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# Christian Slavery: Protestant Missions and Slave Conversion in the Atlantic World, 1660-1760

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Program in the History of American Civilization

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**ABSTRACT**

**Christian Slavery: Protestant Missions and Slave Conversion in the Atlantic World, 1660-1760**

"Christian Slavery" shows how Protestant missionaries in the early modern Atlantic World developed a new vision for slavery that integrated Christianity with human bondage. Quaker, Anglican, and Moravian missionaries arrived in the Caribbean intending to "convert" enslaved Africans to Christianity, but their actions formed only one part of a dialogue that engaged ideas about family, kinship, sex, and language. Enslaved people perceived these newcomers alternately as advocates, enemies, interlopers, and powerful spiritual practitioners, and they sought to utilize their presence for pragmatic, political, and religious reasons.

Protestant slave owners fiercely guarded their Christian rituals from non-white outsiders and rebuffed the efforts of Quaker, Anglican, and Moravian missionaries to convert the enslaved population. For planters, Protestantism was a sign of mastery and freedom, and most believed that slaves should not be eligible for conversion. The planters' exclusive vision of Protestantism was challenged on two fronts: by missionaries, who articulated a new ideology of "Christian slavery," and by enslaved men and women who sought baptism for themselves and their children.

In spite of planter intransigence, a small number of enslaved and free Africans advocated and won access to Protestant rites. As they did so, "whiteness" emerged as a new way to separate enslaved and free black converts from Christian masters. Enslaved and free blacks who joined Protestant churches also forced Europeans to reinterpret key points of Scripture and reconsider their ideas about "true" Christian practice. As missionaries and slaves came to new agreements and interpretations, they remade Protestantism as an Atlantic institution.

Missionaries argued that slave conversion would solidify planter power, make slaves more obedient and hardworking, and make slavery into a viable Protestant institution. They also

encouraged the development of a race-based justification for slavery and sought to pass legislation that confirmed the legality of enslaving black Christians. In so doing, they redefined the practice of religion, the meaning of freedom, and the construction of race in the early modern Atlantic World. Their arguments helped to form the foundation of the proslavery ideology that would emerge in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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# INTRODUCTION

In 1657, the English traveler Richard Ligon published an account of his three-year visit to Barbados in the late 1640s. In one well-known anecdote, Ligon described an encounter with an enslaved man who accompanied him on a trip through the woods. During their journey, the man expressed interest in the compass that Ligon was using to determine their direction. Seeing the "needle wag," the man asked "whether it were alive." Ligon answered "no" and then proceeded to ask his companion to hold his axe close to the needle and move it in a circular pattern. "[A]s he did so, the Needle turned with it, which put him in the greatest admiration that ever I saw [in] a man." Following this display, the enslaved man entreated Ligon to make him a Christian. In Ligon's words, "he thought to be a Christian was to be endued with all those knowledges he wanted."

Ligon promised his companion to "do [his] best endeavor" and when he returned, he "spoke to the Master of the Plantation" and suggested that he introduce his slave to the Christian religion. To his surprise, Ligon was told that "the people of that Iland were governed by the Lawes of England, and by those Lawes, we could not make a Christian a Slave." Realizing that the slave owner had misunderstood his intentions, Ligon pointed out that his "request was far different from that," and that he "desired him to make a Slave a Christian," not to make a Christian a slave. The master, at last comprehending the issue at hand, responded that "being once a Christian, he could no more account him a Slave, and so lose the hold they had of them as Slaves, by making them Christians; and by that means should open such a gap, as all the Planters in the Iland would curse him."[1]

In Ligon's story, two perspectives of Christianity emerge: first, the enslaved man linked Christianity to the use of a compass. The instrument, which was a large and bulky object "used with

[1] Richard Ligon, *True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, ed. Karen Kupperman (Hackett Publishing, 2011), 100–1.

a tripod or stand," consisted "of a brass bar with a compass in the middle and sights on the two ends."[2] Known as a *circumferenter*, the compass allowed Ligon to determine his direction without prior knowledge of an area or the use of environmental cues. But the element of the compass that most impressed the enslaved man was, apparently, Ligon's ability to move the needle at will by placing a metallic object, such as the axe, close by, thereby manipulating its direction. It was Ligon's power to move the needle without using tactile force that resulted in "the greatest admiration" as well as the man's desire to become a Christian. This conceptual connection suggests that the enslaved man understood the term "Christian" to be associated with the ability to overcome the perceived rules of the material world. By moving the compass needle without resorting to physical force, Ligon exerted a seemingly supernatural control over his possession. Christians, from this perspective, were defined by their access to particular types of knowledge and power, such as the ability to manipulate an object from afar.

The "Master of the Plantation," by contrast, defined Christianity in legal and ethnic terms. For him, Christians and slaves were diametrically opposed categories. A Christian, he asserted, could not be made a slave because the island was "governed by the Lawes of England." Implicit in this statement was the belief that English people were both Christian and free – but only within the bounds of the English Empire. Indeed, the most common use of the term "Christian slave" during the seventeenth century was in reference to English enslavement by Barbary pirates or Turks.[3] Thus

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[2] Richard Ligon, *True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, ed. Karen Kupperman (Hackett Publishing, 2011), 101 n. 120.

[3] See, for example, Anon., *A True Narrative of a Wonderful Accident Which Occur'd Upon the Execution of a Christian Slave at Aleppo in Turky, Being a Remarkable Instance of Divine Providence, Attesting the Acceptableness of the Christian Religion, and the Virtue of Chastity to Almighty God* (London: Printed for Dorman Newman, 1676); Francis. Brooks, *Barbarian Cruelty. Being a True History of the Distressed Condition of the Christian Captives Under the Tyranny of Mully Ishmael, Emperor of Morocco, and King of Fez and Macqueness in Barbary: In Which Is Likewise Given a Particular Account of His Late Wars with the Algerines, the Manner of His Pirates Taking the Christians and Others, His Breach of Faith with Christian Princes, a Description of His Castles and Guards, and the Places Where He Keeps His Women, His Slaves and*

English law was credited with providing Christians with their freedom. As a result, to be a Christian slave within the English domain was impossible – "being once a Christian," one could "no more [be] account[ed] a Slave," Ligon was told. Compounding the issue was the threat to the social order. Making the jump from the particular to the abstract, the planter feared that the master class would "lose the hold they had of them as Slaves, by making them Christians." This "gap" would cause "all the Planters in the Island [to] curse him."[4] For the slave master, then, Christianity was intimately tied to both Englishness and freedom. While it was not inconceivable for a slave to become a Christian, it was undesirable because it would shake the social order and deprive the planters of their most captive laborers.

To be a Christian was to claim contested terrain in the early modern Atlantic world. The enslaved man, his master, and Richard Ligon all articulated divergent ideas about the meaning and accessibility of Christian practice. While the enslaved man viewed Christianity as a way to access knowledge and power, his master sought to build walls around his religion, which was bound closely to his ethnic identity as an Englishman as well as the sense of freedom and order that came from English law. Ligon, while not stating his position explicitly, was clearly more amenable to the idea of slave conversion. Ligon's belief that an Afro-Caribbean slave should, if desired, have access to the

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*Negroes : with a Particular Relation of the Dangerous Escape of the Author and Two English Men More from Thence, after a Miserable Slavery of Ten Years* (London: Printed by J. Salusbury and H. Newman, 1693); King Charles II, *The Demands of His Gracious Maiesty the King of Great Brittain, to the Grand Seignior or Emperour of Turkey Sent by the Lord General Montague, with His Lordships Proposals to the Governour of Algier, the Answer Thereunto, and the Manner of the Treaty before That Great and Now Conquered City. With a True Relation of the Great and Bloudy Fight Between the English and the Turks, the Dividing of His Majesties Royal Navy into Several Squadrons, by the Victorious Earl of Sandwich, and Ever Renowned Sr. John Lawson, the Battering down of Half the City, and All the Castle Walls, the Dismounting of the Turkish Cannon, the Sinking and Burning of 18 Great Ships, with Above a Thousand Piece of Ordnance, the Great Slaughter Made by the English Fire-ships, the Redeeming of Many Hundred Poor Captives and Christian Slaves, and a True and Perfect Relation of the Losse on Both Sides, with the Number Killed and Taken Prisoners* (London: Printed for G. Horton, 1661).; Anon., *An Account of the Extream Misery of the Christian Captives in Barbary, Written by a Person, Who Had Been a Slave There a Considerable Time.* (London: printed by J. Downing, 1731).

[4] Ligon, *True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*, 100–1.

Christian religion, represented the general view of slave conversion in Protestant Europe. Over the course of the seventeenth-century, this pro-conversion stance grew stronger, as reports of planter intransigence and anti-conversion sentiment became infamous among concerned Protestants in Europe.

This dissertation examines the changing attitudes toward slave conversion in Europe and the Americas, as well as the effect of slave conversion on Protestant cultures in the Atlantic world. I ask two central questions: first, how did the encounter with—and adaptation to—African slavery challenge European Protestants to rethink their ordering of the world and adjust their ideas about "authentic" Christian practice? And second, when and why did enslaved and free Africans participate in Christian rituals in the Protestant Caribbean? I concentrate on the three Protestant groups who sent missionaries to enslaved Africans between 1660 and 1760: the Quakers, the Anglicans and the Moravians. Missionaries, I argue, were at the forefront of the struggle to reconcile the institution of African slavery with Protestant notions of civility, evangelization and freedom.

Quaker, Anglican, and Moravian missionaries arrived in the Caribbean intending to "convert" enslaved Africans to Christianity, but their actions formed only one part of a dialogue that engaged ideas about family, kinship, sex, and language. Enslaved people perceived these newcomers alternately as advocates, enemies, interlopers, and powerful spiritual practitioners, and they sought to utilize their presence for pragmatic, political, and religious reasons. Most Protestant slave owners, meanwhile, fiercely guarded their churches and their religious rituals from non-white outsiders and rebuffed the efforts of Quaker, Anglican, and Moravian missionaries to convert the enslaved population. Their anti-conversion sentiment was indicative of the changing meaning of Protestantism in the Caribbean colonies: over the course of the seventeenth century, Protestant planters claimed Christian identity for themselves, creating an exclusive ideal of Christianity based on ethnicity. Planters' desire to prevent their slaves from accessing Christian knowledge affected the

perception of Christianity among the enslaved population. By guarding the pages of their Bibles and keeping their most intimate rituals behind closed doors, Protestant slave owners in the West Indies made Christianity a sign of whiteness and power.

Despite planter intransigence, a small number of enslaved and free Africans advocated and won access to Protestant rites. As black men and women claimed Christianity for themselves, "whiteness" replaced Protestantism as the primary indicator for freedom in the Atlantic world. As newly-conceived "white" slaveholders, overseers, and missionaries presided over slave societies, family culture and gender order became increasingly politicized aspects of Christian theology and practice. Expanding on Ann Stoler's argument that "intimate domains … figure in the making of racial categories and in the management of imperial rule," this dissertation shows how slaves, slave owners, and missionaries negotiated ideas about race and religion on a daily basis.

## I. Protestant Missions and the Meaning of Conversion

My approach is multidenominational, inter-imperial, and transatlantic. While extensive work has been done on Quaker, Anglican and Moravian missions in isolation, no one has examined these three groups in an integrated and chronological framework.[5] By looking at how Quakers, Anglicans, and Moravians responded to each other and to the demands, interests, and suggestions of enslaved and free Africans, my dissertation provides new insight into the impact of slavery on Protestantism. I pay close attention to how missionaries changed their requirements for the sacraments of baptism and communion. How did missionaries nuance their standards to encourage slaves to convert? And

[5] Larger studies have incorporated Quakers, Anglicans and Moravians, but since their scope was much broader, there was less attention paid to the specifics of each of the denominations and how they interacted with each other. See, for example, David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

what can these alterations tell us about the broader changes occurring within Protestantism in the Atlantic World?

At the heart of this inquiry is the concept of "conversion," a word that I use with caution. As Jean and John Comaroff have written, "the very use of 'conversion' as a noun leads, unwittingly to the reification of religious 'belief.'" As they explain, "[t]his abstraction makes spiritual commitment into a choice among competing faiths, and 'belief systems' into doctrines torn free of all cultural embeddedness."[6] Indeed, the modern use of the word "conversion" implies that it is possible to turn from one belief system to another, and it ignores the inextricable connection between religious belief and cultural practice, economy, and society. Yet "conversion" itself has a contentious history within Christianity in general and Protestantism in particular, and it is to this history that we now turn.

Etymologically, conversion derives from the word "turning," a movement from one thing to another. Within a Christian context, this "turning" has been qualified and defined in a number of ways. While early Christian conversion targeted "pagans," by the medieval period, as Bruce Hindmarsh has written, "Christendom had become so englobing that conversion could no longer be the proselyte experience of conversion from paganism." Instead, "the word *conversio* came to denote not principally the transition from pagan to Christian, but the passage of a Christian into the life of a religious." In the splintered churches of sixteenth-century Europe, conversion became "a matter of true belief and allegiance to the true institutional church," whether that church was Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Dutch Reformed, or the newly formed and internally contentious Church of England.[7]

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[6] Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 251.

[7] D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spirtual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 21, 31. For a more in depth

Conversion took a new turn with the Puritan and Pietist movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Early modern Puritans distinguished not only between Christians and heathens, but also between saved and unsaved Christians. By making such distinctions, these reformers introduced new complexity into the meaning of conversion. Deconstructing conversion became a major theme for Puritan and Pietist theologians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Puritans stressed that conversion was the transformation of an individual by grace and they developed a "morphology of conversion" that codified each step in that process. Some Puritan gathered churches went so far as to require all of their applicants to verify their status as "visible saints" with a conversion narrative. While individual narratives differed, there were recognizable patterns in these early modern "conversions": an awareness of sin led to humiliation, repentance, and the hope for God's grace. Experience of God's saving grace was followed by period of doubt and reassurance.[8]

Quaker ideas about conversion, which they termed "convincement," emerged from Puritan theology.[9] Like Puritans, Friends saw conversion as an experience that occurred within the

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analysis of the difference meanings of "conversion" within early Christian and medieval European contexts, see the essays in James Muldoon, ed., *Varieties of Religious Conversion in the Middle Ages* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997); Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton, eds., *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003).

[8] Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965); E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570-1720* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-century New England* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Anne Brown and David D. Hall, "Family Strategies and Religious Practice," in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 41–68; Carter Lindberg, ed., *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004).

[9] While Rufus Jones located Quakerism within Christian mysticism, Geoffrey Nuttall argued that it is best understood as an offshoot of English Puritanism. Rufus M. Jones, *The Life And Message of George Fox 1624 to 1924* (New York: Macmillan, 1924); Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946).

lifespan of an individual and they narrated their own "convincements" in journals, letters, and other publications.[10] Yet they differed from Puritans in their emphasis on 'inward light' and their belief that "the Holy Spirit was in every man."[11] As a result of their perfectionist tendencies, Quakers rejected both baptism and a formal ministry, since the indwelling seed of God could be found in any person.[12] These theological differences had a major effect on Quaker missions, as Friends offered little in the way of ritualized events that could mark new "converts" as being members of their community.

