary that he had endeavored to reconcile them to that Lot in

Life in which God had placed them, and to impress upon their Minds; the Duty of

Obedience to their Masters."[94]

Besides the fact that Laurens saved this man's life, or at least kept him from being

deported, it is important to note the words he used to do it. Laurens did not, it appears,

posses the same fears of enthusiastic religion in the midst of a plantation society as did so

many of his day. Granted, he distanced himself, at least in his capacity as a public official,

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[93] Ibid., 207-208.

[94] Council of Safety to St. Bartholomew Committee, 18 July 1775, Ibid., 231.

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from the label of "Enthusiasm," as did practically any respectable Evangelical. In the fulfillment of his duty as spokesman for the Council of Safety, he assured the people of St. Bartholomew that there was not a necessary correlation between praying with slaves in private without permission from masters and the planning of an insurrection. In fact, he stressed, enthusiastic religion can and was used as a means to convince the slaves of their "Duty of Obedience." In other words, the salvation of the slave's soul and the sanctification of the system which held him, Laurens believed, fit hand-in-glove.

The real demonstration of Laurens' evangelical view on this point came after the resolution of Burnet's problems in St. Bartholomew. Laurens was so convinced of Burnet's evangelical designs that he offered him a job on one of his Georgia plantations. The offer, whatever other duties may have been involved, was evidently for the added purpose of preaching to his slaves. Three years later Laurens, serving in the Continental Congress, wrote to Burnet indicating his continued satisfaction with the preacher's performance by opening up other plantations to him. "I hope I shall find you . . . in some other of my Plantations where you shall think you may be most serviceable. . . ."[95] Laurens' plantations had become itinerant stops on the ever widening evangelical circuit.

Whatever misgivings Laurens and other Christian slave owners had over the slave trade, and for that matter the overall institution itself, it may be inferred that they saw the Christian conversion of slaves as a means by which they could balance out twinges of personal doubt and plunge headlong into vigorous participation in the system. As seen in

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[95] Henry Laurens to John Burnet, 24 July 1778, Ibid., 14: 65.

several cases, such participation involved the flexibility that subjective pietistic interpretation afforded. And by aggressive attempts to christianize their slaves, they created a foundation upon which they could be slave owners and not violate their deeply held Christian principles. For some, far from bordering on the violation of faith, owning slaves strongly validated their role as conscientious and humanitarian Christians. Those like Laurens could periodically squelch lingering negative thoughts of the system and focus on the greater good within their reach. In this regard Laurens was not different from Whitefield, Knox, and others for whom slavery had virtually become a Christian institution, at the very worst "an inconsiderable evil."

Chapter Six

"Mine Eyes have Seen Thy Salvation": Pietistic Secularization and the American Revolution

. . . We are never free from one or more of that stamp in this province. But politicks has of late so much engaged the attention of that sort of people that they have neglected Methodism, "that one thing needful", as they call it.[1]
(Reverend Samuel Frink, Anglican minister in
Savannah, Georgia, 4 January 1769)

A debate among colonial and revolutionary historians that has centered around the extent to which Christianity influenced and even shaped patriotic resolve is still much alive. Jon Butler, a recent advocate for the more secular causes, has written that "at its heart, the Revolution was a secular event" and that "the ideologies that shaped it placed religious concerns more at its margins than at its center." Thus, "a secular, rather than a supernatural, view of life" dominated the Revolutionary Era, at least for most of the leading patriots. This view was prominent among early historians of the Revolution such as David Ramsay and George Bancroft, but among most modern historians who have, as Butler has, examined the religious dimensions of this period, the secular dominant view falls far short of the mark.[2] Scholars such as Perry Miller, Carl Bridenbaugh and Alan

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[1] Quoted in Robert M. Calhoon, *Evangelicals and Conservatives in the Early South, 1740-1861* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 31.

[2] Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), 194-196, 215 (quotations 195, 215). As to David Ramsay, Arthur Shaffer has written, his "conception of America bore the unmistakable stamp of Evangelical thinking." Though his view of the American Revolution and of republicanism "was highly secularized," he wrote, "it was nevertheless akin to the Evangelical assumption that a converted (republican) heart would express itself

Heimert, and more recently William McLoughlin, Rhys Isaac, Patricia Bonomi, Harry Stout, Ruth Bloch, and J. C. D. Clark have in one way or other carried forward the view that religion, and more specifically evangelically oriented religion, had a profound impact on the shaping of revolutionary rhetoric and action.[3]

Nathan Hatch, who would fall into the more religious oriented category, has shown that in New England a certain civil millennialism resulted from the mixture of the secular and sacred. Evangelical religion, especially in its eschatological emphasis, provided much of the impetus and emotional zeal that fueled patriotic sentiment. In this mixture, Hatch has written, "the American Republic assumed 'the soul of a church' not by accident but as the direct result of those principles of republican eschatology which

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in works for the public good and would look for signs of the coming millennium in the improvement of society." Ramsay sought in the American Revolution "a secularized version of the Christian republic." Arthur H. Shaffer, *To Be An American: David Ramsay and the Making of the American Consciousness* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 14, 15.

[3] See Perry Miller, "From the Covenant to the Revival," in *The Shaping of American Religion*, ed. James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 322-368; Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics, 1689-1775* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962); Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind from the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966); William G. McLoughlin, "'Enthusiasm for Liberty': The Great Awakening as the Key to the Revolution," in Jack P. Greene and William G. McLoughlin, *Preachers & Politicians: Two Essays on the Origins of the American Revolution* (Worcester, Massachusetts: American Antiquarian Society, 1977), 47-73; Rhys Isaac, "Evangelical Revolt: The Nature of the Baptists' Challenge to the Traditional Order in Virginia, 1765-1775," *William and Mary Quarterly* 31 (July 1974): 345-368; Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Harry S. Stout, "Religion, Communication, and the Ideological Origins of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 34 (October 1977): 519-541; Ruth H. Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); J. C. D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty, 1660-1832: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

emerged in the years between America's two Great Awakenings." The uniqueness of this civil millennial impulse came from a "new configuration of civil and religious priorities in the minds of the [New England] clergy." The difference between the millennialism born of the Great Awakening and that exhibited on the eve of the Revolution was that the latter was based "on the civil and religious liberty that American victory over Britain would insure," whereas the former emanated from "the New Light confidence in the progressive course of history [and] was based on the spread of vital piety. . . ." Revolutionary millennialism saw America, so to speak, as the new Kingdom of God, the "seat of Christ's earthly rule."[4].

Hatch has argued for a more balanced blend of secular and religious influences. Certainly no historian on either side of the debate would disagree that both secular and religious issues informed the revolutionary impulse.[5] The question has been over which had the more dominant influence. But in the debate, as is evidenced by Butler's above statement, there has been a tendency to relegate one or the other to peripheral status, when in fact there may be room for religious and secular interests working in unison. Americans were both secular and religious, and both played a significant role in bringing

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[4] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 17, 23, 24. It should be noted that leaders in the Great Awakening (particularly Whitefield and Edwards) also saw America as the center, so to speak, of the new Kingdom of God. Thus, in my view, Hatch may over emphasize the difference in spiritual goals promulgated within the two periods.

[5] Gordon Wood has recently authored an article that, in my view, offers a balanced position between religious and secular causes of the Revolution. See Wood, "Religion and the American Revolution," in *New Directions in American Religious History*, ed. Harry S. Stout and D. G. Hart (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 173-205.

about independence. This was accomplished in part, as Sidney Mead has stated, by means of a "brooding higher unity" that eventually transcended doctrinal differences in much of the American religious landscape. In support of Mead's observation, Hatch noted that "where multiple religious institutions cancelled out each other's exclusive claims, Americans began to grope for a communal identity to which they could assign an ultimate and inclusive function. That institution was, or became, the nation."[6]

With certain adjustments, Hatch's model of civil millennialism is applicable to the Anglican lowcountry. Historians have generally considered the Charleston area, often more than is deserved, as a bastion of secularism. This is especially true for the Revolutionary period. Hatch believes that the civil millennialism in New England had little connection with the Great Awakening. It came, he argued, from a new form of religious expression that developed in the years just before the outbreak of hostilities.[7] It is at this point that Hatch's civil millennialism begins to lose explanatory weight for the southern lowcountry. However true his division between mid-eighteenth century and Revolutionary Era piety may be for New England, I argue in this chapter that the secular impulse for revolution emerged from experientially driven subjective religious forms with connections to the Great Awakening. Moreover, I argue further that the secularization came, not only from the most obvious of secular oriented sources (natural rights philosophy, etc.), but from the *very make up* of Pietism itself.

The very nature of subjective religion lends itself to secularization over time. Modern Theologian Donald Bloesch aptly described this point. It is no mistake, Bloesch

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[6] Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty*, 141-142 (Mead quotation 141).

[7] Ibid., 22-25.

wrote, that "the University of Halle, founded as an institution for Pietism, became within one generation a bastion of rationalism." When a movement places greater emphasis on the inward subjective witness, "reason ineluctably regains its sovereignty because feeling and experience must finally be interpreted in order to give direction and meaning to life."[8] Sidney Ahlstrom as well has observed that Pietism's "assent on the religious feelings combined with its denigration of theological rigor opened the doors to rationalism, even at the University of Halle."[9] Also, there are indications that an interesting connection existed between the secularizing influence of Pietism and the formation of later German nationalism. Salo Baron has argued that a key ingredient which brought the many social, political, and cultural entities of eighteenth and nineteenth century Germany together into "an all-German nationalism" was the encouragement of "mystical union" common in German Pietism.[10]

Thus, due to its heavily weighted subjective components, Pietism has its own secularizing tendency. It is not so much a matter of competition between the sacred and secular as it is the natural outworking of a subjectively focused religion toward its most natural end. An examination of the actual nature of pietistic belief is needed in order to understand how this transition took place. Allen Guelzo has aptly noted that "above all,

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[8] Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 93.

[9] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 239.

[10] Salo Wittmayer Baron, *Modern Nationalism and Religion* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947), 131. It is interesting to note that Baron believed Pietism's emotional and mystical elements eventually contributed to *irrational* components present in German nationalism.

we are desperately impoverished in our understanding of the spirituality of the Awakening.
. . ." In this vein, rather than stressing religion's role in the "creation of a *political* mentality that prepared Americans for the Revolution," he argued, there should be an examination of the actual "shaping [of] the American *evangelical* mentality," an exploration of the "peculiar connection between individualistic assent to religious experience and the possibility for a new, heightened shape of communal order."[11] In this regard, I maintain that Pietism not only served as a facilitator of the political unity necessary for the implementation of resistance activity, as seen earlier in this study, it also infused patriotic sentiment with a certain subjective fervor that while operating authentically within the spiritual realm, was as much a force for secularization as any rationalist philosophy could be.