While Quakers were radical in their rejection of baptism and a ministerial class, both Puritan and Anglican members of the Church of England maintained the significance of baptism as the central rite in Christian conversion.[13] Unlike radical Puritans, however, most Anglicans did not privilege an experience of saving grace as the most important element of "conversion." Instead, their conception of Christianity was based more on cultural practice, education, and knowledge. These priorities were clearly demonstrated in the Anglican missionary ventures.

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[10] For scholarly interpretations of seventeenth-century Quaker religious experience, see Leopold Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in 17th-century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Rosemary Anne Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences: Faith, Practices, and Personalities in Early British Quakerism, 1646-1666* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

[11] Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 157.

[12] These basic convictions remained central to the Society of Friends even as Quakerism lost its early radicalism. The Quaker historian William Braithwaite divided seventeenth-century Quakerism into two periods: the radical period of the Civil War and Interregnum, and the institution-building period that began in 1660. See William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism* (Cambridge University Press, 2008); and William C. Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism* (University Press, 2008).

[13] For an overview of how baptismal practices remained central even as they were contested in early modern England, see David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pt. II: Baptism. For a broader history of the Protestant Reformation and its effect on Christian rituals such as baptism, see John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

Thomas Bray, the founder of the SPCK and the SPG, made the publication and circulation of catechisms, alongside the creation of libraries and schools, the primary means of evangelization.[14] The SPG trained Anglican missionaries to demand both Christian knowledge and "civilized" behavior from non-European baptismal candidates.[15]

The debates about baptism and conversion in early modern England were part of a broader conversation about the meaning of true Christianity throughout Protestant Europe and the American colonies.[16] In Germany, the Pietist movement took inspiration from English Puritanism in its effort to revitalize the Lutheran Church.[17] August Hermann Francke (1663-1727),

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[14] See, for example, Thomas Bray, *A Course of Lectures Upon the Church Catechism in Four Volumes* (Oxford: Printed by Leonard Litchfield, 1696); Thomas Bray, *A Short Discourse Upon the Doctrine of Our Baptismal Covenant Being an Exposition Upon the Preliminary Questions and Answers of Our Church-catechism : Proper to Be Read by All Young Persons in Order to Their Understanding the Whole Frame and Tenor of the Christian Religion, and to Their Being Duly Prepared for Confirmation : with Devotions Preparatory to That Apostolick and Useful Ordinance* (London: Printed by E. Holt for R. Clavel, 1697).

[15] Anglican missionaries used the word "civility" to indicate the adoption of European cultural practices. For a useful overview of the SPG's changing strategies to convert non-Europeans, see Travis Glasson, "Missionaries, Slavery, and Race: The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in the Eighteenth-century British Atlantic World" (Ph.D., Columbia University, 2005), 96–120.

[16] Rosalind Beiler has shown how Quaker missionaries used dissenting Protestant networks in continental Europe to spread their message while Ernest Stoeffler has argued that the Pietist movement in Germany was closely connected to the English Puritanism. Rosalind J Beiler, "Dissenting Religious Communication Networks and Migration, 1660-1710," in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500-1830*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 210–236; F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (Leiden: Brill, 1965). For the connection between Anglican voluntary organizations and Pietist/Puritan networks in Europe and America, see Daniel L. Brunner, *Halle Pietists in England: Anthony William Boehm and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); Brijraj Singh, "One Soul, Tho' Not One Soyl"? International Protestantism and Ecumenism at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 31 (January 2002): 61–84. These networks were essential to the spread of evangelical revivals in the eighteenth century. See W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[17] For a helpful overview of Pietism research, see Jonathan Strom, "Problems and Promises of Pietism Research," *Church History* 71, no. 3 (September 1, 2002): 536–554. For a broader, transatlantic perspective on Puritan and Pietist networks, see F. Ernest Stoeffler, ed., *Continental*

one of the leading Pietist figures, corresponded frequently with Puritans throughout the Atlantic World and wrote about his own conversion as an inner struggle (*Busskampf*) followed by a sudden breakthrough (*Durchbruch*).[18] The Moravians, whose roots lay in both Pietism and the Hussite tradition in the modern-day Czech Republic, developed their own version of evangelical conversion that replaced despair about ones' own sinfulness with the "ideal of self-abandonment and childlike trust in the love of the bleeding Saviour."[19] The Moravian leader Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf criticized the Pietist emphasis on struggle (*Busskampf*) in the conversion process, inciting a feud between Moravians and the Halle Pietists that traversed the Atlantic.[20]

As this brief survey illustrates, there was no consensus among early modern Protestants about what constituted "conversion." While some denominations retained the same ritualized events, such as baptism, even the details of these rites were highly contested. Protestants disagreed

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*Pietism and Early American Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); Jonathan Strom, Hartmut Lehmann, and James Van Horn Melton, *Pietism in Germany and North America 1680-1820: Transmissions of Dissent* (Farnham, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2009).

[18] Markus Matthias, "August Hermann Francke," in *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Carter Lindberg (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 100–114; Richard F. Lovelace, *The American Pietism of Cotton Mather: Origins of American Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1979).

[19] Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative*, 162. See also Gisela Mettele, "Constructions of the Religious Self: Moravian Conversion and Transatlantic Communication," *Journal of Moravian History* no. 2 (2007): 7–35. On the radical gendered dimensions of early Moravian theology, see Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female: Moravians and Radical Religion in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).. For Moravian piety in colonial Bethlehem, see Craig D. Atwood, *Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012).

[20] Erika Geiger, "Zinzendorf Stellung Zum Halleschen Busskampf Und Zum Bekehrungserlebnis," *Unitas Fratrum: Zeitschrift Für Geschichte Und Gegenwartsfragen Der Brudergemeine* no. 49/50 (January 2002): 12–22. For more details on Zinzendorf and his theology, see Peter Vogt, "Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf," in *The Pietist Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Carter Lindberg (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 207–223; Martin Brecht and Paul Peucker, eds., *Neue Aspekte Der Zinzendorf-Forschung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006). The Atlantic dimensions of the feud between Halle Pietists and Moravians is addressed in Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female*, pt. 3.

about whether children should be baptized; whether an individual should be "dipped" or "sprinkled" with water; and whether conversion had to be preceded by education or an experience of saving grace. These questions and debates took on new meanings as Quaker, Anglican, and Moravian missionaries crossed the Atlantic on missions to bring the gospel to enslaved Africans. Within the context of Caribbean slavery, Protestants sometimes maintained and sometimes altered their conception of conversion to fit their new environment. As they did so, they redefined Protestant practice in the Atlantic World.

While early modern Protestants debated the meaning of true conversion, what did "conversion" mean to the enslaved and free Afro-Caribbeans who were the object of the Protestant missions? While the cultural and religious diversity of the African and Creole populations in the Caribbean make this question difficult to answer, there are some general conclusions that can be made. First of all, it is important to acknowledge that many enslaved and free Africans living in the Protestant Caribbean would have been exposed to Christianity in Africa. In *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World*, John Thornton reminded historians that the Kingdom of Kongo in Central Africa had embraced Christianity as early as the fifteenth century, and that many slaves were familiar with Catholicism before they left Africa. For Thornton, Kongolese Christianity was deeply inflected by African cosmology and Christianity "provided a sort of lingua franca that joined various national religious traditions" together in the New World.[21] Aside from a familiarity with Catholicism, some Afro-Caribbeans were Muslims. As Michael Gomez has pointed out, there were a large number of Muslims who were enslaved in Senegamia and elsewhere. Indeed, the Moravian

[21] John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 268; John K. Thornton, "On the Trail of Voodoo: African Christianity in Africa and the Americas," *The Americas* 44, no. 3 (January 1, 1988): 261–278. See also John Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony: Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita and the Antonian Movement, 1684-1706* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

missionary C.G.A. Oldendorp translated the word "God" as "Allah" for the enslaved Fula men and women he met in St. Thomas and St. Croix.[22] Most enslaved and free Afro-Caribbeans, however, would have engaged in non-Abrahamic religious practices.

Regardless of their religious backgrounds, it should not be assumed that Afro-Caribbean men and women interpreted the baptismal and other rites that marked Protestant "conversion" in the same way as Protestant missionaries. This disjuncture presents a problem for historians. As Comaroff and Comaroff have written, "the significance of conversion to Africans themselves cannot be assumed to conform to European preconceptions -- a serious point, to be sure, since it is their experience that the concept is meant to illuminate."[23] If conversion meant something quite different for a non-European "convert" than it did for the missionary, how is this interaction best described?

Scholars have come up with a variety of answers to this question. African "survivals," acculturation, syncretism, and hybridity have all been proposed as potential models. Much of the scholarship specifically addressing Afro-Protestantism in the Americas, however, privileges debates about the persistence, recreation, or creolization of African religious traditions and does not examine the theological and cultural meaning of Protestant conversion to enslaved men and women.[24] As a

[22] C. G. A. Oldendorp, *Historie Der Caribischen Inseln Sanct Thomas, Sanct Crux Und Sanct Jan: Insbesondere Der Dasigen Neger Und Der Mission Der Evangelischen Brüder Unter Denselben*, ed. Gudrun Meier et al., vol. 1 (Berlin: VWB - Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, 2000), 460.

[23] Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:250.

[24] Sylvia Frey has divided the historiography on African American religions since 1978 into three categories: African "survivals," creolization, and a revisionist approach that seeks reconceptualize the debate about African retentions. Sylvia R. Frey, "The Visible Church: Historiography of African American Religion Since Raboteau," *Slavery & Abolition* 29, no. 1 (January 2008): 83–110.

result, the study of Afro-Protestant conversion in the Americas can benefit from the example of other fields of research, such as Christian missions elsewhere in the early modern world.[25]

Scholars have encountered parallel but distinct challenges writing about Native American Christianity that can be useful for the study of enslaved and free Afro-Caribbean "conversion." Allan Greer has argued that conversion should not be treated "as a discrete, unidirectional event, but as a problem to be unraveled in all its ambiguity, instability, and local specificity."[26] Michael McNally, Linford Fisher, and Rachel Wheeler have all suggested that historians need to shift their emphasis from "conversion" to an analysis of lived religious practice.[27] Fisher has argued that "affiliation" is a more appropriate word for describing Native religious engagement with Christianity and he has shown that Indians "had long incorporated new ideas and practical skills alongside old ones, often without intending to drop, remove, or alter the existing ones." As a result, "a broader, Native-centered understanding of religious engagement" shifts away from questions of authenticity to

[25] Three particularly useful studies are David Hempton, *The Church in the Long Eighteenth Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011); Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009); Kenneth Mills and Anthony Grafton, eds., *Conversion: Old Worlds and New* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2003).

[26] Allan Greer, "Conversion and Identity: Iroquois Christianity in Seventeenth-Century New France," in *Conversion : Old Worlds and New*, ed. Kenneth Mills and Grafton Anthony (Rochester, NY: University Rochester Press, 2003), 177; Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint : Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[27] Michael D. McNally, "The Practice of Native American Christianity," *Church History* 69, no. 4 (December 1, 2000): 834–859; Rachel Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope: Mohicans and Missionaries in the Eighteenth-Century Northeast* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Linford D. Fisher, "Native Americans, Conversion, and Christian Practice in Colonial New England, 1640—1730," *Harvard Theological Review* 102, no. 1 (2009): 101–124; Linford D. Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). For more on the theory of "lived religion," see David D. Hall, *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton University Press, 1997).

incorporate a range of behaviors and choices that accounted more fully for Native perspectives on Christian rituals.[28]

David Silverman, Ted Andrews, and Natalie Zemon Davis have focused on the act of translation, rather than conversion, as a way to investigate cultural and religious interactions between missionaries and non-Europeans. In *Faith and Boundaries*, David Silverman showed how Christian concepts that were translated into the Wampanoag language revealed the continued resonance of Native cosmology and were recognizably different from English Puritan theology. Andrews has built on these points to suggest that "translation and appropriation – rather than diffusion and conversion – [are] therefore a more appropriate framework for understanding indigenous encounters with Christianity."[29] Natalie Zemon Davis, while not explicitly investigating the meaning of "conversion," has shown how the act of translation – either from or to creole languages – was central to accessing Dutch Reformed, Lutheran, and Moravian baptismal rites in colonial Surinam.[30]

John and Jean Comaroff's study of the Protestant mission to the Tswana in South Africa has shown that "conversion" was inseparable from social dynamics, kinship networks, and politics. Like Silverman, Andrews, and Davis, they examined translation practices alongside cosmology in order to understand when and why Tswana men and women chose to convert to Protestantism. In their analysis, they distinguished the Tswana's relativistic understanding of the cosmos from the missionaries' universalism: "Not only did the relativism of Tswana culture resist the universalism of

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[28] Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening*, 88.

[29] Edward E. Andrews, "Prodigal Sons: Indigenous Missionaries in the British Atlantic World, 1640-1780" (Ph.D., University of New Hampshire, 2009). p. 12

[30] Ibid.; David J. Silverman, "Indians, Missionaries, and Religious Translation: Creating Wampanoag Christianity in Seventeenth-Century Martha's Vineyard," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (April 1, 2005): 141–174; David J. Silverman, *Faith and Boundaries: Colonists, Christianity, and Community Among the Wampanoag Indians of Martha's Vineyard, 1600-1871* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Natalie Zemon Davis, "Creole Languages and Their Uses: The Example of Colonial Suriname," *Historical Research* 82, no. 216 (2009): 268–284.

Christianity, and consequently make the very notion of conversion difficult for the Africans to grasp," they wrote, but "'conversion' was always mediated to some extent by the forms of *Setswana*." They also showed that the first candidates for baptism were social outsiders who had the least to lose by affiliating with the missionaries, while the second group was junior royals who were denied direct power and saw potential in Christianity. A third group were "women of all ranks."[31]

My dissertation incorporates these social, cultural, and political factors into an analysis of "conversion." I have found that enslaved and free Africans were far more likely to seek out Christian baptism once members of their family had already done so and that the first converts were often enslaved drivers who held a privileged but fraught position in the plantation hierarchy. Yet even as I recognize the social and cultural embededdness of these rites, I also seek to address the theological complexity of "conversion" within both a Protestant and an Afro-Caribbean context. I argue that the stability of the word "conversion" belies the fluid and unstable concept behind it. As the previous section has shown, the definition of conversion was contested even among Protestants. Yet despite – or rather, *because* of this instability, I have chosen to retain the word "conversion" in conjunction with other descriptors – including "engagement," "affiliation," and "participation" – because it acknowledges both the missionaries' intention and the significance of the choice that many enslaved and free Africans made to engage in Protestant rites.

## II. The Protestant Caribbean and Early Modern Atlantic History

My dissertation moves chronologically from 1660, when the Restoration ushered in a new era in English Atlantic history, to 1760, when evangelical revivals had swept across the Atlantic world, profoundly altering the social, cultural, and religious landscape. My dissertation, however, does not examine the "Great Awakening" as a discrete phenomenon. Instead, it focuses on the

[31]Comaroff and Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution*, 1:240.

century of Protestant missions to enslaved Africans *before* the "Great Awakenings" reached the Caribbean.[32] Most historians have found this geographical region and time period to be unimportant in the broader history of black Christianity or Protestant missions because the few missionaries who did go to the West Indies commented mostly on their failure to win enslaved souls. As I argue, however, these missionaries played a central role in initiating a transatlantic conversation about the role of Protestantism in a slave society. Furthermore, while the majority of enslaved and free blacks in the Caribbean did not convert to Protestantism, a small but significant group of Afro-Caribbeans *did* seek out and win access to Christian rites. Their conversion had a profound impact on the religious and racial ideology of slavery in the Protestant Atlantic world by forcing Europeans to reconsider the relationship between religion and freedom.

My project is organized chronologically. This approach illustrates the significant role that inter-denominational rivalry and communication networks played for the development of Protestant slave missions. Quakers were the first Protestant group to advocate for slave conversion and as they increased their missionary efforts, they attacked the Anglican Church for its failure to act. As Anglicans and Quakers became involved in a print war over the role of Christianity and slavery, among other issues, Anglicans moved to establish their own evangelizing presence in slave societies. The result was the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, founded in 1701. While Anglican progress was slow, the growing international network of missionaries made it easier for the

[32] While most historians date the Great Awakening in North America to the 1730s and 1740s, the chronology for the Caribbean is later. Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood, for example, date the revivals in the British Caribbean to the 1780s. Sylvia R. Frey and Betty Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 129. The Moravians, however, can be seen an exception to this general chronology. Jon Sensbach has argued that the Moravian mission to the Danish West Indies, which was founded in 1732, "proved to be the model for the spread of evangelical religion through New World slave communities." Jon F. Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 240. While I do not dispute this view, I aim to show how that there was a longer history of Protestant engagement with slavery and the Moravians were part of this history as well.

Moravians, who were in contact with members of the SPCK and SPG in England, to join the evangelizing effort in the 1730s.

While a chronological lens emphasizes the importance of international connections, my dissertation places the Protestant Caribbean at the geographical center of inquiry. Both Quaker and Moravian missions began in the West Indies, while the SPG was active in early eighteenth-century Barbados. A regional focus is important because it allows me to address the role of local politics and society more effectively, asking how Caribbean-specific concerns influenced the evangelizing process. Each chapter concentrates on one island in the Protestant Caribbean so I am able to address the particular challenges facing the enslaved population in each location. I take labor patterns, immigration rates, and demographic trends into account when considering enslaved Africans' decision to participate in Christian rituals.

While my dissertation is focused on the Protestant Caribbean, it is also a work of Atlantic History. An Atlantic approach is necessary for my project because the missionary networks I examine were, by definition, Atlantic.[33] Furthermore, I pay close attention to how the struggle over

[33] The field of Atlantic history has grown tremendously in the past two decades, but several scholars have offered helpful definitions. David Armitage has postulated three different types of Atlantic history: circum-Atlantic history "insists on the centrality of the diasporic and genocidal histories of Africa and the Americas, North and South, in the creation of the culture of modernity"; trans-Atlantic history is "the history of the Atlantic world told through comparisons"; and cis-Atlantic history is national or regional history within an Atlantic context. David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in *The British Atlantic World 1500-1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 16, 18. Jack Greene and Philip Morgan have suggested that Atlantic history is "best seen as a framework, an angle of vision, an arena of analysis," and that "for some issues, the Atlantic frame of reference may be too limiting and constraining." Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, "Introduction: The Present State of Atlantic History," in *Atlantic History: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 10. Karen Kupperman has argued that Atlantic history "involves decentering the narrative away from the capital cities to the places on the margins where trade and exchange actually took place." Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *The Atlantic in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2. My approach most resembles Alison Games' description of Atlantic history. For Games, "historians who adopt an Atlantic perspective explore commonalities and convergences, seeking larger patterns derived from the new interactions of

Christianity informed discourses of religion, slavery and freedom in both colony and metropole. As Catherine Hall has argued, "colony and metropole are terms which can be understood only in relation to each other."[34] This is particularly true regarding the religious and moral state of European empires. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, imperial representatives and colonists engaged in a series of conversations and debates about the role that Christianity should play within colonial slave societies. Yet as I argue, the conversation about the proper relationship between slavery and Protestantism was not just between one "colony" and one "metropole." Rather, missionaries acted as intermediaries in this transatlantic conversation, publishing and advocating their positions on either side of the Atlantic. As a result, these debates had many "centers" and many "peripheries." Missionaries communicated with imperials officials in London and Copenhagen, but they also had their own "centers" in the form of church headquarters. For Quakers, the center was initially Swarthmoor Hall, the home of Margaret Fell Fox, while it later shifted to the London Yearly Meeting. Anglican missionaries communicated with the Secretary of the SPG and the Bishop of London, while the Moravians exchanged letters and diaries with the church leadership in Herrnhut, Germany and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Secondly, while much literature in Atlantic History has focused on one imperial or linguistic network, such as the British, Spanish, or Dutch Atlantic, I join a growing body of scholarship seeking to examine the connections and comparisons between European empires and the individuals who crossed between imperial borders.[35] This inter-imperial perspective is important

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people around, within, and across the Atlantic." Alison Games, "Atlantic History: Definitions, Challenges, and Opportunities," *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (June 1, 2006): 749.

[34] Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 12.

[35] I have taken inspiration from a number of historians. See, for example, Londa Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

because my primary focus is on "Protestantism," rather than "British Protestantism" or "Danish Protestantism."[36] A multi-imperial perspective allows me to compare different ways of approaching slavery, all ostensibly "Protestant." I have chosen the English and Danish empires because they, unlike the Dutch colonies at this time, hosted the Quaker, Anglican, and Moravian missions that I examine.[37] The Dutch, by contrast, primarily colonized areas that had previously been under Spanish or Portuguese control and they often allowed Catholic missionaries to continue working in those areas. While they created Dutch Reformed churches for imperial representatives, the Dutch Reformed Church never made an explicit effort to evangelize to enslaved Africans in the Dutch Caribbean during the period of my study.[38]

Finally, my project embraces the linguistic complexity of the early modern Atlantic World by assembling a multilingual archive on early modern Protestant slave conversion. As Jon Sensbach's *Rebecca's Revival* and James H. Sweet's *Domingos Álvarez* have shown, scholarly attention to neglected religions and languages beyond English, French, and Spanish can offer exciting new insights into slave life and culture.[39] In my own research, I have translated hundreds of previously unexamined sources in German, Dutch, and Dutch Creole, most of which are held in the Moravian archives in

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2007); Kristen Block, *Ordinary Lives in the Early Caribbean: Religion, Colonial Competition, and the Politics of Profit* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

[36] For a British Atlantic study that engages the category of "Protestantism," see Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

[37] The Moravians sent missionaries to Dutch Surinam in 1735, but their mission there did not begin in earnest until the late eighteenth century. Richard Price, *Alabi's World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990); Davis, "Creole Languages and Their Uses."

[38] Ennis Edmonds and Michelle A. Gonzalez, *Caribbean Religious History: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 67–70.

[39] Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*; James H. Sweet, *Domingos Alvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

Herrnhut, Germany and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The Moravian sources promise to redefine scholarly understanding of black Christian practice with their voluminous and careful observations of daily life in the Caribbean and North America, but they have been underutilized by both Anglophone and German-speaking scholars because they are written in an archaic form of German. In addition to the diaries, letters, and church registers kept by missionaries, the Moravian archives include a small number of letters written by enslaved and free Afro-Caribbean converts—some of the only such documents available for the period. These documents give scholars the extremely rare opportunity to analyze the texts written by, rather than about, Afro-Caribbean men and women in the eighteenth-century Caribbean. In my dissertation, I use these sources to better understand when and why enslaved and free Africans chose to engage in Christian rituals in the Protestant Caribbean. I also compare diaries written by different missionaries in order to paint a multi-perspectival picture of mission culture and everyday life.

Unfortunately, the Quaker and Anglican sources do not match the Moravian sources in the detail or volume of their observations about Afro-Protestant practice. As a result, I have turned to social historical methods, in addition to other strategies, to get a sense of broad, demographic patterns relating to the participation of enslaved Africans in Quaker and Anglican rituals. Besides reading letters written by missionaries, I have analyzed the baptismal and marital registers for Anglican churches and looked at governmental and official records, including wills, censuses, and official correspondence. Still, my chapters on the Quaker and Anglican missions focus more heavily on transatlantic debates *about* slave conversion, rather than an analysis *of* slave conversion itself. Yet as I argue, these two topics – the transatlantic debate and the actual decisions of enslaved and free Africans to participate in Christian rituals – are inextricably connected. Only by examining life "on the ground" in the Caribbean *and* the broader debate regarding slave conversion is it possible to gain

a full understanding of the Atlantic dimensions of Protestant missions and slave conversion in the early modern world.

## III. Historiographical Contributions

Aside from its engagement with Atlantic History, my dissertation seeks to make interventions in four historiographical debates: the origin of pro- and anti-slavery thought, the growth of black Christianity, the relationship between religion and empire, and the development of racial constructs.

*Protestant Missions: Proslavery or Antislavery?*

While Protestant missions to slaves have traditionally been examined within the context of antislavery thought, my dissertation shows how missionaries developed a new vision for slavery that integrated Christianity with human bondage. In contrast to historians of antislavery thought such as David Brion Davis and Christopher Brown, I emphasize the ways that Quaker, Anglican, and Moravian missionaries fought hard to accommodate slavery to their Christian principles and argue that their efforts bore fruit in legislation affirming that Protestant status was compatible with perpetual bondage. As a result, their advocacy should be understood within the long history of proslavery thought rather than an antecedent of antislavery and abolition.[40]

The tendency to read abolition into the early Protestant missions is particularly pronounced in the Quaker historiography. In Thomas Drake's 1950 publication *Quakers and Slavery*, the first chapter – which covered the entire seventeenth century of Quaker slave holding – was entitled

[40] Both Davis and Brown integrated Quakers and evangelical Protestants into a narrative that looked forward to abolition. While this approach illuminated the origins of antislavery and abolition, it obscured other lines of influence. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*; Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

"Slavery Troubles the Quaker Conscience," suggesting that slavery was always disturbing to the Quakers, and it merely took time for Friends to fully recognize the evil of the institution.[41] Thirteen years later, Sydney V. James saw a similar progression of increasing awareness in *A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America*, though he couched antislavery in a larger narrative about humanitarianism.[42] In 1985, Jean Soderlund took a more critical look at the development of Quaker antislavery, arguing that the Quaker embrace of antislavery came in two forms: the idealistic and humanitarian approach of Anthony Benezet and John Woolman and the "tribalistic" approach of many Quakers who were concerned with maintaining a tight-knit and exclusive community structure. Yet Soderlund's emphasis on the eighteenth century and her geographical focus on the Middle Colonies meant that seventeenth-century Quaker debates about slavery were not examined in depth.[43] Most recently, Brycchan Carey has looked beyond Pennsylvania to examine the long history of antislavery rhetoric. Unlike other studies, Carey examines the Quaker community on Barbados in depth, but his trajectory remains thoroughly antislavery. For him, slave-owning Quakers in Barbados took part in "an emerging discourse of antislavery."[44]

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[41] Thomas Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950).

[42] Sydney V. James, *A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).

[43] Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers & Slavery: a Divided Spirit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985).

[44] Brycchan Carey, *From Peace to Freedom: Quaker Rhetoric and the Birth of American Antislavery, 1657-1761* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 49. I am grateful to Brycchan Carey for sharing an early copy of his manuscript with me. Larry Gragg takes a similar perspective. See Larry Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados: Challenging the Culture of the Planter Class* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009).

Indeed, very little has been written on Quaker slave holding practices in their own right, rather than as a prelude for abolition.[45] Quaker founder George Fox's feelings on slavery, for example, are usually considered within the context of antislavery.[46] A transatlantic, interdenominational understanding of seventeenth-century Quaker ideas about slavery reveals something different. With a large community of slave-owning Friends in Barbados, Quakers were among the first Protestants to think seriously about how slave holding would affect Christian practice. Their ideas, publications, and pro-conversion stance affected not only the Society of Friends, but also members of other Protestant denominations. Furthermore, they did not necessarily lead to antislavery thought; their influence can be found in the developing rhetoric of paternalism and Christian slavery as well.

Unlike the Quakers, Anglicans and Moravians were not leaders in the eighteenth-century antislavery movement. Regardless, many scholars have read a humanitarian impulse into their early missionary ventures.[47] Recently, a handful of scholars have critiqued this approach. Jon Sensbach has emphasized the Moravians' acceptance of slavery in their early mission while Claus Füllberg-Stolberg

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[45] One important exception is Kristen Block's recent work on the Lewis Morris and his slaves, Yaff and Nell. See Block, *Ordinary Lives in the Early Caribbean*, pt. 4.

[46] Even scholars who acknowledge that Fox's views cannot be deemed "antislavery" have placed his comments within the context of Quaker antislavery thought. See J. William Frost, "George Fox's Ambiguous Anti-Slavery Legacy," in *New Light on George Fox, 1624-1691*, ed. Michael Mullett (York, England: Ebor Press, 1994), 69–88; Brycchan Carey, "'The Power That Giveth Liberty and Freedom': The Barbadian Origins of Quaker Antislavery Rhetoric, 1657-76," *Ariel* 38, no. 1 (2007): 27–47.

[47] For the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, see Frank Joseph Klingberg, *Codrington Chronicle: An Experiment in Anglican Altruism on a Barbados Plantation, 1710-1834* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949); Samuel Clyde McCulloch, *British Humanitarianism: Essays Honoring Frank J. Klingberg,* (Philadelphia: Church Historical Society, 1950). See also Travis Glasson's helpful discussion of the Anglican historiography in Glasson, "Missionaries, Slavery, and Race," 11–12. For the Moravians, see J. H. Buchner, *The Moravians in Jamaica: History of the Mission of the United Brethren's Church to the Negroes in the Island of Jamaica from the Year 1754 to 1854* (London: Longman, Brown, & Co., 1854), 18; John Taylor Hamilton, *A History of the Missions of the Moravian Church: During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Company, 1901), 36.

and Jan Hüsgen have argued that late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Moravian missions in the Caribbean were not "islands of humanity."[48] Travis Glasson has shown that missionary Anglicanism was responsible for a series of laws and opinions that strengthened slavery in order to encourage slave conversion.[49] Overall, as Glasson writes, "there was no straight line between early SPG efforts to reform slavery and later efforts to abolish the slave trade and free enslaved people."[50]

My dissertation supports and expands these observations by incorporating the Quakers, the Anglicans, and the Moravians into an interdenominational study. I show how the first Anglican publications on slavery were spurred, in part, by Quaker polemics, and that both imperial and denominational rivalry played a major role in determining the objectives of the SPG. Similarly, the Moravians were in close contact with Anglican churchmen in the 1730s, and had a complicated relationship with members of the SPG and SPCK.[51] Far from anticipating an antislavery position, these Protestant missionaries articulated and circulated a vision for Christian slavery that laid the groundwork for the proslavery apologists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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[48] Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*; Claus Füllberg-Stolberg, "The Moravian Mission and the Emancipation of Slaves in the Caribbean," in *The End of Slavery in Africia and the Americas: A Comparative Approach*, ed. Ulrike Schmieder, Michael Zeuske, and Katja Füllberg-Stolberg (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2011), 81–102; Jan Hüsgen, "Die Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine Und Die Sklavenemanzipation in Dänisch Und Britisch Westindien" (PhD, Leibniz Universität, Forthcoming).