There is an interesting precedent in late Middle Age Europe that illuminates the way in which secularization may be seen as a religious act. Ernst H. Kantorowicz in his work *The King's Two Bodies* has shown that secularization during that period often came, not from inactivity on the church's part, but from a conscious and positive decision by some within the church to translate the "*corpus mysticum*" (mystical body) into the "*corpus reipublicae mysticum*" or "mystical body of the commonweal." This act was intended "to raise the state beyond its purely physical existence, and to transcendentalize it. . . ." With this translation the earthly kingdom could "be a distinct entity within the

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[11] Allen C. Guelzo, "God's Designs: The Literature of the Colonial Revivals of Religion, 1735-1760," in Stout and Hart, eds., *New Directions in American Religious History*, 163, 160.

traditional mystical body signifying the oneness of Christian society," or for that matter, as

some asserted, "the secular entity itself was a 'mystical body.'"[12]

The mystification of the political realm had much to do with its identification by

the Early Modern Era as an organic entity, "a body composed of head and members."[13]

Fourteenth century Neapolitan jurist Lucas de Penna wrote in this vein. ". . . Just as men

are joined together spiritually in the spiritual body, the head of which is Christ," he

asserted, "so are men joined together morally and politically in the *respublica*, which is a

body the head of which is the Prince."[14] Due largely to Lucas de Penna's influence the

union of the *corpus mysticum* and the state became deeply entrenched in France's social

and political culture. His view of the Prince as head of the body came in large part from

the Aristotelian idea of the king as a spousal head of the body politic. At the coronation

of Henry II in 1547, taking the ring signified that "the king solemnly married his realm (*le*

roy espousa solemnellement le royaume)."[15]

In 1603 James I gave his first speech to the British Parliament in which he stated,

"'What God hath conjoined then, let no man separate.' I am the husband, and all the

whole island is my lawful wife; I am the head, and it is my body; I am the shepherd, and it

is my flock." Along with the marriage motif, the view of an organic union of the *corpus*

mysticum and the state, with a king as head of the body, became well entrenched in

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[12] Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 207, 208; see also Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty*, 12n.

[13] Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 209.

[14] Quoted in Ibid., 216.

[15] Ibid., 217-222 (quotation 222); these were the words used at Henry's coronation.

English thought. Fifteenth century jurist Sir John Fortescue expressed what would become more and more common in Early Modern English political theory when he wrote that "just as the physical body grows out of the embryo, regulated by one head, so does there issue from the people the kingdom, which exists as a *corpus mysticum* governed by one man as head." Fortescue saw this union in much the same way Christian mystics saw the individual's eventual union into the divine. He "visualized the *corpus mysticum*," Kantorowicz explained, "as the last stage of perfection of a human society. . . ." That perfection reached such an extent that in fifteenth century England, as no where else, the "body politic" of King, Lords, and Commons came to be seen as "a trinity in unity and unity in trinity." The state had assumed its own deification within the body. It had become "co-eternal with the Church. . . ."[16]

However much subsequent events between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries lessened the notion of a *corpus mysticum* in English political thought, the concept was present in one form or other into the eighteenth century. A certain level of organic unity is part-and-parcel to any Erastian society, and it was to some degree a part of the thinking of American provincials. For Americans who thought in organic patterns, therefore, declaring independence from the Crown and Parliament involved a complex set of circumstances, not the least of which was how to justify rending the body from its head and how to then re-form it into a renewed living entity. This task was more complex than it might appear on the surface when one considers that an independent America forfeited establishment religion for sectarianism, Parliament for a Continental Congress, and the

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[16] Ibid., 223, 224, 227, 232.

king--later under the Constitution--for an elected and impeachable president. I maintain that subjective oriented religious tendencies, the kind prominent in pietistic thought, may well have helped or at least provided language for this process of religious secularization, namely reforming the *corpus mysticum* into the *corpus reipublicae mysticum*.

It is significant, in my view, that the development of the Medieval *corpus reipublicae mysticum* discussed by Kantorowicz developed within a Roman Catholic theological setting in France and, prior to the mid-sixteenth century, in England. Granted, much of the underlying civil religious concepts that informed such a process came from Roman antiquity. But the ability to formulate a "mystic body of the commonweal" within a Christian setting required an element of subjective creativity that Catholic theology allowed for. Pietism's subjectivity, as seen earlier in this study, was the same in kind. And it was this quality which allowed for transcendence of denominational and political boundaries and made it possible to not only rend the body but also to recreate what G. K. Chesterton later called "a nation with the soul of a church." Although a spiritually driven organic view of the body politic may have been more prominent in New England where religious language was much more freely engaged for political discourse, there are hints that such a pattern of thinking existed for lowcountry provincials as well. What Heimert wrote of New Light Edwardian Calvinists may also be said of some lowcountry patriots, that their evangelical impulse "provided pre-Revolutionary America with a radical, even democratic, social and political ideology," which in turn, "inspired . . . a thrust toward American nationalism."[17] Robert Calhoon has written that the revolutionary South felt the

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[17] Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, viii.

impulse of "evangelical persuasion [which] sought to interpret the whole character of life in the new nation and to define citizenship in spiritual and moral terms."[18]

Thinking of the state as an organic mystical body could cut in a number of ways, however. Many lowcountry Evangelical Pietists remained loyal to the Crown. Being an Evangelical Pietist did not mean one would support independence from Great Britain. Some, such as James Habersham of Georgia, thought in similar organic patterns, and partly for that very reason could not bring themselves to separate from Great Britain's governing body. Though Habersham supported the repeal of the Stamp Act and believed the British Ministry was increasingly oppressive, he never advocated separation from the mother country. Although he died in 1775 before the full outbreak of hostilities, all indications point to his desire to remain within the royal political orb to the very end.

It was not simply because Habersham had served on Georgia's council and as acting royal governor that he resisted independence. He held to his loyalist position, in part at least, for religious reasons. During the Stamp Act controversy Habersham wrote to New Jersey's Reverend Samuel Finley of his internal conflicts. "At present my Heart is torn to pieces with our present internal distraction occasioned by the Stamp Act." And, he added, "I must and do dislike it, but I detest and abhor from every motive Human and Divine the Intemperate Zeal, . . . that has been shown throughout this Continent. . . ." He went on to request Finley's prayers "to him (who ruleth over the madness of the People) to establish Peace, Harmony and Confidence amongst us. . . ."[19] Whatever the human and

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[18] Calhoon, *Evangelicals and Conservatives in the Early South, 1740-1861*, 92-93.

[19] James Habersham to Reverend Samuel Finley, 20 January 1766, in James Habersham, *The Letters of Hon. James Habersham, 1756-1775*, in *Collections of the Georgia Historical Society*, vol. 6 (Savannah: Georgia Historical Society, 1904), 53; it is

divine motives were, they kept him from resigning his seat on the council, and when

Georgia's royal governor James Wright needed to go on an extended trip to England, he

named Habersham, who, as senior councilor was designated in the royal instructions to

serve as interim. Governor Wright added his assurances saying that Habersham was "a

gentleman of property, and no Liberty Boy."[20] Habersham served as acting royal

governor for the years 1771-1772.

Just as Christian patriots used biblical imagery to spiritualize their roles in the

coming revolution, loyalists such as Habersham did the same for their own purposes.

During the Stamp Act controversy Habersham wrote to his evangelical friend William

Knox about his political dilemma. He commented on how overly zealous patriots had

threatened him and his property. He also stated that Governor Wright had remained firm

in his loyalty to the crown and that defending the governor had been to his own personal

detriment. This loyalty bore similarities in Habersham's mind to what Christ had done for

mankind as the crucified substitute. His words are reminiscent of Whitefield's earlier

messianic complex. "I think my self a person of no Consequence" in light of the

Governor's prospects at loosing his properties, he wrote. "I know the Governor is thrust

at through my Sides, but I will cheerfully bear it. . . ."[21]

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interesting to note that Habersham wrote essentially the same to George Whitefield; see
Ibid., 57.

[20] William Bacon Stevens, " A Sketch of the Life of James Habersham, President of His
Majesty's Council in the Province of Georgia," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 3
(December 1919): 165

[21] James Habersham to William Knox, 29 January 1766, Habersham, *The Letters of Hon.
James Habersham*, 56.

George Whitefield had earlier stated his reservations about armed rebellion, and

this attitude no doubt influenced Habersham's thinking. Referring to conflicts over

religious liberty brewing in Scotland in 1739 Whitefield wrote to Reverend Ralph Erskin

in response to the question "Whether you approve of taking the sword in defence [sic] of .

. . religious rights?" Taking up arms, he said, is "contrary to the spirit of JESUS CHRIST and

his apostles." And "when zeal carries us to such a length, I think it ceases to be zeal

according to knowledge."[22]   The "spirit" of the Apostles and Christ to which Whitefield

alluded, was outlined by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans.

> Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of
> God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the
> power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves
> damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then
> not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the
> same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is
> evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a
> revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be
> subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.[23]

This Christian principle of subordination to authority overrode any inclinations

Habersham might have had toward going against his divinely appointed government. Near

the end of his life in 1775 he rightly feared that "an open Rebellion against the parent

State, and consequently amongst ourselves" was at hand. In light of this filial attachment

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[22] George Whitefield to Ralph Erskin, 28 November 1739, in Whitefield, *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield*, 6 vols. (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1771), 1: 129. These reservations concerning armed revolt notwithstanding, Whitefield showed early signs of sympathy with American concern over British intrusions of liberty. See Whitefield, "Britain's Mercies, and Britain's Duties," in *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730-1805*, ed. Ellis Sandoz (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1991), 123-138. This sermon was preached in 1746 and related specifically to events that surrounded King George's War.

[23] Romans 13: 1-5 (King James Version).

to the 'parent State," he asserted, "I must, and do upon every occasion declare, that I would not chuse [sic] to live here longer, than we are in a State of proper Subordination to, and under the protection of Great Britain. . . ."[24] The British government was his parent, and he dared not defy parental authority.