[49] Travis Glasson, "'Baptism Doth Not Bestow Freedom': Missionary Anglicanism, Slavery, and the Yorke-Talbot Opinion, 1701-30," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (April 1, 2010): 279–318.

[50] Travis Glasson, *Mastering Christianity: Missionary Anglicanism and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 200.

[51] Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England, 1728-1760* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

*Black Christianity in the Atlantic World*

While the history of Protestant missions to slaves has been dominated by antislavery concerns, the historiography on black Christianity has concentrated on two central questions: first, did conversion to Christianity represent a "break" with the African past or should it be viewed in continuity with African religious traditions? And second, were slaves who converted to Christianity resisting their enslavement, or should their actions be interpreted as a sign of acculturation and accommodation? The trajectory of these debates was set in 1941, when the anthropologist Melville Herskovits published *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Herskovits sought to disprove assumptions that African Americans had no cultural or religious past by identifying several African cultural forms - what he deemed "survivals" or "retentions" - that continued to exist in North America.[52] In the 1960s, E. Franklin Frazier criticized Herskovits for his failure to account fully for the repercussions of slavery. Frazier insisted that enslavement "practically stripped" Africans of their "social heritage," while Christianity created "solidarity" among enslaved Africans "who lacked social cohesion and a structured social life."[53]

In 1978, Albert Raboteau sought a middle path between Frazier and Herskovits in *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*. He rejected Frazier's argument that slavery erased slaves' cultural and religious connection to Africa. Yet he also resisted Herskovits' insistence that African American culture was replete with "survivals" of an African past. Raboteau found that African Americans in the antebellum South adopted Christianity but infused it with African-inspired cultural practice. By emphasizing the syncretic nature of African American religious culture, Raboteau argued that slaves found creative ways to reinterpret African cultural practices in the Americas. Thus African singing, dancing, spirit possession and magic "continued to influence

[52] Melville J Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York and London: Harper & Bros, 1941).

[53] E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken, 1974), 9, 14.

Afro-American spirituals, ring shouts, and folk beliefs."[54] Importantly, Raboteau found that slave conversion to Christianity was minimal until the Great Awakening of the 1740s. Evangelical religion spread among blacks because it fostered egalitarianism, was more accessible to illiterate individuals, and relied less on education than former missionary ventures. While most blacks did not join institutional churches, evangelical Christianity became integrated as the "folk religion" of slaves and ex-slaves as an "invisible institution."

Since the publication of *Slave Religion*, historians have continued to emphasize the continuities, rather than discontinuities, between African and African American religion.[55] The publications of John Thornton and James Sweet have been central to this trend.[56] While Thornton and Sweet have focused on the origins of Afro-Catholicism and African religious practice in the Americas, the most complete history of Afro-Protestantism is Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood's 1998 *Come Shouting to Zion*. Like Herskovits and Raboteau, Frey and Wood did not find a radical break with African traditions during the Middle Passage and they argued that the Great Awakening was a major turning point in the history of African American Protestantism. While Anglicans made some

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[54] Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 92.

[55] There have been some exceptions. Jon Butler has argued that enslaved Africans experienced a "spiritual holocaust that forever destroyed African religious traditions as *systems* in North America and that left slaves remarkably bereft of traditional collective religious practice before 1760." Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 130.

[56] Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*; Thornton, *The Kongolese Saint Anthony*; Heywood and Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585-1660*; James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Sweet, *Domingos Alvares, African Healing, and the Intellectual History of the Atlantic World*. For other recent studies that emphasize the continuities between African and African American religious practices, see Jason R. Young, *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011); Ras Michael Brown, *African-Atlantic Cultures and the South Carolina Lowcountry* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

effort to proselytize to slaves before 1740, their strategies failed to awaken broad interest. The evangelists of the Great Awakening, by contrast, emphasized spiritual equality as well as oral-aural communication. The Moravian brethren, whose tactics influenced the Methodists, pioneered new missionary techniques, such as bi-racial congregations, the ritual washing of feet, and placing new converts in positions of authority as small group leaders or "helpers." Religious revivals also provided new modes of religious worship, such as shaking and vocalizations and they offered women spiritual leadership. In the late eighteenth century, it was black Christians who spread evangelical Christianity further into the southern US and Caribbean.[57]

While Frey and Wood synthesized research on Afro-Protestantism over several centuries, Jon Sensbach's *Rebecca's Revival* provided an intimate portrait of one Afro-Caribbean woman who helped to spread the Moravian message to slaves and free blacks on St. Thomas. While other Protestant denominations failed to attract large numbers of slaves and free blacks, Sensbach argued that the Moravians succeeded for a variety of reasons: in terms of theology, the Moravian brethren offered a more visceral and ceremonial Christianity than most other Protestants, and several of their symbols and traditions (particularly their emphasis on blood and singing) had counterparts in African religions. The institutional structure of the Moravian Brethren also provided two important social needs: mentorship and kinship. All of these factors were crucial for the success of the international Moravian movement, as were figures like Rebecca, who straddled two worlds and made the Moravian mission her life's work.[58] As the work of Sensbach, Frey, Wood and others shows, the literature on Afro-Protestantism has highlighted the rise of evangelical Christianity as a major

[57] Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*. See also Alexander X. Byrd, *Captives and Voyagers: Black Migrants Across the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010); Edward E. Andrews, *Native Apostles: Black and Indian Missionaries in the British Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[58] Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*, 64.

turning point in the history of black Christianity. Scholars have emphasized the emotive qualities of revivalism, including the embrace of dance and vocalizations, as being critical for this development.

My dissertation revises this narrative by emphasizing the significance of Anglican, Quaker, and Moravian conversion *before* the evangelical revivals of the mid- to late-eighteenth century. I argue that scholars have overstated the significance of emotive worship for the appeal of Christianity. While this was certainly an important feature of evangelical Protestantism, it ignores the powerful draw of literacy that was associated with Protestant conversion both before and after the Great Awakening. Secondly, historians have paid too little attention to the strong anti-conversion sentiment that existed throughout the Protestant regions of North America and the Caribbean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. My research reorients the history of black Christianity by focusing on the earliest period of Afro-Protestant conversion, when anti-conversion sentiment among Protestant slave owners made Christian knowledge esoteric and difficult to access. In the seventeenth and eighteenth-century Caribbean, enslaved and free Africans who affiliated with Protestant churches were attracted to the promise of literacy, new kinship networks and increased social standing rather than the affective worship practices of revivalism.

*Religion and Empire*

The exclusive nature of Protestantism in the early modern Caribbean set it apart from the Catholic Church in the Spanish, Portuguese, and French empires. The differences between Catholic and Protestant slave cultures have long been a subject of debate. In 1946, Frank Tannenbaum famously compared the British and Latin American slave systems, arguing that their differences stemmed from divergent legal and moral traditions in early modern Spain and England. In Latin America, he argued, the Spanish could draw on a well-established slave tradition that came through the Justinian code and was deeply influenced by Catholicism. In the Iberian tradition, a

slave was defined as a having a "moral personality" and was endowed with certain rights and protections, such as the right to belong to a Christian community and partake in the sacraments, including baptism and marriage. Manumission was more common and the transition from slavery to freedom was well defined and somewhat accessible. In northwestern Europe, by contrast, the lack of a well-known legal tradition regarding slavery led Anglo-Americans to "identify the Negro with the slave," and legal obstacles were quickly placed in the way of manumission.[59] The role of the church further differentiated slave life in the British and Spanish Empires, as slaves "were almost completely denied the privileges of Christianity."[60]

Tannenbaum's *Slave and Citizen* has generated a passionate and extensive historiographic debate about slavery, race, law and religion over the past several decades. Sidney Mintz and David Brion Davis have both shown that there was, in fact, legal precedent for slavery within early modern England encoded in villeinage laws. Davis also insisted that "Negro slavery in the British colonies and Southern United States was of a nearly uniform severity," contradicting Tannenbaum's claim that British slavery was more "severe" than its Latin American counterpoint.[61] Yet recently, Alejandro de la Fuente has suggested that despite its flaws, Tannenbaum's thesis has remained relevant because a number of his observations regarding the legal and religious differences within colonial empires require explanation.[62] While Tannenbaum

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[59] Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1946), 65.

[60] Ibid., 82.

[61] Sidney W Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1974), 70; Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, 223–227. Tannenbaum wrote: "If one were forced to arrange these systems of slavery in order of severity, the Dutch would seem to stand as the hardest, the Portuguese as the mildest, and the French, in between, having elements of both." Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen*, 65.

[62]Alejandro de la Fuente, "Slave Law and Claims-Making in Cuba: The Tannenbaum Debate Revisited," *Law and History Review* 22, no. 2 (July 1, 2004): 339–369.

emphasized the law in abstract as granting slaves a "moral personality," de la Fuente follows more recent scholarship in showing that enslaved people learned how to use the law to their favor. Furthermore, instead of making large generalizations about "the nature" of slavery in a given colonial empire, de la Fuente has suggested that research should be firmly grounded in local cultures.

Following de la Fuente, my dissertation examines the establishment of Protestant churches in the Caribbean and asks how and why enslaved and free Africans gained access to the exclusive rites of the church. My approach takes inspiration from recent scholarship on Afro-Catholic practice in Spanish America. In *Africans in Colonial Mexico*, Hermann Bennett showed how enslaved and free blacks used the institutional structures of Catholicism, such as church support for conjugal rights, to navigate daily life.[63] More recently, Kristen Block has shown how the Afro-Catholic woman Isabel advocated for the punishment of her former mistress by making her Catholic faith central to her appeal.[64] As this scholarship shows, enslaved Africans in colonial Cartegeña and Mexico sought out the Catholic Church and the Spanish legal system to their benefit to sue for their freedom or to prevent the separation of their families. Catholic priests and missionaries sometimes played an important role as advocates for enslaved men and women.

In contrast to colonial Cartegeña and Mexico, Protestant planters in the Caribbean created religious and legal institutions that excluded the majority of their population and with a small number of notable exceptions, they refused to recognize their slaves as potential Christians. By looking at the legal and institutional structures in both the English and Danish colonies in the Caribbean, my dissertation seeks to examine the varieties of opportunities that enslaved and free

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[63] Herman L. Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico: Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570-1640* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

[64] Block, *Ordinary Lives in the Early Caribbean*, pt. 1.

Africans had in the Protestant West Indies.

*Religion and the Construction of Race*

Historians have often looked to the early modern period to understand the development of racial categories, but they have tended to overlook the role of religion in that process. One of the major goals of my research is to show the centrality of religion in the history of race. While several scholars have acknowledged that religion helped to define human difference in medieval and early modern Europe, many have privileged discourses about medicine, the body, and natural history when discussing the emergence of race as a modern concept.[65] Others have been more interested in the connection between race and African slavery.[66] While these discourses and approaches are unquestionably important, I argue that ideas of religious difference remained central to racial terminology well into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Terms such as "white" grew out of the religious categories like "Christian." While this religious heritage can be easily forgotten, "whiteness" continued to be mobilized in ways that suggested the continued significance of

[65] Joyce Chaplin, "Race," in *The British Atlantic World 1500-1800*, ed. David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 154–173; Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000). Several historians have examined the gendered dimensions of race. See Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Jennifer Morgan, "'Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (January 1, 1997): 167–192; Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

[66] Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen*; Oscar and Mary F. Handlin, "Origins of the Southern Labor System," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (April 1, 1950): 199–222; Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003).

religion.[67] In the Protestant Caribbean, for example, "whiteness" could be used to justify religious exclusion, much as the term "Christian" had before it.[68]

My argument builds on the work of historians like Winthrop Jordan, Colin Kidd, and Rebecca Goetz who have all suggested that religion was, in many ways, used as a proto-racial category to distinguish masters from slaves.[69] In 1969, Winthrop Jordan argued that Africans were enslaved in English America for a variety of reasons, the most important being economic need and a readily available cultural explanation for perpetual slavery based on "heathenism." The English frequently contrasted "negroes" with the word *Christian*, which they reserved for themselves. Over time, the use of the term "Christian" was gradually replaced by an emphasis on complexion. As Jordan explained, "[f]rom the initially most common term *Christian*, at mid-century there was a marked drift toward *English* and *free*. After about 1680, taking the colonies as a whole, a new term appeared—*white*." The shift to "whiteness" represented a wider change in the English justification for slavery: from religious to racial/national. This shift, however, was "an alteration in emphasis within a single concept of difference rather than a development of a novel conceptualization."[70] In

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[67] Vincent Brown has suggested that this process represented a "sacralization of whiteness." Vincent Brown, "Spectacular Terror and Sacred Authority in Jamaican Slave Society" (presented at the McNeil Center for Early American Studies Seminar, Philadelphia, PA, 2002), 14.

[68] While I have identified this particular link between whiteness and Christianity in the Protestant Caribbean, the development of race was deeply dependent on local factors. See, for example, Peter Silver's study of Indian war and whiteness in the Middle Colonies. Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009).

[69] Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Rebecca Anne Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012). For the medieval and early modern meanings of the "Curse of Ham," see Benjamin Braude, "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods," *William & Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (January 1997): 103–142.

[70] Jordan, *White Over Black*, 95–6.

other words, "whiteness" retained elements of religious import, explaining why many slave owners continued to resist slave conversion well into the eighteenth century. Colin Kidd elaborated upon the religious justifications for slavery in *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000*. Kidd argued that "race" was a theological issue in the early modern era and showed how intellectuals sought to accommodate different complexions to scriptural monogenesis. For Kidd, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that religion began to be seen as a subcategory of race, rather than the other way around.[71]

While both Jordan and Kidd traced broad changes over several continents and centuries, Rebecca Goetz has focused on the relationship between religion and race in colonial Virginia. In *The Baptism of Early Virginia*, Goetz asked how Anglo-Virginians came to understand "*Negro* and *Christian* as irreconcilable terms" and argued that colonists changed the meaning of Christianity while inventing "an entirely new concept -- what it meant to be 'white.'" Goetz argued that they did so by connecting "physical differences such as skin color with a budding idea of hereditary heathenism – the notion that Indians and Africans could never become Christian." Goetz, like Jordan, looked to sexual culture as well as religion to understand the development of racial categories. In the mid seventeenth century, she noted, Anglo-Virginians passed laws regulating marriage and sex between Christians and non-Christians (both Indians and blacks), suggesting growing unease about "the mixing of Christian and heathen bodies." It was also in Virginia that the first laws were passed severing the connection between baptism and freedom. These laws helped to make Christianity into a religion for white people that was increasingly inaccessible to Afro-Virginians and Indians. Over the course of the seventeenth century, Anglo-Virginians "created a world where whiteness and Christianity were bound to freedom, political power, and the potential for wealth."[72]

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[71] Kidd, *The Forging of Races*.

[72] Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia*, 2–3, 6.

While Goetz's work showed how "whiteness" developed in colonial Virginia, my dissertation traces a similar shift in a Protestant Caribbean context. Like Goetz and Jordan, I emphasize the significance of interracial sex in the creation of new racial and religious categories. I argue that the baptism of enslaved and free Africans in Barbados implicitly challenged the religious justifications for slavery in the seventeenth century Caribbean. As a small but significant number of Africans and Afro-Caribbeans chose to participate in Christian rites such as baptism, they forced Anglo-Barbadians to redefine their definition of race and their concept of citizenship. Faced with a growing population of Afro-Caribbean men who were both free and Christian, Anglo-Barbadians redefined citizenship to incorporate race and exclude Africans and their descendants from enfranchisement.

## IV. Chapter Overview

When Protestant settlers founded colonies in the Caribbean, they developed a system of slavery reliant on religious difference. In Chapter 1, "Intimate Encounters: Christian Slaves, Free Negros and the Emergence of Whiteness in Seventeenth-Century Barbados," I show that Christianity was equated with freedom in mid-seventeenth century Barbados. As small numbers of enslaved and free Africans sought access to the sacrament of baptism and referred to themselves as Christians, they challenged the island's taxonomy of difference. As a result, Euro-Caribbeans stopped referring to themselves as "Christians" and began using the term "white." By 1700, "whiteness" had ballooned to include a wide range of ethnic and political attributes that far exceeded its former meaning as a physical descriptor.

Despite the presence of enslaved Christians on Barbados, planters resented pressure from the metropole or from missionaries to encourage widespread slave conversion. Chapter 2, "'Gospel Family Order': Quaker Slavery and the Transatlantic Debate on Slave Conversion, 1670-1700," argues that the debate on slave conversion revealed a widening gulf between colony and metropole.

In 1671, the Quaker leader George Fox encouraged Friends to preach to the enslaved men and women 'in their families' and he attacked Anglican ministers for their failure to do the same. Using sources from both sides of the Atlantic, this chapter shows that Quaker advocacy contributed to the development of pro-conversion sentiment in England. In Barbados, however, an attempted slave rebellion led planters to blame Quaker proselytizing for slave unrest. In a new trope, slave conversion was blamed for slave rebellion and mission work was denounced.

Even as planters rejected external pressure to convert their slaves, hundreds of slave owners encouraged or allowed a small number of their enslaved property to be educated in Christian doctrine and baptized. Chapter 3, "Institutionalizing Slave Conversion: Christopher Codrington, Franco-English Exchange, and the Founding of the SPG," examines the life and legacy of one individual who struggled to reconcile the institution of slavery with an evangelical Christian vision. Codrington, who was raised in Barbados and educated in England, was familiar with both colonial and metropolitan views on slave conversion. He also spent most of his life either fighting or befriending the French and he corresponded with Jesuits about the proper role of Christianity in a slave society. When he died in 1710, he took inspiration from French precedent when he bequeathed his Barbados plantation to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, thereby creating a new space for Anglican missionaries in the West Indies. This chapter investigates the cultural and religious forces that shaped Codrington's life and argues that inter-imperial ties were central to changing ideas about Protestantism and slavery.

Chapter 4, "Inner Slavery and Spiritual Freedom: German Pietism and the Critique of Black Christianity on St. Thomas, 1730-1735," turns to the Danish West Indies, where slave conversion was closely tied to emancipation, education, and increased social standing. When the first Moravian missionaries arrived on the island in 1732, they criticized black Christians for placing too much emphasis on learning without reforming their family structures and behavior. This chapter parses the

exchanges between black Christians and Moravian missionaries and argues that pietist Christianity initially appealed to non-elite slaves, while elite slaves were more likely to join established churches such as the Dutch Reformed or Anglican.

As Moravian missionaries adapted to the West Indies, they were forced to change their definition of true Christian practice to better accommodate the demands and arguments of their enslaved converts. In Chapter 5, "Literacy, Marriage and Death: The Moravian Missions to St. Thomas and Jamaica, 1735-1760," I show how missionaries shifted their proselytizing approach: while they initially rejected polygyny and embraced reading, they later reversed their positions after long debates with their converts. These shifts show how Christian practice was being constantly adjusted and redefined to fit the pressures of West Indian culture.

These transformations were indicative of the wider changes taking place in the emergent culture of Atlantic Protestantism. When Protestant planters founded slave societies in the Caribbean, they redefined Christianity in the process. For them, Protestantism was tied to mastery and freedom and slaves were not eligible for conversion. The "planter's church" was challenged on two fronts: by enslaved men and women who sought baptism for themselves and their children, and by missionaries, who articulated a new ideology of "Christian slavery." Missionaries argued that slave conversion would solidify planter power, make slaves more obedient and hardworking, and make slavery into a viable Protestant institution. Their arguments helped to form the foundation of the pro-slavery ideology that would emerge in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. At the same time, enslaved and free blacks who joined Protestant churches forced Europeans to reconsider their ideas about "true" Christian practice. Black Christians challenged missionaries to reinterpret key points of Scripture and so-called "heathen" practices such as polygyny. As missionaries and slaves came to new agreements and interpretations, they remade Protestantism as an Atlantic institution.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Intimate Encounters:
### Christian Slaves, Free Negros, and the Emergence of Whiteness in 17th Century Barbados

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On November 16, 1651, a man named Lazarus entered the Anglican church in Christ Church parish, Barbados. As he walked toward the church doors, he would have passed the "strong pair of Stocks" where public punishments took place. The church itself was a wooden structure and one of the oldest buildings on the island. Constructed in 1629 on the coast of Dover just two years after the first English settlers arrived, the church would meet a tempestuous end: it was destroyed by a flood in 1669 and washed out to sea. The second and third iterations of the church were destroyed by hurricane. But before the first church structure met its watery demise, it served as the site of Lazarus's baptism. Lazarus, who was described only as "a negro" in the church register, was the first Afro-Caribbean to receive baptism in the Anglican Church on Barbados. Neither his age nor status were given, nor the name of his master.[1] Like most enslaved Christians in the seventeenth century English West Indies, however, Lazarus was mostly likely an "elite" slave who had an intimate, if fraught, relationship with his master and other whites. As a result, Lazarus was exposed to his master's rituals, beliefs and convictions. Perhaps his master felt it was an act of benevolence to introduce his slave to Christian doctrine. If so, Lazarus may have felt pressure to show his interest in Christian baptism. Alternatively, Lazarus may have embraced the opportunity to partake in a Christian ritual since he – unlike other enslaved people on his estate – would have been granted access to a mysterious and potentially powerful rite.

[1] Though there is no mention of his master, it is unlikely that Lazarus was free. The first recorded free black baptism did not take place until 1677, and there were few, if any, free blacks living on the island in 1651. See Jerome S. Handler and John T. Pohlmann, "Slave Manumissions and Freedmen in Seventeenth-Century Barbados," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (July 1, 1984): 390–408.

While the social, political and religious forces that Lazarus felt are difficult to imagine, his baptism was a significant event. The Anglican Church in Barbados was an exclusive church, the domain of slave owners and government officials. While most scholars have downplayed the relevance of institutionalized Christianity in the seventeenth-century Protestant Caribbean, viewing the sugar colonies as islands of depravity, the Anglican Church was central to the maintenance of planter power in Barbados.[2] The Anglo-Barbadian elite viewed their status as Protestants as inseparable from their identity as free Englishmen. Like their counterparts in England, they purchased pews, sought to memorialize themselves within the walls of the church, and used the church structure as a site for both punishment and politics. Aside from the stocks that sat outside the church doors, the church served as the site of island elections and as a community bulletin board where white inhabitants could post news about stolen goods or runaway slaves.

Unlike the parish churches in England, however, the Anglican Church in Barbados was restricted. It separated masters from their enslaved "heathen" laborers and marked Anglo-Barbadians as both English and free. The association between Anglicanism, Englishness and freedom was so strong that most slave owners dismissed the idea that their slaves were eligible for conversion. In 1661, when the British Parliament instructed Lord Willoughby, the reinstated governor of Barbados, to "[win] such as are purchased…as slaves to the Christian faith and [make]

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[2] For the argument that the English West Indian colonies were islands of depravity, see Richard S Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972); Carl Bridenbaugh and Roberta Bridenbaugh, *No Peace Beyond the Line: The English in the Caribbean, 1624-1690* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Gary A. Puckrein, *Little England: Plantation Society and Anglo-Barbadian Politics, 1627-1700* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Michael Craton, *Sinews of Empire; a Short History of British Slavery.* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1974). Recently, Larry Gragg and Nicholas Beasley have contested this characterization. See Larry Gragg, "The Pious and the Profane: The Religious Life of Early Barbados Planters," *The Historian* 62, no. 2 (January 1, 2000): 264–283; Larry Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted: The English Colonization of Barbados 1627-1660* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Nicholas M. Beasley, *Christian Ritual and the Creation of British Slave Societies, 1650-1780* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010).

them capable of being baptized thereinto," the Assembly and Council refused to pass Willoughby's 1663 bill "recommending the christening of Negro children, and the instruction of all adult Negroes, to the several ministers of this place."[3] By 1680, the Barbadian planters' stance against slave conversion had become more pronounced. When William Blathwayt, on behalf of the Lords of Trade and Plantations in London, wrote to the merchants of Barbados to inquire as to "the unhappy state of the negroes and other slaves in Barbadoes by their not being admitted to the Christian religion," the self-titled "gentlemen of Barbados" explained that "the conversion of their slaves to Christianity would not only destroy their property but endanger the island, inasmuch as converted negroes grow more perverse and intractable than others."[4] As these quotations indicate, anti-conversion sentiment was one of the defining features of Protestant slave societies in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. While enslaved Africans in Spanish, Portuguese and French colonial societies were regularly introduced to Catholicism and baptized, whether willingly or not, Protestant slave owners in the English Caribbean tended to view conversion as inconsistent or incompatible with slavery.

How is it possible to reconcile the prevailing anti-conversion sentiment among slave owners with the evidence from Christ Church parish that Lazarus, "a negro," was baptized on November 16, 1651? This chapter addresses this question by investigating the role of the Anglican Church in the development and maintenance of race-based slavery in Barbados. It argues that Christianity played a complex and somewhat contradictory role within English West Indian society, and that religion was central to both the idea of freedom and the construction of race in the Protestant Atlantic World. Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, Christian status was used to distinguish

[3] CSP, Vol. 5 (1661-1668), no. 24, 6-7; P. F. Campbell, *The Church in Barbados in the Seventeenth Century* (St. Michael, Barbados: Barbados Museum and Historical Society, 1982), 82–83.

[4] CSP, Vol. 10 (1677-1680), no. 1535, 611-2.

slaves from servants. Slaves, who were consistently referred to as "negros," were juxtaposed with the "Christian" population, suggesting that only "heathens" were eligible for enslavement and that "negros" could never be "Christian." Slave conversion was generally seen as a threat to the island's safety and security. At the same time, Anglican churches played an important role in maintaining and displaying the established hierarchy on the island through seating arrangements, burial locations, sermons and architecture. Ministers were expected to support the slave system by reciting labor laws and posting notices about runaways or stolen items.

Despite strong anti-conversion sentiment and the commitment of the Anglican Church to maintain slave law, the Barbados parish registers indicate that at least 320 individuals identified as negros or mullattos were baptized by 1725. The total was likely much higher since only four of eleven church registers have survived for this period. The small but significant populations of Christian slaves and freed Christians coexisted with anti-conversion rhetoric and created an implicit challenge to the ideology of slavery on the island. If slaves were "heathens," how did Christian slaves fit into the social structure of the island? This chapter contends that the growing population of free and enslaved Christians had a subtle but substantial effect on the racial taxonomy of Barbados. Over the course of the seventeenth century, Euro-Caribbeans stopped referring to themselves as "Christians," and began using the term "white." At the turn of the century, the meaning of "whiteness" had ballooned to include a wide range of ethnic and political attributes that far exceeded its former meaning as a physical descriptor. By 1700, "whiteness" had replaced "Christianity" as the primary indicator of freedom and mastery.

Intimacy played a central role in this history. As Ann Stoler has written, "intimate domains - sex, sentiment, domestic arrangement, and child rearing – figure in the making of racial categories

and in the management of imperial rule."[5] It was in the "intimate domain" of the plantation and urban household that ideas about race and religion were played out, managed, and negotiated on a daily basis. Even as planters rejected external pressure from the metropole or missionaries to convert their slaves, hundreds of slave owners encouraged or allowed a small number of their enslaved property to be educated in Christian doctrine and baptized. Over the course of the seventeenth century, these intimate relationships influenced the construction of race, religion and mastery on the island. As Christian slaves and freed Christians became a regular presence in church, new categories developed to exclude them from full participation in the culture of freedom.

*The Planter's Church*

On September 27, 1661, the Assembly of Barbados passed two acts relating to the island's labor force: *An Act for the better ordering of Negroes* and *An Act for the good governing of Servants*. Ministers were instructed to "distinctly read and publish the Act[s] in their respective Parish Churches" twice a year so that "no Person may pretend any Ignorance in this Act or Statute, or any Branch, or Clause thereof." While scholars have written about the passage of these Acts, analyzing their methods of labor control and the precedence they set for other slave codes in the British West Indies, none have taken notice of their biannual recitation in the parish churches or the role that ministers played in re-articulating and pronouncing these laws.[6] Yet it was through the mouths of ministers that the brutal

[5] Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," in *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*, ed. Ann Laura Stoler (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 23.

[6] David Barry Gaspar examined the legal influence of the Barbados slave codes on other colonies while Susan Amussen showed how the lack of legal precedent for the slave codes in English law meant that colonists experimented with "various ways of organizing work and controlling subordinates." David Barry Gaspar, "With a Rod of Iron: Barbados Slave Laws As a Model for Jamaica, South Carolina, and Antigua, 1661-1697," in *Crossing Boundaries: Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine and Jacqueline McLeod (Bloomington: Indiana University

labor laws in Barbados were enunciated, year after year. These performances show that parish church functioned not only as a place of worship, but also as a communal space for making announcements, posting notices, sharing news, and verbally reinforcing labor laws.

The spatial and visual environment of the parish church was designed to embody plantocratic power. While critics, both then and now, have accused West Indian planters of being "irreligious," Barbadian elites saw their religious identities as being intimately tied to their status as free Englishmen and they integrated the Anglican Church into a broader geography of exclusion that helped to define and maintain the brutal labor system in the sugar islands. As in England, the organization of church space embodied both theological dogma and social authority. Pews faced the preaching box and the communion table, while the floors were often "composed of gravestones, inscribed with pious phrases and evidence of gentility."[7] Church members could purchase pews and elites reaffirmed their standing through the ritual of attending church. The location of a pew conferred both social and religious significance. In 1698, four Bridgetown residents received permission "to erect a pew at the south side of the Church by the great door for themselves and families near unto the place where some of their relations are enterred [*sic*]."[8] Four other church-goers preferred to sit on the pew "on the right hand where Geo. Peers Esq. and several others sit" while the pew to "at the Great door, on the south side of the Church" was "fitted up and is

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Press, 1999), 343–366; Susan Dwyer Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 130–144.