Habersham held a similar view as fellow Evangelical Reverend John J. Zubly, who strongly supported repeal of the Stamp Act and the repulsion of other coercive measures, but who, even later as a member of the Continental Congress, stopped short of advocating independence from the crown.[25] In a 1766 sermon Zubly took the ideal of subordination to its logical conclusion, at least for one who believed in divine sovereignty over the affairs of men. Christianity "engages subjects to obey for the LORD's sake, not only to the gentle but also to the froward. We cannot be good christians," Zubly preached, "unless we are also good subjects and good members of the community. . . ." And "if ever . . . we should be cursed with a tyrannical oppressive government," he added, "our sins must be the cause of it."[26] In a later sermon preached in 1775 at the opening ceremony of Georgia's provincial congress, Zubly advised to "let neither the frowns of tyranny, nor

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[24] James Habersham to Messieurs Clark and Milligan, Habersham, *The Letters of Hon. James Habersham*, 236.

[25] I include Zubly in the pietistic orb even though he was not as prone, it seems, to subjectively oriented religion as were men like George Whitefield, James Habersham, Henry Laurens, or Richard Clarke. He was much more the careful Calvinist less interested in experience than correct doctrine. But he did have important pietistic connections such as the religious and philosophical club examined earlier, more specifically the spiritual camaraderie he had developed with Richard Clarke in the mid 1750s.

[26] J. J. Zubly, "The Stamp-Act Repealed; A Sermon, Preached in the Meeting at Savannah in Georgia, June 25th, 1766" in Zubly, *Revolutionary Tracts* (Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1972), 26-27. The three tracts in this reprint edition have been copied from the originals and contain separate pagination for each individual work.

pleasure of popularity, sway you from what you clearly apprehend just and right, and to be

your duty." And, he continued, "consider . . . how greatly your religion, your liberty, your

property, your posterity, is interested." You must "endeavour to act like freemen, like

loyal subjects, like real Christians. . . ."[27]

Rejection of authority would mean eventual internal disintegration for the colonies.

It would mean the rending of an organic relationship that, at least in Habersham's mind,

had no remedy. He was particularly concerned that destruction of the family body politic

would manifest itself within biological families. To London acquaintances Habersham

wrote in 1775,

> . . . Altho' I cannot altogether approve of the steps she [Great Britain] has lately
> taken, and do most cordially wish, that a permanent Line of Government was drawn,
> and persued [sic], by the Mother and her Children, and may God give your Senators
> Wisdom to do it, and heal this Breach; otherwise I cannot think of this event but
> with Horror and Grief. Father against Son, and Son against Father, and the nearest
> relations and Friends combatting with each other, I may Perhaps say with Truth,
> cutting each others throats, dreadfull to think of much less to experience. . . .[28]

Habersham wrote these words with a hint of personal apprehension, and for good reason.

He knew that his sons did not share his loyalty to the crown. And had he lived to see the

commencement of the War his fears of a family breach might have been realized. His

Princeton educated son Joseph, an otherwise devoted child, was completely dedicated to

American independence. Early in 1776, Joseph, a leader of Georgia's Liberty Boys,

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[27] Zubly, "The Law of Liberty. A Sermon on American Affairs, preached at the Opening of the Provincial Congress of Georgia. Addressed to the Right Honourable the Earl of Dartmouth," in Ibid., 25-26.

[28] James Habersham to Messieurs Clark and Milligan, *The Letters of Hon. James Habersham*, 236.

personally arrested his late father's close friend and colleague, Governor Wright.[29] One can only imagine what would have been the fate of the elder Habersham had he lived one more year. Death was a relief for both father and son.

Other lowcountry Christians with pietistic connections remained loyal to the Crown. Dr. Alexander Garden, for example, who attended Clarke's pietistic club and who developed a very close relationship with the mystical rector as well as with Henry Laurens, could not bring himself to advocate a break with the Mother country. He, like Habersham and Zubly, decried the tyrannical measures employed against the colonies but fell short of taking up arms for independence. It is interesting to consider how Garden justified his decision through his combined love for science and God. He saw scientific observation as a sacred task. Margaret Denny has observed that Garden "like so many men of the Enlightenment believed that the growth of piety was dependent on progress in scientific knowledge."[30] He stated in somewhat semi-gnostic terms that such investigation could lead to the spiritual quality of "true happiness" because it afforded "a knowledge of the beautiful order, disposition and harmony of the three kingdoms here and the other parts of this system in its higher sphere which at last leads us gradually to the Great Eternall first cause." To Garden, science was a means to worship God. It was as Nina Reid has written, a "kind of rhapsodic worship" for him. The view that scientific observation, especially botanical, was a means of spiritual encounter with the divine, had an influence on his being a loyalist. Reid explained that "Garden's attempt to see God more clearly

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[29] John Mebane, "Joseph Habersham in the Revolutionary War," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 47 (March 1963): 80.

[30] Margaret Denny, "Linnaeus and his Disciple in Carolina: Alexander Garden," *Isis* 38 (February 1948): 166.

ultimately precluded the marshalling of science in support of the Revolutionary cause."

For Garden "the natural world spoke . . . not of self-interested particles, but of harmony

and integration upheld by the hand of deity."[31] Thus, on one level, Garden saw organic

unity as a spiritual reason to maintain consensus in the political realm. Declaring

independence was for him a violation of the harmonious body he saw in the natural world,

a harmony implanted by a God of order and design. To participate in rending the body

politic, therefore, would impede his experiential relationship with such a God.

Although Evangelicalism is often seen as an engine for American patriotism, the

above examples of loyalism point to the fact that at whatever level a subjective,

experientially driven spirituality influenced one's thinking, it did not necessarily determine

political allegiance. There were enough differences, for example, among leaders of non-

establishment churches to question the view that Evangelicalism on average determined

which side one would take in the controversy.[32] The fact that in 1777 the Council of

Safety, led by Henry Laurens, solicited the Baptist minister Oliver Hart and the

Presbyterian minister William Tennent III, both outspoken Evangelicals, to go into the

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[31] Nina Reid, "Loyalism and the 'Philosophic Spirit' in the Scientific Correspondence of Dr. Alexander Garden," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 92 (January 1991): 14. For an account of Garden's troubles attending his loyalty see Edmund Berkeley and Dorothy Smith Berkeley, "The Quandary of the Loyalists," chap. in *Dr. Alexander Garden of Charles Town* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 262-291. I use the term "semi-gnostic" because while Garden demonstrated a pleroma model similar to gnosticism, he advocated the acquisition of ultimate spiritual knowledge by the lessons afforded from the natural world, a decidedly non-gnostic use of material substance.

[32] See Durward T. Stokes, "The Presbyterian Clergy in South Carolina and the American Revolution" *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 71 (October 1970): 270-282; also see his "The Baptist and Methodist Clergy in South Carolina and the American Revolution," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 73 (April 1972): 87-96.

South Carolina backcountry to persuade their fellow evangelical dissenters to become patriots at least shows that Evangelicalism did not uniformly translate into belief in the American cause.[33] It is even more revealing that their attempts at what Robert Calhoon has called "Evangelical Persuasion" were not successful in the backcountry. The hegemony of the loyalist leadership there gave "Hart and Tennent . . . little opportunity to change people's minds."[34] Bernard Bailyn was correct in arguing that "religion . . . had no single influence on the Revolutionary movement: it was itself both a stimulus and a deterrent to revolution. . . ."[35] More importantly, for our purposes, the variety of ways one could religiously evaluate the political spectrum attests to the flexibility and personal usefulness of pietistic forms.

That elite lowcountry Anglicans were at the forefront of patriotic resolve and were compelled to employ dissenting Evangelicals to win over the backcountry, illustrates the

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[33] It should be noted that there was a strong pietistic bent among backcountry dissenters during this time. Charles Woodmason, Anglican itinerant rector of the backcountry's St. Mark's parish, recognized elements of their subjective inclinations and responded to them in similar fashion as earlier lowcountry critics had done to George Whitefield and John Wesley. Woodmason observed in his usual exaggerated way that dissenters were "a Sett of Rhapsodists-- Enthusiasts-- Bigots-- Pedantic, illiterate, impudent Hypocrites. . . ." Moreover, he continued, "among . . . Quakers and Presbyterians, are many concealed Papists-- . . . And in the Shape of New Light Preachers, I've met with many Jesuits." Richard J. Hooker, ed., *The Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution: The Journal and Other Writings of Charles Woodmason, Anglican Itinerant* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1953), 42.

[34] Calhoon, *Evangelicals and Conservatives in the Early South*, 93.

[35] Bernard Bailyn, "Religion and Revolution: Three Biographical Studies," *Perspectives in American History* 4 (1970): 85. In my view, Bailyn goes too far in stating that "it is a gross simplification to believe that religion as such, or any of its doctrinaire elements, had a unique political role in the Revolutionary movement" (85). It simply does not follow from the fact that religion had varied results that it had no "unique political role." Pietism's unique role, in part, was its flexibility to adjust to either side.

uniqueness of the region in comparison to the colonies at large. For one thing, it illustrates the lowcountry Anglican's understanding of the power of evangelical persuasion. Also, it almost automatically leads one to consider how such a situation would have ever worked itself out apart from the surging influx of Evangelical Pietism during 1739 and 1740 and the subsequent religious harmony between dissenters and influential Anglican elites spearheaded by William Hutson and Richard Clarke in the late 1750s. To whatever the degree it was recognized by those in authority, Evangelical Pietism had become a valuable tool in the lowcountry to convince others of the righteousness of the American cause. And for some in the elite Anglican ranks, it was recognized as such, possibly because they had come to their own resolve through similar religious channels of persuasion.

Gordon Wood has recently written that "the notion that Americans suffered a religious recession during the Revolution is an optical illusion, a consequence of historians' looking for religion in the wrong places."[36] This, in my view, is especially true of the lowcountry revolutionary South. What has generally been dismissed as overtly secular motivations leading toward the Revolution may reveal religious impulses heretofore unrecognized. Most studies that have argued for a strong revivalistic religious connection with revolutionary impulses has focused primarily on the northern colonies, especially New England. Also, leaders within non-Anglican denominations are generally presented as the prime movers--outside the more obvious non-religiously motivated exceptions such as Jefferson and Adams--that operated under the sway of these mixed

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[36] Wood, "Religion and the American Revolution," 177.

secular and sacred impulses.[37] In this respect, it is important to note the uniqueness of

Carolina's lowcountry Anglicans. Whereas in some colonies Anglicanism was a strong

impetus to loyalism, the opposite is true of South Carolina. Of the twenty three Anglican

clergy in the province, only five supported Great Britain. And no Carolinians more

vigorously and influentially stood for American independence than those from

Charleston's St. Philip's Church.[38] Moreover, it is worth noting, some of the principal

revolutionary leaders from that parish had been members of Richard Clarke's and William

Hutson's religious club. Thus, among the varied causes that set lowcountry Anglicans

apart from many other Anglicans in America, the pietistic history that several had shared

on a personal and corporate level should be considered in this distinction.