[7] Beasley, *Christian Ritual and the Creation of British Slave Societies, 1650-1780*, 22.

[8] "Records of the Vestry of St. Michael, Barbados," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 17, no. 4 (1950): 194.

appointed for the use of Captains of Ships or Strangers."[9] Seats in the back of the church and in the galleries were left open for non-elite parishioners, including poorer whites and free people of color.[10]

The church regularly received bequests or gifts from parishioners eager to improve the material used in church. Elizabeth Paynter left "two small silver cups" to the St. Michael's parish church in 1676, while John Mills bequeathed "the sum of three hundred and fifty pounds sterling for the buying and purchasing of a good and convenient Organ.[11] Many of the church's most dedicated supporters sought burial inside, making the church's interior simultaneously a place of worship and a memorial to the Barbadian elite. In St. Michael parish church, both the walls and floors were decorated with inscriptions. These monumental inscriptions were a reminder not only of individuals who were buried, but were also a testament to the social and political power of the planter elite who saw the church as central to their personal and public lives.

Aside from its role as a displayer of plantocratic influence, the parish church functioned as a center of communication and public punishment. In the 1640s, the Barbados Assembly instructed the churchwardens of every Parish to "provide a strong pair of Stocks to be placed… near the Church or Chapel." Every Sunday, the constables, churchwardens and sidesmen were to "walk and search Taverns, Ale-houses, Victualling-houses, or other Houses, where they do suspect laws and debauched Company to frequent." If they found anyone "drinking, swearing, gaming, or otherwise misdemeaning themselves," they brought them to the Stocks "to be...imprisoned [for] the Space of Four Hours." It is unlikely that this law was strictly followed, since nearly thirty years later, in 1668, the Assembly passed another law "preventing the selling of Brandy and Rum, in Tipling-

[9] Ibid., 198.

[10] Beasley, *Christian Ritual and the Creation of British Slave Societies, 1650-1780*, 32–3.

[11] "Records of the Vestry of St. Michael, Barbados," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 16, no. 1 (1949): 59; "Records of the Vestry of St. Michael, Barbados," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 17, no. 2 (1950): 126.

houses near the Broad-paths and High-ways." The Act targeted "Servants and Negroes" and complained that "on Sabbath-days, many lewd, loose, and idle persons, do usually resort to such Tipling-houses, who, by their drunkenness, swearing, and other miscarriages, do in a very high nature blaspheme the name of God, profane the Sabbath, and bring a great scandal upon true Christian Religion."[12] The presence of stocks close to the church tied church attendance to the theater of public punishment.

Election days reinforced the centrality of the parish church to the island's political system. In 1656, Governor Daniel Searle signed an Act instructing "all the Freeholders of every Parish within this Island" to return to "their respective Parish-churches, every year" in order to choose their sixteen-man vestry. Election days at church were rowdy and tumultuous. In 1699, the Assembly passed an Act bemoaning that "many undue and illegal Practices have been used by Menaces and Threats to awe and force Men to vote contrary to their Inclinations and Consciences, to the manifest violation of the freedom of Elections of Assembly-Men and Vestry-Men."[13] Not only free-holders but also servants and perhaps some slaves would have been present on such days, crowding around and inside the parish church.

Finally, the parish church served as the community bulletin board, providing information and news to white island inhabitants. In 1711, the Assembly passed an act requiring the "Rector of each Parish-church in this Island" to publish all enacted laws. Beyond official pronouncements, white colonists also posted notices for lost or missing items. The 1688 *Act for the governing of Negroes*, for example, mandated that "every Overseer of a Family" search "all his Negro-Houses" every fortnight. If they found anything that they "suspect[ed] or kn[e]w to be stolen Goods," they were to

[12] Richard Hall, *Acts, Passed in the Island of Barbados. From 1643, to 1762, Inclusive* (London: Printed for Richard Hall, 1764), 4–5, 63–4.

[13] *The Laws of Barbados, Collected in One Volume, by William Rawlin, of the Middle-Temple, London, Esquire. And Now Clerk of the Assembly of the Said Island* (London: Printed for William Rawlin, Esq, 1699), 203.

provide "a full and ample Description of the Particulars…to the Clerk of the Parish" who was to "set upon the Posts of the Church-Door a short Brief that such lost Good are found, whereby any Person that hath lost his Goods may the better come to the Knowledge where they are."[14] As this law shows, the clerk served as the point person for the parish community, while the "posts of the church-door" functioned as a space for announcements regarding anything from local news to labor control.

The church's centrality to the political and social world of white Barbadians demonstrates that the Anglican Church was a meaningful institution in the Protestant Caribbean. Elites reinforced their standing by buying pews and memorializing their families in the stone foundations of the church; they employed the church as site of island elections; and they used the pulpit to proclaim their labor laws. In all of these instances, the Church stood together with the colonial government as an instrument of planter power.

*Taxonomies of Difference in Seventeenth-Century Barbados*

Just as the parish church became an important site for displaying planter power, planters in Barbados articulated a taxonomy of difference that relied on Christian status to distinguish between slavery and servitude.[15] An examination of the Acts passed in Barbados during the seventeenth century shows that by 1661, Christianity had become the most important signifier dividing "slaves," who were usually just called "Negroes," from non-slaves, who were identified simply as "Christians." While the laws from the 1640s imagined "Christianity" as a doctrine or belief, those

[14] Hall, *Acts, Passed in the Island of Barbados*, 112–121.

[15] Irish Catholics held an uneasy place within this hierarchy of difference. As Catholics, they were "Christians," but their ethnic and religious identities set them apart from English Protestants. See Jenny Shaw, *Everyday Life in the Early English Caribbean: Irish, Africans, and the Construction of Difference* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, Forthcoming). I am grateful to Jenny Shaw for sharing her book manuscript with me.

passed in the second half of the seventeenth century used the term "Christian" as shorthand for "non-slave." The changing representation of "Christianity" within the Barbadian law books reflects a larger shift occurring within Barbadian culture.[16] As Barbados became a society with a majority slave population, Christianity was used as an ethnic indicator, juxtaposed with the word "negro." This taxonomy provided an implicit justification for slavery, implying that "negro slaves" were "heathen" and thus could be legitimately enslaved.

In the 1640s, the Barbados Assembly passed a series of laws intended to promote Christianity and the cultivation of godly households. These laws reflected English social thought of the period by emphasizing moral behavior and household piety. *An Act concerning Morning and Evening Prayer in Families*, which was passed sometime between 1642 and 1650, instructed families to hold household prayers twice a day and mandated church attendance for everyone living within two miles of a church; otherwise, inhabitants were expected to attend twice a month. Immoral behavior, such as swearing, was to be punished.[17] While this law was probably not strictly enforced, its passage suggests that church attendance was considered significant by Barbadian elites, as were education and moral policing. It also suggests that the plantocracy was trying to encourage the cultivation of "godly households" on the island. This ideal, which was widespread and influential in England, was based on the belief that a good society was dependent on the existence and cultivation of godliness within families. Governed by the master of the house, all members of the extended "family" –

[16] My analysis of Barbadian law is not concerned with implementation, but with representation: what did the terminology and text of a particular law say about the Barbadian society? Why did the Barbados Assembly decide to articulate their concerns in this manner? Using this textual approach to Barbadian legal history, it is possible to see the creation of ideology over time through the shifting meaning of "Christianity" in the Barbadian law books.

[17] Arthur Charles Dayfoot, *The Shaping of the West Indian Church, 1492-1962* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1999), 72.

including women, children and servants – were intended to join in prayer regularly and develop a firm Christian bond that united the "little commonwealth" in godly devotion.

While the ideal of the "godly household" was present in the social thought of the Barbadian elite in the 1640s, the context of plantation slavery dramatically altered the meaning of the "household." In England, the household was usually limited to a handful of house servants, but the growing size of plantations on Barbados meant that "households" could include more than a hundred laborers. Over the course of the 1640s and 1650s, an increasing percentage of these laborers were enslaved Africans who had little or no familiarity with English culture or religion, making even the pretence of the "godly household" increasingly difficult to sustain. These trends were accelerated by the demographic, environmental, and economic transformation that occurred in Barbados between the 1640s, when the first acts regarding religion were passed, and 1660, when Charles II's coronation ushered in the Restoration. This period saw the "sugar revolution" in which small landholdings were converted into large land units growing sugar on a commercial basis with increasing dependence on enslaved Africans. By 1661, the enslaved population had exceeded the number of whites and a small number of big planters consolidated their power on the island. Demand for arable land led to widespread deforestation as eager immigrants sought to make a profit from the booming sugar economy. These changes transformed Barbadian society even as elite planters aimed to "transplant" English institutions and maintain their identities as pure Englishmen.[18]

The massive demographic and economic changes of the "sugar revolution" affected the meaning of Christianity in Barbados. These changes were evident in 1661, when the Barbados Assembly passed a series of laws to replace those passed during the Interregnum. Unlike the laws from the 1640s, these laws invoked Christianity as an indicator of ethnic identity. *An Act for the good*

[18] Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*; Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted.*

*governing of Servants* sought to protect "Christian" servants from excess brutality and death. While the act mainly used the simpler term "servants," the text switched to the longer "Christian servant" when referring to burial. Masters were forbidden from burying "any Christian Servant … until the Body of such Servant hath been viewed by the next Justice of the Peace, or a Constable and Two of the Neighbours of the Parish..."[19] The choice to use the adjective "Christian" in this case had two purposes: it reminded citizens that their servants were also Christians who were owed a Christian burial, and it distinguished the class of "Christian servants" from another class of laborers: slaves.

The importance of "Christianity" in distinguishing servants from slaves can be seen most clearly in the *Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes*. The *Act for better ordering* used the word "Christian" seven times – more than all previous acts combined. In each case, Christianity was used as a static ethnic category that was placed in opposition to the categories of "negro" and "slave." When the law stated that Negroes were to be punished if they committed "any violence to any Christian," the implication was that a Negro could not, by definition, be a Christian. Similarly, the Barbados Assembly was concerned about the island's increasing number of slaves: "[U]nless we have a considerable number of Christians to balance and equal their strength," they wrote, the safety of the island was at risk. Their solution was to increase the population of "Christian servants" by calling on "every freeholder [to] provide himself with one Christian servant for every twenty acres of land..." Lawmakers also invoked Christianity as a strategic tactic intended to work against any cooperation between the laboring classes of servants and slaves. In a section on runaways, the Act warned that "any Christian servant" who provided refuge to "any Negro or Negroes" would be given thirty-nine lashes.[20] While these laws did not always have their intended effect, the use of

[19] Hall, *Acts, Passed in the Island of Barbados*, 39.

[20] "An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes," September 27, 1661. CO 30/2, 16-26.

Christianity as an indicator of ethnicity remained a defining feature of the Barbadian social hierarchy throughout the seventeenth century.

*The Anglican Church in Imperial Context*

While Christian status and the Anglican Church played a central role in the maintenance of planter power on Barbados, Anglican ministers had very little influence on the island government. This weakness can be attributed, in large part, to the bureaucratic structure of the colonial church, which severed connections to the episcopal hierarchy in England and made colonial ministers reliant on local vestries. Understanding the institutional structure of the Anglican Church overseas is crucial for interpreting why colonial ministers were unable to respond effectively to imperial and ecclesiastical calls for slave conversion during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Barbados was divided into parishes, based on the English system, by 1629.[21] In 1637, the Reverend Thomas Lane notified Archbishop Laud of Canterbury that six churches and some chapels had been constructed. Over the next decade, several new parishes were added to accommodate the growing population.[22] Ultimately, the island was to have eleven parishes. The parish system formed the basis of both ecclesiastical and civil administrations in Barbados and other English West Indian islands. Each parish was governed by a vestry made up of members elected by the freeholders of property. In this lay-based institutional structure, the vestry was responsible for the maintenance of the church, tax collection, and providing a salary for the minister.[23]

By making the parish the basic unit of both ecclesiastical and civil administrations, the

[21] Keith Hunte, "Protestantism and Slavery in the British Caribbean," in *Christianity in the Caribbean: Essays on Church History*, ed. Armando Lampe (Mona, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2000), 86.

[22] Campbell, *The Church in Barbados in the Seventeenth Century*, 29–42.

[23] Hunte, "Protestantism and Slavery in the British Caribbean," 87.

English islands mimicked the structure of government in England. In the West Indies, however, the church could not function independently of the civil government. In England, bishops were responsible for recruiting clergy and making sure that ministers were properly maintained. The episcopal hierarchy provided support and authority to ministers that relieved them from full dependence on their parishioners. In Barbados and the other English Caribbean islands, however, the governor and the vestry were empowered to oversee these basic processes and the first resident bishop was not appointed until 1824.

The inability of the episcopacy to assert authority over colonial churches during this period set a pattern for West Indian church life that was "almost congregational." The vestries and churchwardens, elected by freeholders, solidified their control over their ministers while the governor exerted authority over both the vestries and ministers and acted as the chief arbiter of disputes. Lacking strong links to the Bishop of London or any other episcopal representative, ministers were virtually unable to challenge the plantocracy on any issue. The Barbadian church became, in Arthur Dayfoot's words, a "planter's church."[24]

The colonies were also plagued by a lack of ministers, especially during the Civil War and Interregnum, when the ordination process was disrupted by disestablishment. After Restoration in 1660, the reestablished Church of England tried to assert more authority in the colonies, but it was largely unsuccessful. Henry Compton, who became Bishop of London in 1675, attempted to gain jurisdiction over the Anglican churches in the American colonies by convincing colonial governors that all colonies were "within [his] diocese." He began to correspond with Jonathan Atkins, the

[24] Dayfoot, *The Shaping of the West Indian Church, 1492-1962*, 71–2. For more on the role of the Governor and colonial legislatures, see Jack P. Greene, "Liberty and Slavery: The Transfer of British Liberty to the West Indies, 1627–1865," in *Exclusionary Empire: English Liberty Overseas, 1600-1900*, ed. Jack P. Greene (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 50–76.

Governor of Barbados (1674-1680) soon after Atkins was appointed.[25] But while Compton claimed wide jurisdiction as early as 1675, it was not until the 1680s that the Lords of Trade granted him any official authority.[26] Even then, his only real power was the ability to authorize new clergy heading to posts in the colonies.[27] Continued resistance to the Bishop of London's instructions from colonial governments meant that, as the late eighteenth-century Jamaican planter-historian Bryan Edwards put it,

> The bishop of London is said to claim this island as part of his diocese, but his jurisdiction is renounced and barred by the laws of the country; and the governor or commander in chief, as supreme head of the provincial church, not only inducts into the several rectories…but he is likewise vested with the power of suspending a clergyman of lewd and disorderly life *ab officio*, upon application from his parishioners.[28]

Upon their arrival in the Caribbean, then, Anglican ministers found themselves to be almost fully dependent on the governor and vestries for their maintenance and support.[29] The subordination of the ecclesiastical administration to the civil government had significant repercussions in the English West Indies. Without a strong connection to the episcopacy in England, colonial clergymen were at the mercy of their parishioners and the Bishop of London was unable to execute his own agenda in the colonies. In short, the plantocracy controlled the colonial church by implementing or ignoring the suggestions of the Bishop of London at will and dismissing colonial ministers who proved unsatisfactory.