Henry Laurens and Christopher Gadsden are good examples of the extent to which

this innate secularization of pietistic principles could influence revolutionary action. On

the surface the two seem to be unlikely candidates for such an examination since they were

often strongly at odds with each other politically. But their differences make their role as

pietistic facilitators in the secular realm more interesting in that together they embody the

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[37] J. C. D. Clark emphasized the role of dissenters as the principal agents of revolutionary religious impulses in his *The Language of Liberty, 1660-1832.*

[38] Samuel S. Hill, Jr., ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion in the South* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1984), s.v. "South Carolina," by Lewis P. Jones, 707. Edward McCrady wrote that "of the party which Christopher Gadsden assembled under the Liberty Tree, in 1766, ten of the twenty-six were his fellow worshippers in the old Church [St. Philip's]. . . ." And that "of the sixty principal citizens of South Carolina, upon the fall of Charleston arrested and sent by the British in exile to St. Augustine, . . . more than a third were from St. Philip's." Edward McCrady, "An Historic Church. The Westminster Abbey of South Carolina. A Sketch of St. Philip's Church, Charleston, S. C., from the Establishment of the Church of England, Under the Royal Charter of 1665, to the Present Time," in *Year Book City of Charleston So. Ca. 1896* (Charleston: Lucas & Richardson Company, n.d.), 345, 346.

bedrock principle of Pietism's subjective flexibility. Even more intriguing, the two end up virtually at the same place politically, possibly a testament to Pietism's other bedrock principle, the natural drive toward consensus.

One of the major characteristics of eighteenth century pietistic religion was its penchant for a contemporary, practical use of the Bible.[39] This was a tendency perpetuated, as F. Ernest Stoeffler has written, by belief in the Holy Spirit's ability "to commend the truth of the Bible to men's minds and hearts without the tortured interpretations of the professionals." The pietistic layman's use of Scripture was not so much for doctrinal formulation as it was for answering the question, "How are the insights of the Bible to be applied to the problems of daily life?" Of course any evangelical movement, pietistic or otherwise, can in one way or other be characterized as biblical. That is, the Bible strongly informs the beliefs held. With Pietism the emphasis is more on the extent to which Pietists see in biblical passages a personal, practical, and contemporary relevance *beyond* the intended meaning of the actual texts. The Bible itself uniquely enters into experience providing an interpretive window for contemporary events.[40] Just as this tendency evidenced itself with pietistic loyalists such as Habersham, it did the same for those who wanted to justify separation from the governing body politic.

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[39] It should be noted that the use of biblical imagery, especially prior to the Revolution, was commonplace with many outside pietistic circles. Nevertheless, whether used by Pietists or not, it may be considered, at least in part, a subjective hermeneutic principle made popular by them. Regardless of the user, this type of biblical imagery was pietistic in that it removed the text from its intended doctrinal purpose to serve secular ends.

[40] F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism*, 2nd ed. Studies in the History of Religions IX (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 21, 20. It should be noted that this type of contemporary use of Scripture was extensively employed by American Puritans as well.

David Ramsay noted that his father-in-law Henry Laurens had a particular way with the Scriptures. "With the bible he was intimately acquainted. Its doctrines he firmly believed; its precepts and history he admired, and was much in the habit of quoting and applying portions of it to present occurrences."[41] While in London in 1774 Laurens spoke of the ever widening gap between the British and colonial positions. During this period he began to formulate these tensions into a biblical and even millennial framework.

> If the Americans adhere Steadily to their present Subsisting Resolutions & the British Ministry are as tenacious of their Diabolical plan, we Shall certainly be laid under many difficulties in our part of the World. . . . The view is painful & nothing less than that confirmed patriotism which is equal to forsaking Father & Mother & House & Land for the Kingdom of Heaven's Sake. . . .[42]

By this stage of the tension (September 1774) the lines were clearly drawn in Laurens' mind between the iniquity of certain British officials and the righteousness of the American cause. The following month Laurens compared his plight to that of his grandfather, a Huguenot who had lost all as a result of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.[43] The conflict was shaping into a religious war not unlike what his forbears had experienced almost a hundred years before.

Laurens, however, was everything but a supporter of the often rash and intolerant actions associated with patriotism. The tensions between him and his boyhood friend Christopher Gadsden, especially after their strong disagreement over peace negotiations

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[41] David Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina from its First Settlement in 1670 to the Year 1808*, 2 vols. (Newberry, South Carolina: W. J. Duffie, 1858; reprint, Spartanburg, South Carolina: The Reprint Company, 1959, 1971), 2: 261.

[42] Henry Laurens to Ralph Izard, 20 September 1774, Philip Hamer et al, eds., *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, 14 vols. thus far (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1968-), 9: 566 (hereafter *Laurens Papers*).

[43] Henry Laurens to John Delagaye, 21 October 1774, Ibid., 596.

with the Cherokees in 1761, were usually in one way or other due to what Laurens'

believed to be the intemperate demeanor Gadsden portrayed in political decision making.

After the Cherokee War came another political rift between the two. In 1762 Governor

Thomas Boone, based on a technicality, refused to recognize Gadsden's election from St.

Paul's parish. Gadsden and his supporters ignored his decision and vowed to let vital

legislative measures, including the appropriation of Boone's salary and the payment of

government accumulated debts, remain dormant until such time the assembly's right to

control its own elections was recognized. Laurens stood with Gadsden in principle for

representative control of elections, but believed the harm caused by refusing to meet

financial obligations was of greater import than winning a dispute with the royal

governor.[44] To Laurens, Gadsden had become a "poor rash headlong gentleman . . . a

ringleader . . . in popular quarrels." As much as Gadsden and Laurens agreed in the

overall principle of colonial rights in the face of British intrusion, they were usually miles

apart on how those rights should be asserted. As Laurens biographer David Wallace has

written, "the two distinguished patriots . . . [were] so similar in some respects and in

others so different. . . ."[45] Laurens was more like loyalists Habersham and Garden in his

moderate approach to the growing tensions than were many of his fellow patriots. Of the

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[44] Jack P. Greene, "The Gadsden Election Controversy and the Revolutionary Movement in South Carolina," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 46 (December 1959): 479. Greene sees this event as an important training exercise for would-be revolutionaries in South Carolina. The election controversy "provided an opportunity for influential South Carolina representatives to develop further in political leadership and to acquire an important type of political experience--the waging of a political war of attrition in defense of what they felt were their constitutional rights" (490).

[45] David Duncan Wallace, *The Life of Henry Laurens* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1915), 106.

inflamed patriots' "measures," Laurens wrote, "I condemn, but I condemn them as improper modes of resentment." For, he added, "errors will appear even on the side of the injured party in all great quarrels."[46] Wallace described Laurens well in this regard.

> He bore his part in the acts of revolutionary resistance and loyally stood by those even who acted with indiscretion in the cause; but he was temperamentally unable to delight in confusion, violence, and mobs and looked upon separation from the sovereign of his birth as only the last resort to preserve freedom.[47]

It is clear that one of the strong informants on Laurens' more moderate disposition was the pietistic principle of religious tolerance. In 1775 when Laurens became the chairman of South Carolina's Continental Association, his opposition to the "Test Oath" controversy demonstrated the influence his spiritual leanings had on his political principles. The oath stipulated that any who would not sign, avowing full loyalty to patriotic principles, would be branded "*Inimical to the Liberty of the Colonies.*" Such a stipulation was to Laurens, as he stated in his dissenting speech to the Association, "abhorrent & detestable." Many "are not Enemies to their Country_ who are friends to all America" such as "Quakers or Men of Quaker principles" who cannot in good conscience sign such an oath even though they may "confide in the goodness of our Cause & the overruling Providence of God." Laurens then explained that his own distaste for creedal formulations which unnecessarily bind men's spiritual consciences put him at odds with any type of oath which did not account for a good faith dissent.

> I hate all Dogmatic & arbitrary dictates over Mens Consciences_ here Gentlemen is a Book [Book of Common Prayer]_ from which we have just heard Prayers, an Orthodox Book in which I find a Doctrine similar to that which I now object to in

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[46] Quoted in Wallace, *The Life of Henry Laurens*, 200.

[47] Ibid.

our intended Association_ "Which Faith except every one do keep whole &
undefiled without doubt he shall Perish Everlastingly[.]" Long was this Athanasian
Test, a stumbling block in the cause of Religion in general, a bar to the honour &
prosperity of the Church established by Law_ . . . Honest minded Men of narrow &
fervorous Zeal for the same religion_ abandoned & detested that Church which
maintained such intolerant damnatory tenets, as essential to Salvation.

When I was a Boy before there were any settled principles of Religion in my mind,
I have heard my Father and . . . Mother & many other good old People profess that
Creed with great warmth of Devotion_ I, at the same time inwardly exclaiming_ this
can't be true_ I cannot believe it_[48]

Laurens pietistic religiosity manifested in biblical imagery evidenced itself in his

national political perceptions as well. In 1777 South Carolina sent Laurens as a

representative to the Continental Congress whereupon his talents were quickly recognized,

and he was subsequently elected as that body's president. John Adams, after observing

Laurens' deportment in the fulfillment of his duty wrote to his wife, "They have sent us a

new delegate whom I greatly admire, Mr. Laurens, . . . a gentleman of great fortune, great

abilities, modesty and integrity, and great experience too. If all the States would send us

such men, it would be a pleasure to be here."[49] One might conclude from this

endorsement that the deist Adams detected no enthusiastic religious tendencies in Laurens.

That may well be the case. Laurens knew when and when not to display his religious

proclivities. Yet, it was Adams who saw in the New England Puritans' enthusiastical

tendencies a great advantage for the commonweal. ". . . It will be found universally true,

that no great enterprise for the honor of happiness of mankind was ever achieved without

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[48] Enclosure of test oath dissenting speech from Henry Laurens to John Laurens, 8 June
1775, *Laurens Papers*, 10: 175-177.

[49] Quoted in Wallace, *The Life of Henry Laurens*, 229.

a large mixture of that noble infirmity."[50] To him subjective religion had its advantages,

especially for facilitating periods of transition. Adams may have been thinking of Cato's

proposition that general enthusiasm had a "Fierceness for Liberty of Opinion . . . , and for

subduing all Men to it. . . ." And although for Cato it had its drawbacks and limited

usefulness, "this Courage of Enthusiasm" could play an important role "in the first Rise of

States and Empires."[51] Adams may well have sensed Laurens' subjective spiritual air and

thought the better of him for it. It is more likely, however, given Laurens' seeming

obsession with impressing his peers, that he kept his more emotional religious tendencies

close to the vest and apart from the discerning eyes of men like Adams. Nevertheless, his

correspondence during the entire Revolutionary Era shows that he was no less motivated

by strong strains of "that noble infirmity."

In Laurens' first year in the Congress he served on a committee that involved itself

with the precarious situation of Georgia's defense. He informed his Georgia acquaintance,

merchant Joseph Clay, "I have done every thing in my power to impress upon the mind of

. . . Congress the value & Importance of Georgia" and the necessity for its protection. He

saw South Carolina in a similar predicament and evaluated his concerns in a biblical

context. "I apply in politics, St. Paul's remark, if one member Suffers all the Members

Suffer . . .[,] the loss of Georgia or South Carolina or even their distress will be Sensibly

felt by all the northern States." And, he added, "I think this important truth has not

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[50] Quoted in David S. Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World: Heresy to Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), 228.

[51] Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, no. 65 in *The English Libertarian Heritage: From the Writings of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon in the Independent Whig and Cato's Letters*, ed. David L. Jacobson (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965), 161.

hitherto been properly considered__[.]"[52] This comment not only illustrates Laurens'

habit of applying Scripture "to present occurrences," it also hints at the way in which he

saw the organic component of the newly formed confederation of states within a spiritual

context. After all, in the passage to which Laurens refers (I Corinthian 12) St. Paul was

expounding on the church as the spiritual "body of Christ" in which there "should be no

schism." To Laurens, on some level, the new confederation had become a living and

spiritual entity.

But in the debate on the Árticles, Laurens is generally seen as attempting to

protect local interests rather than perpetuate central unity and control. On the whole, this

evaluation is valid. It is true that throughout most of the debates, Laurens consistently

voted against measures that would give population or wealth (proportional tax

contributions) the upper hand for certain states. Wallace has written that "in this great

debate between the nationalists and particularists Laurens stood steadily with the latter. . .

." On the other hand, it should be noted that those generally thought of as nationalists

(often those from the most populated or wealthiest states) who wanted "to express the

national unity of the country," were in one sense no more concerned with the sum over the

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[52] Henry Laurens to Joseph Clay, 20 August 1777, *Laurens Papers*, 11: 463. The biblical
passage to which Laurens refered is I Corinthians 12: 26. The context for this portion of
Scripture is Paul's exposition on the nature of the spiritual body of Christ. Paul
emphasized its unified nature stating that God had "tempered the body together" and "that
there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care
one for another." He then stated--the section to which Laurens alluded--that "whether
one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the
members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."
I Corinthians 12: 24-27 (King James Version).

parts than were those who were simply asking for a more level playing field.[53] Suffice it to

say that particular interests played heavily on both sides.

Nevertheless, there are indications that in some cases, a more centralized federalist

position took precedence over local interests in Laurens' thinking. For example, when an

amendment was proposed that would prevent congress from interfering with a state's

ability to levy "imposts and duties on foreigners as their own people are subject to,"

Laurens voted against it. He was the only southern delegate to do so. His position was

"in harmony with his tendency to magnify the authority and dignity of Congress," and it

demonstrated "his freedom from sectional bias." Laurens also, again in the minority (with

two others) voted that the national congress should be the final arbiter between state

disputes.[54] Given this nationalistic tendency, it is not altogether surprising to find Laurens

almost ten years later expressing approbation for the Constitution over the Articles of

Confederation. The Constitution was "infinitely better" than the Articles, he said in 1787,

but some "will not like it, because it is calculated to make them honest." But even as

much as he liked the new Constitution, that it did not give the executive branch enough

power was, he believed, a blemish.[55]

In December of 1778 Laurens resigned his presidency in Congress over the Silas

Deane affair, and a year later he was appointed foreign minister to Holland. On his

voyage to Holland his ship was intercepted by the British resulting in a fourteen month

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[53] Wallace, *The Life of Henry Laurens*, 232-233 (quotation 233).

[54] Ibid., 233-234 (amendment quotation 233).

[55] Henry Laurens to Edward Bridgen, 8 October 1787, and *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 31 October 1787, The Papers of Henry Laurens, University of South Carolina, Columbia (hereafter H. L. Papers).

imprisonment in the Tower of London. The condition of release was simply to consent to

being an English citizen; he consistently refused. During this imprisonment Laurens

demonstrated further his use of pietistic biblical imagery to explain the conflict.

While in captivity certain of his friends informed him of the British plan to send

agents from New York amongst the Pennsylvania defectors in order to solicit their

enlistment into the British army. Laurens compared the incident with a biblical account

recorded in Acts 19. In this passage certain Jewish priests in Ephesus, sons of Sceva, took

it upon themselves to exorcise, in the name of Jesus, evil spirits out of some who were

possessed. Upon this attempt one of the spirits rebuked them saying, "Jesus I know, and

Paul I know, but who are you?" (Acts 19:15). Laurens' biblical structuring of this event is

significant on two counts. It not only illustrates his pietistic application of written

revelation, it seems to indicate his own self identity as an instrument of prophetic

utterance.

> I said to those friends . . . "This circumstance is no more than I had expected, no
> more than I had foretold Congress before I quitted it."
> "With respect to the persons sent from New-York to enlist, depend upon it, they
> will meet a worse fate than the seven sons of Seeva [sic] did, (Acts 19th.) The
> defectioners will say to them, 'Congress we know! and Washington we know! but
> who are ye? who dare to interfere in our family quarrel?' They will seize those
> persons, and they will be treated as spies, and hanged. You will hear of this very
> soon."
> These sentiments quieted the minds of true friends, and demonstrated to all, my
> confidence in the goodness of our cause.
> My friends complimented me by saying in this article I had been prophetic: which
> lost me no credit with them.[56]

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[56] Henry Laurens, "A Narrative of the Capture of Henry Laurens, of his Confinement in
the Tower of London, &c. 1780, 1781, 1782," in *Collections of the South-Carolina
Historical Society* (Charleston, South Carolina: S. G. Courtenay & Company, 1857), 1:
44-45.

The British released Laurens on 31 December 1781. For health reasons he resided in France for several months, awaiting a suitable time to return to America. On 12 November 1782 he received a summons from congress to participate in the peace negotiations in Paris. Due to his belief that his services were not needed and to a serious case of gout he requested to be excused from the trip. Not receiving an official exemption, he decided it was his duty to make the trip regardless. He arrived near the end of the conference and was able to participate only two days prior to the preliminary signing.[57] Nevertheless, his contribution was important. John Adams, a lead participant in the negotiations, wrote to Robert Livingston that even though Laurens was there for only a short period, "he was of great . . . service to the Cause." Moreover, he added, "he has done great Service to America in England, where his Conversation has been Such as the purest and firmest American would wish it, and has made many Converts."[58]

Laurens saw his overall contributions in much the same fashion. He reported to congress from Europe almost as if he were an awakening preacher authenticating his usefulness in the Lord's vineyard, even in the midst of suffering and opposition. He had been a faithful and fearless proponent of the "Doctrine of the total Independence of America." It was, he wrote, "a Doctrine which I asserted in the Tower of London & out of it, & always in the presence of Their Lordships as freely & as strenuosly [sic] as ever I had done at the State-House in Philadelphia," and, he added, "I am assured I have made

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[57] Wallace, *The Life of Henry Laurens*, 399, 401-402.

[58] John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, 23 January 1783, H. L. Papers.

many Converts amongst people of the first Importance in England; & perhaps it would be no Exaggeration, instead of many, to say, Thousands."[59]

The greatest pain Laurens received from the War was the word of his eldest son's death. John Laurens had died in South Carolina in one of the last skirmishes of the conflict. This loss moved Henry even more to see the American cause as divine in origin. All great losses need greater reasons. Not long after learning of John's death he wrote in the context of that loss, "Young Men ought with Vigor to engage in the great Work of establishing the new Government by Wisdom in Justice and in Righteousness, that their Children's children may rejoice and say, this is the Work of God, Our Fathers were the . . . Instruments."[60] In Laurens' mind the legacy of a righteous government was the one accomplishment left that could bring full meaning to this righteous war waged by righteous people. Only then could he completely justify the loss of so promising a son. Less than three weeks later, still distraught, he wrote to his sister-in-law a deeply felt expression of grief. At one point in the letter he had to stop until he could compose himself. He again thanked God for a son who gave his life for his country and then reflected on his own pressing responsibilities, "tis my duty to God, by doing my duty to my country. . . ."[61]

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[59] Henry Laurens to President of Congress, 30 May 1782, *Laurens Papers*, 15 (to be published). It should be noted that the occasion of this letter was to refute what some, such as James Madison, believed to be indications of Laurens' lack of resolve to the American cause by certain statements he made while imprisoned in the Tower.

[60] Henry Laurens to John Bondfield, 12 December 1782, H. L. Papers.

[61] Henry Laurens to Mary Laurens, 30 December 1782, Ibid.

Laurens often complained that few in America appreciated his contributions made at so great a personal sacrifice. There were exceptions, however. Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut wrote to Laurens, who was still in Europe in the Fall of 1783, congratulating and thanking him for the accomplishments his efforts and suffering had brought forth. Trumbull placed Laurens' recent accomplishments in the gallery of the most unique and historic workings of divine providence. The words must have greatly pleased the pietistic patriot.

> That superintend[in]g Wisdom which governs human Affairs has bro't to a happy Termination our arduous Contest & It has bro't these United States to be named among the Nations of the Earth, as a free, independent & Sovereign People__ The same indulgent Providence has given you & me the Privelidge [sic] of Citizenship in this newly rising Empire.__ Suffer me to congratulate you, on this great Event__ an Event which at the same Time that it astonishes almost the World, has been accomplished, even . . . beyond our own Expectations__ so great a Revolution, undoubtedly is the Work of Heaven__ and as such, claims our utmost Gratitude & Love to the supreme Disposer of all events__[.]"[62]

Principal revolutionary leaders in the lowcountry are often presented as almost purely secular in their outlook since their arguments were more or less secular in tone and content. Such cannot be said of Henry Laurens. But Christopher Gadsden is a different story. To Jon Butler, for example, Gadsden's secular demeanor placed him within the ranks of deists and socinians who only gave notice to Christ in so far as "his morals were true to the dignity of mankind rather than because they were divine." Gadsden in particular, Butler continued, was a confirmed secularist who on the whole discounted any serious notion of religion since he mostly "quoted Juvenal, Pope, and Plato . . . rather than Milton and Christ."[63] Granted, unlike Henry Laurens, it is more difficult to find overt

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[62] Jonathan Trumbull, Sr. to Henry Laurens, 5 October 1783, Ibid.