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[25] J. H. Bennett, "English Bishops and Imperial Jurisdiction 1660-1725," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 32, no. 3 (September 1964): 177.

[26] Ibid., 178.

[27] Dayfoot, *The Shaping of the West Indian Church, 1492-1962*, 104.

[28] Cited in Ibid., 105–6.

[29] Hunte, "Protestantism and Slavery in the British Caribbean," 87–9. For the role of the Bishop of London in the colonies, see Geoffrey Yeo, "A Case Without Parallel: The Bishops of London and the Anglican Church Overseas, 1660-1748," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44, no. 3 (July 1993): 450–475; Bennett, "English Bishops and Imperial Jurisdiction 1660-1725."

The planters' authority over the colonial church was particularly consequential with regard to slave conversion. Responding to reports that slave owners were generally averse to converting their slaves to Christianity, Henry Compton, the Bishop of London, included a passage on the subject in his "memorandum concerning the Church" of 1680. Compton reassured colonists that the "apprehensions of planters that the conversion of slaves may deprive the owners of their present power and disposal of them" were to be "dispelled as groundless."[30] Forty years after Compton's reassurance, however, little attention had been paid to the Bishop of London's recommendations. When Edmund Gibson, Compton's successor, wrote to the colonial clergy in 1723 to inquire, among other things, about the status of "any Infidels, bond or free, within your parish," only three of the twenty-eight ministers in the West Indies reported that anything had been done for conversion of enslaved or free blacks. Edward Briery, minister of St. Lucy's, explained that "their conversion must be the work of authority," suggesting that he would need the support of the civil government in order to proceed.[31] Alexander Deuchar, minister of St. Thomas's parish, gave a similar answer: "I know not neither do I use any Mean towards their Conversion," he wrote. "Nor do I see any practicable without the Authority & Concurrence of the civil power."[32]

*Slave Conversion in the Planter's Church*

The emergence of slave baptism on Barbados in the 1650s and 1660s seems to contradict both the taxonomy of slavery and the strong anti-conversion rhetoric that prevailed on the island. Yet despite these factors, first dozens and then hundreds of enslaved Africans sought and received

[30] Cited in Dayfoot, *The Shaping of the West Indian Church, 1492-1962*, 87. See also C.S.S. Higham, "The Early Days of the Church in the West Indies," *The Church Quarterly Reviews* 92 (1921): 113.

[31] LPL Fulham Papers, Vol. XV, 204.

[32] LPL Fulham Papers, Vol. XV, 205.

baptism in the parish churches of Barbados. This disjuncture presents a puzzle. Why did some planters strongly resist slave conversion while simultaneously encouraging or allowing hundreds of their own slaves to embrace Christianity? There are two answers to this question. First, the actual number of baptized slaves was always small compared to the total population of enslaved Africans. In 1680, for example, there were just 43 non-white baptisms in Christ Church parish, compared to a total population of 4,723 enslaved Africans. This meant that less than 1% of the Afro-Caribbean population was baptized by 1680.

The second answer relates to family culture and gender politics. Charles Irvine, the minister of St. Philip parish, hinted at this connection in 1724. Writing in response to the Bishop of London's query regarding the state of the "Infidels, bond or free," within his parish, and "what means are us'd for their Conversion," Irvine replied that "The Negroes in general are Infidels, of whom there are about 10,000 in this Parish & no means us'd for their Instruction." Irvine's answer thus far resembled the answers of most of the other ministers on the island, who also claimed that "no means" were used to convert the Negro "Infidels." Yet Irvine then went on to add, almost as an afterthought, that "in most Families some chief slaves are instructed & baptized." He also mentioned that he had "baptised some hundreds [him]self."[33] By simultaneously claiming that "no means" were used for the conversion of slaves and that he himself had baptized "hundreds," Irvine dissociated the "masses" of enslaved people on the island from the individuals, the "chief slaves," who he knew and personally baptized. His outlook reveals both a significant hierarchy within the slave population and an inability on the part of the white population to recognize that their "chief slaves," the enslaved individuals that they knew personally, were connected to the enslaved "masses" that they ruled and feared. Irvine's comments also show that Anglican religious culture in Barbados was both intimate and personal. It reflected and reinforced family networks, friendships, gender

[33] LPL Fulham Papers, Vol. XV, 209.

order, and power dynamics between masters and slaves. In other words, the decision about when, or if, a particular enslaved person was to be instructed in Christian doctrine and given the choice to accept Christian baptism was a personal one, dependent on the relationships between members of a household.

Lazarus was the first of eighty-seven enslaved males baptized between 1650 and 1725, at least twenty-seven of whom were adults.[34] While the minister did not record occupations, most of them would have been elite slaves. Both Charles Irvine's comments about slave baptism and research by Richard Dunn on Moravian missionaries in Jamaica have suggested that the first enslaved people to seek out baptism were men who worked as drivers, head boilers, personal servants or held other elite positions.[35] This argument is supported by the fact that only a small number of enslaved men were baptized on each estate—usually no more than one or two individuals. These men would have interacted more frequently with whites than field slaves, and were often granted special privileges and opportunities. Their increased authority and responsibility, however, came at a price. The politics of mastery were more complicated and often less overtly oppressive between masters and slaves who had close interpersonal relationships. As Rhys Isaac's analysis of Virginia planter Landon Carter's diary has shown, Carter's relationship with his attendant, Nassew, was both intimate and fraught. Carter considered Nassew both a skilled medical practitioner and a bold knave or trickster, and fluctuated in his trust for his closest slave. Carter also wrote in detail about Nassew's drunkenness and spent significant periods of time contemplating how to combat this behavior. Overall, he sought to dominate Nassew not only through physical

[34] The ministers did not always provide the age of the individuals they baptized. Of the eighty-seven male slaves baptized during this period, twenty-seven were adults, twenty-nine were children, and fifty-six cannot be identified by age.

[35] Richard S Dunn, *Moravian Missionaries at Work in a Jamaican Slave Community: 1754-1835* (Minneapolis: James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota, 1994).

attacks, but using psychological and religious tactics as well. As Isaac concluded, "The master's straining past the slave's body to claim his soul, and the guilt that this approach was intended to induce…surely took its toll."[36] Lazarus, like other elite male slaves, may have had a similar relationship with his master.

Lazarus's baptism was followed the following year by that of Peter, an enslaved mulatto child. Peter's father, Jacob Heming, was a white man who probably initiated the ritual and was likely present at the baptismal font. Peter's mother remains nameless but was probably one of Jacob's slaves. The minister recorded only that Peter was "begotten of a negro." While Peter was the only child baptized in 1652, he was certainly not the only mulatto child born that year. Sexual relationships between white men and black women were both common and widely accepted on Barbados. As Richard Godbeer and Philip Morgan have argued, the inhabitants of the British West Indies were comparatively open about their interracial relationships.[37] This was in marked contrast to the Chesapeake, where sex between masters and slaves certainly existed, but was not readily acknowledged. Still, despite the prevalence of interracial sex, the number of "mulattos" was still far smaller than that of "negros." This was partially due to the increased numbers of captive Africans transported to Barbados, and partly due to the small size of the island's white population.

"Mulatto" children were far more likely to be baptized than "negro" children. Even though the majority of enslaved children on the island were "negro," more than half of baptized children were, like Peter, "mulattos." Of the 45 enslaved children baptized before 1725, only 19 were

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[36] Rhys Isaac, *Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom: Revolution and Rebellion on a Virginia Plantation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 318–9. See also John Smolenski, "Hearing Voices: Microhistory, Dialogicality and the Recovery of Popular Culture on an Eighteenth-Century Virginia Plantation," *Slavery & Abolition* 24, no. 1 (2003): 1–23.

[37] Philip D. Morgan, "Interracial Sex in the Chesapeake and the British Atlantic World, 1700-1820," in *Sally Hemings & Thomas Jefferson: History, Memory, and Civic Culture*, ed. Jan Lewis and Peter S. Onuf (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 52–85; Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

identified as "negro," compared to 22 who were described as "mulatto" or who had clear interracial parentage. Four were not given a racial descriptor. As these data show, enslaved mixed race children were more likely to be baptized than "negro" children. Men like Jacob Heming may have wanted to acknowledge their children through baptism, or they may have felt strongly that providing them with baptism would protect their offspring. Baptism was a powerful and significant event, and most English men and women would have felt it was a parental duty to bring their children into the church covenant. The fact that a number of white fathers chose to baptize – but not manumit – their mixed race children suggests that the culture of mastery could coexist with feelings of paternal duty and familial obligation.

While Jacob Heming probably initiated Peter's baptism, what role did Peter's mother play? And what type of relationship did she have with Peter's father? In all likelihood, Peter's mother was enslaved to Peter's father. She may have been his long-term mistress, or she could have been a more infrequent sexual partner. Either way, she would have had a limited set of options if her master had turned his eyes toward her. Power dynamics between white men and non-white women meant that even seemingly "consensual" relationships cannot be viewed through the lens of consent.[38] Within households and on plantations, a patriarch could use his mastery over a woman's labor to create opportunities for sex that gave his dependents little choice or say. Through manipulative tactics, "servants and slaves could not only be forced *to* consent, but this force was also refigured *as*

[38] Kirsten Fischer and Jennifer Morgan, "Sex, Race, and the Colonial Project," *William & Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (January 2003): 197; Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Wendy Anne Warren, ""The Cause of Her Grief': The Rape of a Slave in Early New England," *Journal of American History* 93, no. 4 (March 2007): 1031–1049. For the constraints of the archive on telling the stories of enslaved women, see Saidiya V. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 26 (2008): 1–14; Marisa J. Fuentes, "Power and Historical Figuring: Rachael Pringle Polgreen's Troubled Archive," *Gender & History* 22, no. 3 (November 2010): 564–584.

consent."[39] Dependent women, whether they were servants or slaves, could make choices within this framework of mastery to improve their own condition, but their choices were always confined. So while it is impossible to know whether Peter's "negro" mother was Jacob Hemings' primary mistress or not, or whether she welcomed the partnership as an opportunity to improve her circumstances, she certainly had a very narrow set of options placed before her. Once her son was born, what did she think when Jacob Heming brought him to the baptismal font? She may have been resentful that he was inducting her son in a foreign ritual or she could have seen Christian baptism as another cloak of spiritual protection that could aid her child as he came of age in a brutal slave society.

Though Peter's unidentified mother probably played no part in her son's baptism, other enslaved women were identified and acknowledged by the island's ministers. In 1667, a "negro woman called Sillian" brought her son Richard to the baptismal font in Christ Church. Richard, a "mulatto," was the first of three children that Sillian brought to church. Her son Thomas, also a mulatto, was baptized on January 1, 1669, while her daughter Mary was brought into the church covenant nearly two years later, on December 31, 1670. There is no record that Sillian herself was ever baptized, nor are any of her partners mentioned. So why did she care to bring her children to church? She may have believed that Christian baptism was more meaningful and efficacious than any other religious ritual or she could have paired baptism with other forms of Afro-Caribbean rites.

Some enslaved women chose to be baptized alongside their children. Hannah, a twenty-one year old in the home of Justice Hall, was baptized on July 18, 1704, the same day as her four-month-old son John. George Marshal, Edward Nusum, Mrs. Cotterel and Mary Gay served as witnesses to the rite. The rites, which took place in St. Michael church in Bridgetown, were characteristic of an urban baptism. Hannah was, like most female slaves in Bridgetown, probably a domestic servant who served in close quarters with her master and mistress. As a domestic, she may have been the

[39] Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America*, 68.

personal servant to Mrs. Hall or perhaps she worked as a cook or house cleaner. If she was Mrs. Hall's attendant, she may have cultivated a close personal relationship with her mistress. Perhaps Mrs. Hall took a personal interest in Hannah's spiritual life, encouraging her interest in Christianity. As island elites, the Halls may have prided themselves on proselytizing to their house slaves. Alternatively, Hannah may have been introduced to Christian doctrine by other whites in Bridgetown. She certainly had a special relationship with her godparents – it may have been their influence that incited Hannah's interest in baptism.

There is no indication that interracial sex played a part in Hannah's baptism, but it was an important factor for other enslaved women. Just under twenty-percent of the enslaved women baptized were identified as the mistresses of white men, though this is likely a low estimate since interracial sex was not always acknowledged in the baptismal register.[40] In one of the most egregious examples of interracial sex prompting baptism, the slave owner and merchant John Peers brought three of his enslaved mistresses, along with at least fourteen children, to the baptismal font between 1670 and 1683. His three mistresses, Hester, Susanna and Elizabeth, were baptized together on June 8, 1670. The pastor listed the women as "negro women slaves to John Peers."[41] Thirteen years later, John Peers returned to church to baptize nine of his children. Three were "begotten of a mul[atto] woman named Susanna," another three were "begotten of a mul[atto] woman named Elizabeth," while the final third were "begotten of Dorothy Spendlove," who was probably a white woman.[42]

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[40] All of the cases that I have found that clearly acknowledge sustained relationships between white masters and enslaved women were in Christ Church Parish. This suggests that there are important differences in the recording styles of the various ministers on the island.

[41] Joanne Mcree Sanders, *Barbados Records. Baptisms, 1637-1800* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1984), 91.

[42] The only record to Dorothy Spendlove in the baptismal record is on Aug 13, 1683: "Frances 6 yrs, Ann 4 yrs, John 2 ½ yrs, chn of John Peers begotten of Dorothy Spendlove." Ibid., 275. The fact that the minister records Susanna and Elizabeth alternately as "negro women slaves" and "mul[attos]" speaks to the somewhat haphazard usage of the two terms. Since mulattos were

John Peers, then, was actively involved in bringing both his mistresses and his mixed race children to the baptismal font. When he died in 1688, he provided for his mistresses and children in his will. While he gave the bulk of his estate to the legitimate children from his first and second marriages, he gave "Elizabeth Ashcroft," "Susannah Mingo a black" and "Dorothy Spendlove" as well as their children use of his "house & grounds."[43]

The case of John Peers and his many children reflects the interconnection between sexual and religious cultures in seventeenth-century Barbados. As the baptisms of Elizabeth, Susanna, Dorothy, and their children show, religious culture cannot be understood without taking interracial sex into account. Yet while interracial sex was certainly an important factor in the creation of a baptized non-white population, its influence should not be overstated, particularly for adults, since the majority of adults baptized do not appear to have been in sexual relationships with white men. Most enslaved baptized adults were men, not women, and only a minority of the women were identified as mistresses. This evidence suggests that the most important factor leading to baptism for adults was maintaining a close relationship with a master or mistress. The importance of a master's consent can be seen in the baptismal records. Ministers recorded that some masters served as witnesses in the baptism of their slaves, thereby displaying not only their consent, but their approval

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sometimes referred to as negros, there is an underrepresentation of mulattos in the baptismal records.