[63] Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, 214-215 (quotation 215).

references to personal religious belief in the writings of Gadsden. But as seen earlier, Gadsden was interested in experiential religion and there are indications he closely aligned himself with evangelical and pietistic forms.

Early on, Gadsden and Laurens covenanted to be each other's moral keeper. Moreover, David Ramsay explained, this spiritually oriented relationship helped to prepare them for their roles in the Revolution.

> They made a common cause to support and encourage each other in every virtuous pursuit, to shun every path of vice and folly, to leave company whenever it tended to licentiousness, and by acting in concert, to parry the charge of singularity so grating to young persons. By an honorable observance of a few concerted rules, they mutually strengthened virtuous habits, broke the force of many temptations, and acquired an energy of character which fitted them for acting a distinguished part in the trying scenes of a revolution through which it was the destiny of both to pass under similar circumstances.[64]

The above description is strikingly similar to relationships cultivated in religious societies such as might have developed in an Oxford Holy Club or Fetter Lane. This mutual resolve for each other's moral and spiritual welfare may hint at motivations behind their simultaneous participation in Clarke's and Hutson's pietistic club.

Gadsden was one of the earliest southern Americans to push for unity among the colonies against the Stamp Act. Massachusetts' call for the formation of a Stamp Act Congress was vigorously supported by Gadsden in the South Carolina Commons. His leadership eventually placed him as one of three South Carolina delegates to convene in New York. He later stated of himself that "no man in America strove more (and more successfully) first to bring about a Congress in 1765, and then to support it afterwards

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[64] Ramsay, *Ramsay's History of South Carolina*, 2: 253.

than myself."[65] South Carolina's leadership in colonial unity is unique when one considers

the localism demonstrated by Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia which did not send

delegates. Gadsden's "honest zeal, ardor, and energy," as one contemporary put it, for a

unified effort against the British encroachment was a major if not the decisive

differential.[66] Gadsden's previous experiences as a merchant apprentice in Philadelphia

and a purser on the HMS *Aldborough* which took part in ending the French occupation of

Louisburg on Cape Breton Island, "prepared [him] to think of the colonies as a whole. . .

." Also, Gadsden's education in England and his life in a major port town like Charleston,

it has been suggested, "contributed to his broad perspective."[67]

In addition to non local activities, Gadsden's religious influences seem to have

contributed to his holistic political tendencies. He saw the hand of providence in the

formulation of an organic unity among the people. In his response to the Townshend

Acts, for example, Gadsden encouraged himself by recounting the obvious righteousness

of the American cause in past events. God's hand, he said, had been evident during the

Stamp Act crisis in that Carolina's courts functioned even without the yet unavailable

stamped paper from England. The same "kind providence, without whose permission not

even a sparrow falls to the ground" that has prompted the colonists to manufacture their

own necessary items in the face of nonimportation, has "graciously, as in times of the

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[65] Quoted in Robert M. Weir, ed., *The Letters of Freeman, Etc.: Essays on the Nonimportation Movement in South Carolina Collected by William Henry Drayton* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), xiv.

[66] Quoted in E. Stanly Godbold, Jr. and Robert H. Woody, *Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 52.

[67] Weir, ed., *The Letters of Freeman*, xiv; Godbold and Woody, *Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution*, 56.

stamp-act, . . . knit the hearts of all the sons of *America* together . . . as the heart of one

man, to make use thereof." In light of this divine intervention, Gadsden exclaimed, "thank

God, we are not altogether forsaken." Gadsden's sentiments echoed his friend Rawlins

Lowndes, who, as a judge in Charleston stressed that the courts ability to function was not

impaired by the absence of stamped paper. The whole event was, Lowndes said, "as much

to be attributed to the Act of God, as if the Ship which brought them into the Province

had been cast away in a storm, for nothing less than this immediate and irresistible

influence could have as it were in a Moment United all America and made them as the

heart of one Man."[68]

Gadsden's and Lowndes' statements are congruent with an evangelical pietistic

sentiment. One of Gadsden's associates, Reverend Oliver Hart, who had been profoundly

influenced as a teenager by the Great Awakening in Pennsylvania, came to Charleston in

1749 and served as pastor of the Charleston Baptists from 1750 until he was forced to

flee north during the British occupation of the town thirty years later.[69] He had, as

mentioned above, gone into the backcountry at the behest of the Council of Safety to

dissuade dissenters from loyalistic tenets. After his exile from Carolina, he never returned,

settling in New Jersey where he served another congregation for several years. In 1789

Hart preached a Thanksgiving Sermon recounting the work of God behind the unification

of the colonies under the First Continental Congress. His words are strikingly similar to

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[68] Weir, ed., *The Letters of Freeman*, 61-62, 138n.

[69] Loulie Latimer Owens, *Oliver Hart, 1723-1795: A Biography* (Greenville: The South Carolina Baptist Historical Society, 1966), 7-9. Gadsden and Hart worked closely together for religious disestablishment by helping draft the High Hills Petition in 1776.

those of Gadsden and Lowndes and show his own view of America as a *corpus reipublicae mysticum.*

> CONGRESS was formed! And, wonderful as it is in itself, astonishing as it appears to the whole world, this heterogeneous company became, under God, the salvation of dear America. However much divided with regard to locality, religion, personal interests, tempers and prejudices, they all united as one man, in the common cause of their country. Who, but that Being who governs the heart, could effect this? The several provinces, thus united in Congress, as the head and soul of the whole community. . . . [70]

During the Stamp Act Congress Gadsden strongly stressed the need for a unified front against British encroachment. Afterwards, he wrote of his influential resolve. "Our people have behaved as firmly in the common cause as any upon the Continent, . . . and I make little doubt of their continuing so to do. . . ." Many southerners, though, had not come around to "our uniform spirit of firmness" as exhibited by "our brethren to the Northward." Gadsden warned that "nothing will save us but acting together. The Province that endeavours to act separately will certainly gain nothing by it; she must fall with the rest, and not only so," Gadsden added with a hint of revivalistic zeal, "but be deservedly branded besides with everlasting infamy." It will be a trap for the whole if some colonies act on their own. If "different Colonies . . . act differently in this great common cause, . . . all will be over with the whole." Therefore, he insisted, "there ought to be no New England man, no New Yorker, *etc.* known on the Continent, but all of us Americans." For those, such as many in neighboring Georgia, who decided to capitulate

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[70] Oliver Hart, *America's Remembrancer, with Respect to Her Blessedness and Duty. A Sermon Delivered in Hopewell New Jersey on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1789* (Philadelphia: Printed by T. Dobson, 1791), 10.

to British law and purchase stamped paper, Gadsden likened them to "Esau of old" who sold his birthright and to apostates in Israel who "bow the knee to Baal."[71]

While Gadsden was in New York, the Sons of Liberty were demonstrating in the streets of Charleston. Most of the lowcountry Liberty Boys were middling artisans who had found in Gadsden a worthy spokesman. Many had come out of two organizations, the Fellowship Society, a poor relief group of which Gadsden was a member, and from Gadsden's own Artillery Company that he had formed prior to the Cherokee War. Sometime around 1764 Gadsden met with several of these men and warned them of the imminent financial burdens they would face under continued British policies. The demonstrations in October of 1765 were in response to some of the same issues raised by Gadsden. The Liberty Boys were, for all practical purposes, acting under the influence of their leader who was in New York seeking to accomplish on a national level what they were attempting locally.

Given this close attachment between Charleston's Liberty Boys and Gadsden, it is interesting to note the religious overtones that were a part of their protest. On 9 October after learning that an English stamp officer and stamped paper were aboard a vessel anchored off the coast, Liberty Boys erected a large gallows with an effigy of a stamp official as well as a devil on the right and a blue bonneted head with a boot for its body on the left. A sign on the front of the gallows read "Liberty and no Stamp-Act," and behind the edifice was a sign that warned, "Whoever shall dare attempt to pull down these

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[71] Christopher Gadsden to William Samuel Johnson and Charles Garth, 2 December 1765, in Richard Walsh, ed., *The Writings of Christopher Gadsden, 1746-1805* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1966), 66-67; Godbold and Woody, *Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution*, 62.

effigies, had better been born with a mill-stone about his neck and cast into the Sea." As

much of a scriptural misquote as this statement is, the meaning is nevertheless clear--

damnation on any who work against the righteous efforts of liberty. Later that evening,

they paraded the spectacle through the streets followed by around 2,000 supporters. At

the end of the procession the effigies burned as St. Michael's bells tolled, giving "a touch

of solemnity to the proceedings." Lt. Governor William Bull concluded that the whole

affair was orchestrated "by some considerable man who stood behind the curtain."[72]

The Stamp Act fired in Gadsden the resolve to sacrifice everything, including his

life, on "the Altar of Liberty & in the Cause of my Country." To die for this cause would

have a similar impact as that of the "Martyrs of old." Patriot blood, like those who died

for Christ, would "serve as seed to multiply the supporters of our Noble Cause. . . ."

Thus, he affirmed, "my highest Ambition is to be found doing my Duty let my Master call

at Midnight or at what Hour he please." And, he added, "I desire to be all resignation to

Him & I am sure he will not leave us or forsake us or suffer us to be tried above what we

are able to bear."[73]

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[72] Godbold and Woody, *Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution*, 58-59. Bull
may have believed Gadsden to be "the considerable man who stood behind the curtain."
But Godbold and Woody wrongly conclude that Henry Laurens believed Gadsden was
behind the midnight search of his premises for hidden stamps (59). Laurens, after the
unwelcome search of his home, referred to a "malicious Villain acting behind the Curtain,"
but he believed it was Peter Timothy not Gadsden. See Henry Laurens to Joseph Brown,
28 October 1765, and Henry Laurens to James Grant, 1 November 1765, *Laurens Papers*,
5: 29-32, 35-40. For an examination of the Liberty Boys in Charleston see Walsh,
Charleston's Sons of Liberty: A Study of the Artisans, 1763-1789 (Columbia: University
of South Carolina Press, 1959).

[73] Christopher Gadsden to James Pearson, 13 February 1766, Weir, ed., "Two Letters by
Christopher Gadsden, February 1766," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 75 (July
1974): 173. Gadsden alluded to three different biblical passages in this statement. The
statement of the Master's call at midnight probably came from the story of the five wise

Gadsden's focus after the Stamp Act controversy increasingly promoted colonial

unity. The success of the nonimportation measures in South Carolina, for which Gadsden

deserves the lion's share of credit, made that colony the leader in efforts to keep other

colonies' nonimportation associations intact. South Carolina's association was the last to

disband (December 1770) after the repeal of the Townshend duties. No other association

was able to garner such a wide cross-section of class support. Whereas in most other

colonies the merchants spearheaded nonimportation policies, "South Carolina alone

incorporated the assistance of all of her social and economic groups, save the slaves, in the

resistance to the Townshend duties."[74] Much of this unity was due to Gadsden's emphasis

on a policy of inclusion.

For all of Gadsden's zeal for liberty and colonial unity, it should not be assumed

that he was at this point in favor of actual separation from the Crown. Although he began

to use the word "independence" in his 1769 letters for nonimportation, he meant

independence from the corrupt ministry and the ill-advised parliamentary encroachments

more than from English rule as a whole. More specifically, Gadsden wanted a return to a

relationship between the colonies and Crown that existed prior to the French and Indian

War. Granted, if such a reclamation was impossible, he was not against separation. To be

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and five foolish virgins (Matthew 25: 1-13). The last verse (13) of that passage reads,
"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man
cometh." His statement that the Lord "will not leave us or forsake us" comes from
Hebrews 13: 5. ". . . I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." The words "suffer us to be
tried above what we are able to bear" are derived from I Corinthians 10: 13. "There hath
no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not
suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a
way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (All above biblical quotations are from the
King James Version).

[74] Godbold and Woody, *Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution*, 96.

sure, events after 1769 such as John Wilkes' imprisonment, the lingering Currency Act, the Tea Act, and the Intolerable Acts would lead Gadsden to no longer think of England as a mother but, as he wrote to Samuel Adams in 1774, a "mother *in law*."[75] The familial ties that bind were breaking.

As a delegate in the first two sessions of the Continental Congress, Gadsden continued to push for colonial unity. During the second session, after George III rejected the "Olive Branch Petition," Gadsden's inclination for independence became more and more evident to his congressional colleagues. John Adams stated that no one in the whole congress was as dedicated to a unified effort for America's cause than Gadsden. During that second session he worked on the Naval Committee. An interesting show of Gadsden's continued obsessive push for unity was the naval flag he created. The coiled snake with the words "Dont Tread On Me" spoke of a living unity among the colonies. The banner was an alteration of Benjamin Franklin's 1754 cartoon that had a snake partitioned in thirteen separate sections. Gadsden's snake was in one piece, alive and well and ready to strike. It became the most common symbol of American resolve during the Revolution.[76]

For Gadsden, the decisive factor for out-and-out independence from the Crown was his reading of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* in 1776. He secured several copies

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[75] Ibid., 98, 114; Christopher Gadsden to Samuel Adams, 23 May 1774, 5 June 1774, Walsh, ed., *The Writings of Christopher Gadsden*, 94, 96. For an example of Gadsden's desire during the Stamp Act controversy to be reconciled with England see Christopher Gadsden to James Pearson, 20 February 1766, in Weir, ed., "Two Letters by Christopher Gadsden, February 1766," 173-176.

[76] Godbold and Woody, *Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution*, 135, 139-143.

while serving as a delegate to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. For the first time he was convinced that the only remedy for the colonies' predicament was the formation of a republic wholly separate from monarchical rule. Crossing such a threshold did not necessarily come easy for the radical Carolinian. In all of his arguments against British encroachment, he had always held as an underlying assumption that liberty was an English right. To now extend that argument beyond the pale of English rule was, for him, an uncharted course, one that would place him at odds with some of his otherwise patriotic Carolina brethren. On 10 February 1776 he made public to the South Carolina Provincial Congress his conviction that actual independence was the only viable alternative. Using *Common Sense* as his text, recalled William Henry Drayton, Gadsden's call for separation hit the Congress "like an explosion of thunder." Under accusations of insanity and treason, it looked as if Gadsden had hit a stone wall. [77]

In order to keep Gadsden away from legislative activity, leadership in the assembly appointed him to a judicial post. But he continued to agitate for his views. It is interesting that he decided upon *religious* disestablishment as the most effective vehicle for showcasing his desire for *political* unity. Gadsden, though a committed Anglican, had already determined that a state church was inconsistent with republicanism. Although these early efforts in 1776 were ineffective to bring about change, they were seeds that would yield a harvest the following year. In April 1776 Gadsden met with three dissenting ministers, William Tennent III, Oliver Hart, and Richard Furman, at the High Hills of Santee and helped them draw up a petition for disestablishment which many in the low and

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[77] Ibid., 147-151 (Drayton quotation, 150).

backcountry signed.[78] That petition became the center peice in the dabate for religious

disestablishment in South Carolina. The dissenters' basis for equality in religion was, as

William Tennent argued before the assembly, "EQUALITY OR NOTHING!" Dissenters

"ask no favours," he said, "they ask only the common rights of mankind." [79]

Gadsden's influence on the logic of Tennent's appeal is evident. For Gadsden

political and religious freedom were intricately connected. As irreligious as Thomas Paine

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[78] Ibid., 152-153, 167.

[79] "Mr. Tennent's Speech on the Dissenting Petition, Delivered in the House of Assembly, Charles-Town, January 11, 1777," in "Writings of the Reverend William Tennent, 1740-1777," ed. Newton B. Jones, *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 61 (October 1960): 203, 208. It is not clear just how pietistically oriented William Tennent III was. His famous uncle, Gilbert Tennent, and his father William Tennent, Jr. (son of the patriarch William who founded the famous Log College) were very pietistical in their approach to the Faith. Heimert has rightly noted that Log College men, though often educated, insisted that the major emphasis should not be doctrinal so much as pietistic. Evidence of an inward experienced grace was paramount, even apart from an explicit orthodox position. Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 30. An episode that occurred with William, Jr. gives some idea of the extent to which the younger Tennent may have been exposed to subjective forms. While a young man, William, Jr. went into a coma for three days and was eventually pronounced dead. It is well documented that to the satisfaction of the doctor and family, including his brother Gilbert, William had passed away. Mourners even gathered to comfort the family. After three days in the coma he revived. He claimed to have spent part of that time in or near heaven and received certain revelations there. Prior to this event he had struggled over whether or not he was a truly converted Christian. He gained a strong assurance from this experience that he was indeed a child of God. He went on to be an esteemed and learned, but somewhat eccentric, Presbyterian preacher. On another occasion, later in life, he woke up with a terrible pain in his foot. Upon observation, some of his toes were missing. He claimed that a demon had come in the night and cut them off. It was later believed he stepped on a sharp object while sleepwalking. After his death in 1777, his son, William left South Carolina in order to bring his mother back to Charleston from New Jersey. During the return trip he contracted a fever and died. For an account of these and other fascinating events in the life of William Tennent, Jr. see Elias Boudinot, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. William Tennent, formerly Pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Freehold, in New Jersey: in which is Contained, Among Other Interesting Particulars an Account of His Being Three Days in a Trance, and Apparently Lifeless* (Poughkeepsie, New York: Printed by Paraclete & Shelton Potter, 1815).

was, his arguments for religious freedom's relationship to political freedom struck a cord with Gadsden. But Gadsden's pietistic religious principles also informed this intricate association as well. Gadsden's recent biographers see a corollary between his political views and the fact that during the Revolutionary Era his "personal theology was almost pietistic." He had "twenty years earlier," they observed, "belonged to a religious and literary discussion group organized by Richard Clarke, a rabid, evangelistic Anglican clergyman in Charleston who had once predicted the end of the world."[80] The egalitarian principles gained from that earlier Charleston conventicle, it seems, where finding their way into public policy.

Although for the time being Gadsden and the dissenters did not completely get their way, the essentials for victory were in place. The Anglican Church lost its exclusive status with the new 1777 constitution. Protestantism became the new "established religion."[81] Eventually, as with the rest of the new nation, the principle of no establishment whatever would win the day. All because of the "common rights" of mankind.

During the latter stages of the Revolution, Gadsden and other principal patriot leaders still in Charleston when it was captured by the British in May of 1780 were taken to St. Augustine and held prisoner. While at the Castillo de San Marcos the 106 prisoners were asked to recommit to a previous promise made at their capture, that they would not try to escape. Of all the prisoners, only one refused to do so. "With men who have once deceived me, I can enter into no new contract." Thus, for forty two weeks, Christopher

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[80] Godbold and Woody, *Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution*, 153.

[81] Quoted in Ibid., 168.

Gadsden languished in solitary confinement while the others were able to live a relatively comfortable existence. Finally on 3 May 1781 an agreement of prisoner exchange was made that eventually led to Gadsden's and the others' release. On 17 July they sailed for Philadelphia.[82] The fifty nine year old zealot, physically weakened from the ordeal, had proven the authenticity of his conversion to the cause and came forth victorious. In his own way he had suffered for the faith.

After the war Gadsden continued his fight for greater unity among the states. Although he did not serve in an official capacity on the state or national level after 1784, he did not keep silent. During the 1787 Constitutional Convention Gadsden wrote to George Washington and John Adams in favor of a strong central congress with a presiding authority over individual states.[83] The end result was in many ways what he had longed for throughout his political life. The Constitution was a tremendous victory for this religiously radical proponent for unity. It is no wonder that he expressed his feelings in biblical terms. He wrote to Thomas Jefferson, whose sentiments were not likely as enthusiastic, that if the Constitution's principles would only be ratified and implemented, it would be for him an experience similar to what the old Jewish holy man Simeon felt when he held and looked upon the newly born Christ child and immediately recognized his deity. "For my Part I bless God to have lived to see this important Point in so fair a Way to be accomplish'd, and if I live to see it compleatly [sic] so," he exclaimed, "I shall be apt to

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[82] Godbold and Woody, *Christopher Gadsden and the American Revolution*, 201-213 (Gadsden quotation 206).

[83] Ibid., 241; see Christopher Gadsden to George Washington, 13 May 1787 and Christopher Gadsden to John Adams, 24 July 1787, Walsh, ed., *The Writings of Christopher Gadsden*, 241-242, 243-245.

cry out with old Simeon: Now may thy Servant depart in Peace for mine Eyes have seen

thy Salvation."[84] For Gadsden, the nation was on the verge of embodying the *corpus*

mysticum.

In certain ways Henry Laurens and Christopher Gadsden illustrate the varied forms

pietistic religion could take. They demonstrate that the transcendent qualities of Pietism

work their way into differing personalities and consequently turn out different results.

Yet, aside from their personal dislikes for each other, the two pietistic patriots held similar

views of the times in which they found themselves. Both interpreted the revolutionary

conflict in biblical terms and saw the developing nation as an organic unity and ended up

supporting independence. Both suffered for their positions and saw their contributions as

directed by providence with earth shattering ramifications. But Laurens, the more

reserved and calculating of the two, exemplified in some ways, at least prior to 1777, more

the hesitant convert who had to be convinced to break with the old ways. Granted, once

he eventually came around to a position of all out independence, he gradually saw his own

role in a wider spiritual dimension, even, as he said, a converter of thousands.

But the impetuous and more visionary Gadsden portrayed the fearless prophet and

apostle who could see clearer and further than ordinary men. The loyalist Jonathan

Sewell's words of religiously driven patriotism could just as well have been written of

Gadsden. ". . . There is an Enthusiasm in politics, like that which religious Notions

inspire, that drive Men on with an unnatural Impetuosity, that baffles and confounds all

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[84] Christopher Gadsden to Thomas Jefferson, 29 October 1787, Ibid., 247.

Calculation grounded upon rational principles."[85] Both Laurens and Gadsden embodied

the idea of pietistic secularization. But Gadsden, it seems, displayed more fully the extent

to which an emotionally driven faith could control action in the political realm. This is

somewhat surprising since Laurens was more prone to express the personal elements of

his spirituality than was Gadsden. Laurens appeared to be, on the surface at least, a more

sincere and contentious Christian. But Gadsden put into practice a more recognizable

progression of pietistic involvement in secular affairs. That is, while the whole

revolutionary scene held religious meaning for both, Gadsden acted from beginning to end

as if he were in the middle of an awakening revival. And it was a revival that he, at least

within his own sphere of influence, was largely conducting. He saw himself as an

attendant, so to speak, at the birth pangs of a new nation. One reason, it may be surmised,

that he and others could rend themselves from the old was because they perceived that a

miraculous new birth was underway. Gadsden was every bit as much an evangelist for

American unity in the struggle against the perceived oppressions of England as was

George Whitefield for the unifying gospel that saved from the tyranny of sin and gave

hope of a new life here and hereafter. He was a secular enthusiast for a religious mystical

union of people and nation. And he acted out the role, not by abandoning or ignoring his

religious principles, as some have suggested, but by vigorously employing them.

Both Laurens and Gadsden exemplify Pietism's natural tendency to attach itself to

some type of objective structure. In the absence of doctrinal objectivity, Laurens' and

Gadsden's most accessible and spiritually meaningful objective attachment was in the

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[85] Jonathan Sewall to General Frederick Haldimand, 30 May 1775, in David Donald, ed.,
A Documentary History of American Life, vol. 2, *Colonies to Nation: 1763-1789*, ed.

political realm. The Apostle Paul described religious conversion and commitment as a putting off of the "old man" and a putting on of the "new man."[86] Gadsden and Laurens transposed this biblical concept into their vision of independence and nationhood. The "doctrine" of colonial unity informed by a consensus driven Pietism helped lead them to reject the "old man" and welcome the new. The forming of a new nation was for them as much a spiritual as it was a secular event.

Jack P. Greene (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1967), 267.

[86] Ephesians 4: 22-24.

Conclusion

We ask very few questions of religion today, and they are seldom imaginative. This neglect is unfortunate because no understanding of the eighteenth century is possible if we unconsciously omit, or consciously jam out, the religious theme just because our own milieu is secular. The era of the Enlightenment was far more an Age of Faith (and Emotion) than an Age of Reason.[1]
(Carl Bridenbaugh, *The Mitre and Septre*)

A significant impediment to understanding colonial intellectual history is the

consistent if unintentional dismissal of individual religious belief. That is not to say that

historians ignore religion as a social and even political force, but that the intricacies

inherent in the personal spiritual dimension are too often passed over or misunderstood.

There are, of course, notable exceptions. Perry Miller, for example, even if his

conclusions were at times flawed, was one who grappled so extensively with the New

England religious mind that he probably came closer to understanding how Puritans

actually thought than anyone in modern time has or possibly ever will come.

A problem with understanding the lowcountry colonial South has been the far too

quick conclusion that it had no religious mind.[2] Some have almost completely written off

that region as having little or nothing to offer in the way of religious thought. Lowcountry

South Carolina, for example, is "a society [that] no one has ever credited with significant

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[1] Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics, 1689-1775* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), xi.

[2] For an introduction to the religious intellectual contributions of colonial southerners see Richard Beale Davis, *Intellectual Life in the Colonial South, 1585-1763*, 3 vols. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1978), 2: 627-800.

piety," one historian wrote.[3]   Samuel Hill, the recognized dean of southern religious

thought, believes that the study of southern colonial religion is a largely unproductive

discipline. "The history of religion in the South before it was the South--rather only a

geographical territory of colonies and people until the Revolutionary era--is, in all candor,

not very impressive." He does go on to recognize that the Great Awakening energized a

"culturally feasible pattern of religion" in the South but believes that the impact of that

movement did "not take hold with strength until after the Revolution."[4]

There are, of course, good reasons to make these conclusions. Outwardly, on a

comparative scale, the lowcountry appears to have been anything but a place where

serious spiritual thinking held significant sway over most personal lives, much less over

social and political structure. But as this study has attempted to show, what might

normally be seen as secular, could have a significant spiritual impulse hidden beneath the

surface. This is particularly so with subjective expressions such as found in Evangelical

Pietism. The strains of pietistic and mystical thought that came from England with John

Wesley, George Whitefield, Richard Clarke and others, though often attended with a

counter weight of objective, more orthodox elements, found lodging, if not with most,

with an important and influential few.

The question must be asked, "How was the role of pietistic religion different in the

lowcountry than in other areas?" After all, Whitefield's ministry was much more extensive

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[3] Jon Butler, "Whitefield in America: A Two Hundred Fiftieth Commemoration," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 113 (October 1989): 520.

[4] Samuel S. Hill, "A Survey of Southern Religious History," in *Religion in the Southern States: A Historical Study*, ed. Hill (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1983), 385.

and influential in the middle and northern colonies than in the South. The lowcountry was not the only place where pietistic and mystical thought made inroads. Pennsylvania had a much greater concentration of pietistic sects, not to mention the Quaker dominance there. Of course other regions have their own stories and broader implications not explored in this study, models that may or may not serve as useful comparatives.

As for the lowcountry, there were unique circumstances which help to explain why pietistic religion played the unifying role it did. One difference that separated the lowcountry, especially in and around Charleston, from other regions, was the social elite's uniquely close-knit environment. Possibly more than any other region, "the distance between social classes was never very wide. . . ."[5] As one historian has put it, "there was a relatively large number of wealthy men in South Carolina and together they may have constituted a larger proportion of the population than comparable groups in any of the other British colonies in continental America."[6] Thus, the social and economic proximity and the shared social fears (slave revolts, Spanish, Indians), drove the elite toward achieving social consensus.

The members of the elite class who were inclined to seek inward satisfaction from more subjective religion simply added the transcendentally unifying elements present in mystical and pietistic forms to the other categories of consensus. Far from being a divisive

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[5] Robert M. Weir, "'The Harmony We Were Famous for': An Interpretation of Prerevolutionary South Carolina Politics," in Weir, *"The Last of American Freemen": Studies in the Political Culture of the Colonial and Revolutionary South* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986), 9.

[6] Richard Waterhouse, "South Carolina's Colonial Elite: A Study in the Social Structure and Political Culture of a Southern Colony, 1670-1760" (Ph.D. diss. The Johns Hopkins University, 1973), 177.

force within their ranks, pietistic religion helped create the opposite effect. Those inclined to adopt pietistic religion were able to adapt the subjective principles derived therefrom into their existing social structure and philosophical system (especially country ideology). This of course was not necessarily done by all or most of the elite, but enough did to make a significant contribution toward the "Harmony . . . [they] were Famous for."

Another unique difference that contributed to the way lowcountry elites responded to the pietistic message was the heavy concentration of slaves in the region. South Carolina was the only mainland colony to have a black majority. And the greatest concentration of that majority population was in the lowcountry region. Outside the unifying impulse this fearful reality engendered, a dense slave presence provided an opportunity for Christian slaveholders to apply pietistic forms to the labor structure that provided their wealth. For those who had twinges of doubt about the enterprise in which they participated, subjective religion helped to provide a means by which they could assuage those doubts and even see their role in the system as uniquely Christian. Nowhere was the moral and spiritual legitimacy of slavery more challenged by outsiders than in the lowcountry. Many masters would not christianize their slaves for fear of losing their right to own Christians or at least for fear of an insubordinate work force. Whitefield and other Evangelical Pietists helped to lessen that fear by connecting evangelical christianization with slave subordination. As a result, the plantation in some cases became an extension of a wider evangelical mission field in which masters themselves could perform leading roles. That connection also helped introduce slavery into places previously prohibited, and helped to further entrench the institution where it already existed.

Probably no other colony had as strong a patriot representation from the ranks of establishment Anglicanism as did South Carolina. That the most concentrated support for the American cause in the lowcountry came from the prestigious St. Philip's parish may well be due, at least in part, to the pietistic forms which found a place of approbation in some of the more influential elites there. Moreover, Pietism's natural tendency to secularize and adapt to objective social and political causes created a means by which some could act out their respective roles as secular revivalists. As suggested in this study, the medieval attempt to reform the *corpus mysticum* into a *corpus reipublicae mysticum* was in some degree replicated by many subjectively oriented Christians during the American Revolutionary Era. Some lowcountry Anglicans manifested a similar thought pattern as well. Such a pattern, it may be inferred, was, to some degree, a wider social application of the classic mystical emphasis on the ultimate union of God and man. The vision of a new nation as a spiritually reborn organic union was a natural result of subjective religion's infusion into the secular realm. Only religion informed by some measure of mysticism can transpose earthly action into an exclusively divine cause where the end result is perceived to be the unified Kingdom of God on earth.

In the end, manifestations of subjective religion were as varied as the people that adopted them. By its very nature, pietistic religion does not readily bear uniform results. But there was a common element that seemed to characterize its overall role among lowcountry elites. Evangelical Pietism was highly adaptable. Its subjective elements could be used in practically any way that circumstances required. Of course the excesses of the subjective (Pietism) side were at times checked by the objective (Evangelical) side, making

Evangelical Pietism much more respectable and manageable than pure mysticism or radical Pietism could ever be. But enough of the subjective side was present to help maneuver through the maze of upper class life. In short, it provided *a way* for the elite to fulfill the obligations and enjoy the benefits that came with wealth while preserving the inward satisfaction that their Christian lives were genuine and useful.

Jesus said in response to a rich man who wanted salvation but was not willing to abandon his trust in riches that it was "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."[7] For the lowcountry elite, Evangelical Pietism made the difficult attainable. It placed the best of both worlds within their reach.

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[7] Luke 18: 25 (New American Standard Bible).

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