[43] For more on Susannah Mingo, see Jenny Shaw, "Writing a History of Susanna Mingo: Slavery, Community, and the Problem of the Archive in Early Modern Barbados" (presented at the OIEAHC Conference: Africans in the Americas, Barbados, 2013). "Elizabeth Ashcroft" is probably John Peers' sister. Jenny Shaw has found that her children match the children named in John Peers' will. I am very grateful to Jenny Shaw for sharing her research on John Peers with me. I have found two slightly different versions of John Peers' will. The one cited above is in Joanne Mcree Sanders, *Barbados Records: Wills and Administrations*, vol. 1 (Houston, TX: Sanders Historical Publications, 1979), 272. Another version, which is not fully intact, is published in "Extracts from Wills Recorded in England," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 13 (1945): 83. The second will suggests that Peers may have provided apprenticeship opportunities for his natural born children.

and support. Other times, such as for the baptism of an adult woman named Elizabeth, the pastor noted that Elizabeth had "her master's free consent."[44]

Overall, intimacy, either sexual or social, was the greatest factor contributing to the growth of an enslaved Christian population. Most slave owners opposed slave conversion in principle, but they made exceptions for the individuals in their households with whom they felt close. Many decided to baptize their interracial children, with or without the consent of enslaved mothers. Some encouraged or allowed their mistresses to seek baptism while others "privileged" their most trusted male and female slaves with access to baptism. As these trends show, family politics and personal networks were central to the growth of an enslaved Christian population on Barbados. Over time, these daily practices would have a major effect on the history of race and the development of new taxonomies. As enslaved Christians began to make their presence known in Anglican churches, white Christians reconsidered the relationship between Protestantism and freedom.

*Free Black Christians and the Question of Citizenship*

While some slave owners were content to Christianize their favored slaves, a small number of slave owners went a step further by manumitting slaves who had been especially "loyal" and trustworthy. As Jerome Handler has shown, the free black population on Barbados was never large. Still, its influence was greater than its size. This was particularly true of the "free negroes" who chose to be baptized in the Anglican Church. These Afro-Caribbean Christians implicitly challenged the racial order of Barbados, where the term "Christian" had been used as a proto-racial category that separated "negro" slaves from "free" Euro-Caribbean men and women.

On September 9, 1677, Charles Cuffee was baptized in St. Michael parish. His baptism probably took place inside the church, since Cuffee likely lacked the funds and status to pay for a

[44] Sanders, *Barbados Records. Baptisms, 1637-1800*, 599.

home visit. As the parochial minister noted in his church register, Cuffee had recently been "freed by his master," making him the first free black to be baptized on the island.[45] The fact that Cuffee's baptism followed his manumission suggests that there remained a ceremonial connection between Christianity and freedom, though the existence of forty-six baptized slaves proved that this was not a necessary link. Cuffee's decision to be baptized in the Anglican Church gave him new standing within Barbadian society: while he could already work for himself and accumulate property and capital as a freeman, Christianity offered added social and spiritual benefits. By partaking in baptism, Cuffee received spiritual protection from an established religious practitioner and entered into a new and exclusive community. The Anglican Church on Barbados was an elite church, peopled almost exclusively by the owners of slaves, government representatives and freeholders. By taking ranks within this group, Cuffee was making a claim for himself: as a free Christian man, he had acquired most of the markings of citizenship. According to Barbadian law at the time, he would be eligible to vote in elections and, at least hypothetically, run for office if he could acquire enough property.

Cuffee may or may not have attended church regularly, participated in worship services, or taken an active role in his church community. What is known is that in 1689, twelve years after his baptism, he brought two children to the baptismal font: Thomas, aged ten, and Mary, aged five. The minister noted that they were the "son & dau of Charles Cuffee free Christian negro." The added reference to Cuffee's Christian status in the minister's entry suggests that Cuffee was known and recognized as both a freeman and a Christian. Additionally, the minister recorded the children's godparents: Andrew Miller and Thomas Alford acted as Godfathers, while Hannah Lamply and Ellen Hall served as Godmothers to the children. Cuffee's relationship with these four individuals,

[45] By the time of Cuffee's baptism in 1677, there had been forty-six non-white baptisms, but Cuffee was the first person who was listed as "free."

all white, suggests that Cuffee and his family had created a network of support for themselves among the island's Anglican population.

Charles Cuffee continued to bolster his Christian status in 1694 when he and Mary Jones, another free black, were married on June 25. Mary was baptized the same day. Unlike Cuffee's baptism, however, their marriage was not the first of its kind: by 1694, the minister of St. Michael parish had already consecrated at least six marriages involving free blacks.[46] The first of these took place on January 25, 1684 with the marriage of John Corsoe and Anne Williams. The trend picked up in the 1690s, with three weddings recorded in 1694 alone, including that of Charles Cuffee and Mary Jones. Charles and Mary strengthened their ties to the church as their family grew. In 1697, their son Charles was baptized in St. Michael parish church. Other free black Christians also brought their children into the church covenant. John Corsoe brought his daughters Rachell, aged 8, and Bridget, aged four, to the baptismal font the year after his marriage to Anne Williams. Thomas and Mary Ravell had already baptized their daughters Diana, Katha[rine] and Mary by the time of their marriage in 1688. Charles Hector and Hannah Davis, who were married on July 21, 1706, displayed a different pattern by baptizing their children in their infancy. Hannah and her daughter Joan, nine months, were baptized on the day of Hannah's marriage. Hannah must have been pregnant at the time, because her daughter Mary, aged three months, was baptized the following December. As the timing of these births and marriages show, free Afro-Caribbeans decided for themselves when church sacraments should be bestowed. Many of their children were baptized before their parents' marriages, and parents sometimes waited years before deciding to baptize a child. They may have postponed baptism for a number of reasons. Some parents waited until they could afford to host a

[46] Joanne Mcree Sanders, *Barbados Records: Marriages, 1643-1800*, 2 vols. (Houston, TX: Sanders Historical Publications, 1982). Two of these marriages may have been interracial. While the minister did not list Elizabeth Bullard or Izabella Robinson as free negro women, though he did list their husbands as free negroes. These women may have still been enslaved, or they may have been white.

feast in celebration, while others may have had personal or spiritual grounds for delay. Either way, free Afro-Caribbean families followed patterns similar to those of Euro-Caribbean families on Barbados, who also tended to wait years to baptize children, and often chose to baptize several children at once.

These marriages and baptisms reveal the appearance of a small but significant population of free black Christians on Barbados. By the end of the seventeenth century, free Afro-Caribbeans were making church an integral part of their family life, marking both marriages and baptisms with Anglican rituals. These trends continued in the early eighteenth century.[47] In the 1680s, the number of baptized free blacks jumped from 2 to 15. It nearly doubled ten years later, with 27 baptisms in the 1690s. The level of baptism then evened out over the next several decades, ranging from twenty-three to twenty-six. Most of the baptisms occurred in the parish of St. Michael, which contained the urban center of Bridgetown. Christ Church and St. Philip also showed a sizable number of freed Christians, while St. James had fewer free black baptisms.

By 1725, at least 107 free people of color had been baptized in Barbados. While this was a small percentage of the non-white population, it was a sizable percentage of the free black population. Comparing these numbers to data collected by Jerome Handler and John Pohlmann, it is reasonable to assume that at least a quarter and probably a majority of free blacks chose to be baptized in the Anglican Church. Handler and Pohlmann identified 133 slaves who were manumitted between 1650 and 1700: 123 from wills, and ten from deeds. As Handler and Pohlmann point out, however, only 44.7% of the wills stated that the enslaved person should be manumitted immediately. In the majority of the cases, "conditions in the wills could greatly extend the time before manumission," meaning that the number of slaves actually freed by these wills was probably

[47] Data compiled from Ibid. Data is only available for four of the eleven parishes, so these figures most likely underestimate the actual number of free baptized negroes.

much lower than 123. Furthermore, it is likely that the executors of estates did not always follow through with the intentions of the testator, meaning that not all manumitted slaves received their freedom. This may explain why, when the earliest estimates of the free Negro population were produced in 1748, just 107 individuals, or 0.2% of the population, were estimated to be free.[48] While this latter number probably underestimated the number of free people of color, Handler has argued that the free Negro population never surpassed 5% of the total population until the 1830s.[49] Before 1725, the number was much lower, probably between 100 and 400 individuals.[50] During the same time period, 107 free blacks were baptized in four of the eleven parishes. While data is not available from the seven remaining parishes, it is reasonable to assume that there were free Negroes baptized in those parishes as well. Thus while exact figures remain obscure, it is likely that at least 25% and probably over 50% of the free black population chose to be baptized before 1725.

As the free non-white population grew, so did their presence in churches. While they made up only a fraction of the Christian population, their attendance at church services and their participation in church sacraments did not go unnoticed. This would have been particularly true in Bridgetown, where the majority of free non-white Christians resided. While it is unlikely that all 107 free Christian negroes attended church regularly, it is probable that at least a handful of free negroes

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[48] Handler and Pohlmann, "Slave Manumissions and Freedmen in Seventeenth-Century Barbados."

[49] Jerome S. Handler, *The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 16.

[50] This estimate is my own, based on the data from Handler and Pohlmann, "Slave Manumissions and Freedmen in Seventeenth-Century Barbados"; Handler, *The Unappropriated People*; Sanders, *Barbados Records. Baptisms, 1637-1800*. I have assumed that the free black population must have been over 100, as both Handler and Pohlmann's and my own calculations based on Sanders, *Barbados Records: Baptisms* have indicated. While it is likely that not all of the individuals manumitted through wills or deeds were actually freed, two other factors suggest that the actual number of free negroes was greater than recorded: first, not all wills and deeds have survived, so there may have been more slaves manumitted, and secondly, manumissions do not account for the natural increase of the free negro population. In the baptismal records, thirty of the free negros baptized were the offspring of free negro parents, and thus would not have shown up in manumission records.

were present at most church functions. During the 1690s, their presence would have been increasingly noticeable, as a dozen free people of color were married and sixteen baptized in St. Michael parish church alone.

*Free Blacks, Freeholders, and the Emergence of "Whiteness"*

The increasing presence and rising status of free black Christian created an implicit challenge to the ideology of slavery on Barbados. By the late seventeenth century, dozens of free people of color had been baptized, and many were baptizing their children. As a result, a small but growing class of free Christians of African or mixed African and European ancestry could have been eligible as freeholders. In 1694, when Charles Cuffee and Mary Jones were married, the most recent legislation regarding citizenship had been passed during the Interregnum and there was no firm definition of a "freeholder." In 1656, Governor Daniel Searle passed *An Act concerning Vestries,* which required "all the Freeholders" to "repair to their respective Parish-churches" in order to elect Vestry-men by their own "free voices." The Act did not, however, specifically define freeholders. Instead, the definition would have been assumed to be the same as in English common law. In England, free-holders were adult, Christian, propertied and male. Since free black Christians could attain all of those markers, they were technically eligible for freeholder status.[51]

As the number of free black Christians grew, the Barbadian lexicon shifted to exclude the new potential citizens from enfranchisement. Though Christianity still functioned as an indicator of ethnic difference, it was gradually replaced by the phenotypic term "white." An analysis of all the laws passed in Barbados between 1650 and 1725 shows that the term "white" was used just three times in laws passed between 1660 and 1690. In the last decade of the century, however, usage increased dramatically, peaking in the first decade of the eighteenth century. References to

[51] Hall, *Acts, Passed in the Island of Barbados*, 242–3.

Christianity or Christians, meanwhile, showed an inverse trend, peaking in the 1660s and then dropping to just six usages in the first three decades of the eighteenth century combined. While some of the variation can be attributed to the types of Acts that were being passed, the overall trend in undeniable: by the eighteenth century, "whiteness" had replaced Christianity as the primary indicator of non-slave status.[52]

"Whiteness" came into being within the Barbadian law books as a method of slave control. The first reference to the term was in the 1661 *Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes*. If a "negro" was sentenced to death, the law entitled three freeholders to "cause execution to be done" either by the "common executioner" or "by what other executioner can be got either white man or negro." In this passage, the word "white" was used as a physical descriptor in opposition to the term "negro." The close proximity of "white man" and "negro" in this sentence suggests that "whiteness" was dependent on the literal and rhetorical existence of "negroes" for its conceptual development.[53] The second reference to whiteness came fifteen years later during the fallout from an attempted slave rebellion in 1675. The Barbados Assembly passed *A supplemental Act to a former Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes*, in which it warned that "any Negro or Negroes that shall be found out

[52] These calculations are based on an analysis of all Barbadian laws available in print as well as four manuscript laws relating to slave control. I am very grateful to Jerome Handler for sharing his copies of the Slave Codes that exist only in manuscript. Sources: "An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes," September 27, 1661. CO 30/2, 16-26; "A Supplemental Act to a Former Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes," April 21, 1676. CO 30/2, 114-125; "An Act for the Continuance of An Act Entitled a Supplemental Act to a Former Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes," March 15, 1677. CO 30/2, 125-6; "An Act to Explain a Branch of a Former Act for Ordering and Governing of Negroes," December 13, 1677. CO 30/2, 126-7; and all Acts printed in *The Laws of Barbados*; Hall, *Acts, Passed in the Island of Barbados*; *Acts of Assembly, Passed in the Island of Barbadoes, From 1648, to 1718* (London: printed by John Baskett, 1732).

[53] "An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes," September 27, 1661. CO 30/2, 16-26.

of the plantation…not having a white man with them**,**" would be punished.[54] The same clause was repeated in 1688 in the newly revamped *Act for the governing of Negroes*. Again, the adjective "white" was used only within the context of "Negroes," not as a standalone term. Furthermore, in both cases, whiteness was defined within the context of slave control and punishment.[55]

Beginning in the 1690s, whiteness took on new meanings and connotations. While it remained an instrument of slave control, it also began to indicate ethnic identity, replacing the adjective "Christian" in the Acts regarding servants. The 1696 *Act for the speedy supply of Arms, Ammunition, Stores and white Servants* used the word "white" rather than "Christian" to modify "servant," as did a series of Acts "for the Encouragement of White Servants" passed in 1697, 1699, 1701 and 1703. It was in these Acts that the shift from "Christian" to "white" is made most obvious. Up until 1696, the Barbados Assembly had periodically passed an Act to encourage Barbadians to hire more servants to perform their labor. These Acts, the first of which was passed in 1677, were always given a variation on the title "*An Act to encourage the bringing in of* ***Christian Servants*** *to this Island*." In 1697, just a year after the last of these Acts was passed, a new version of the Act was written. This Act, however, had a new title: "*An Act for the Encouragement of White Servants, and to ascertain their Allowance of Provisions and Clothes*." The sudden shift in the terminology referring to servants provides clear example of a more gradual change that was taking place in the Barbadian taxonomy.[56]

It was not until 1697, when the population of free black Christians had grown to at least thirty individuals, that the Assembly and Council clarified the definition of freeholder. The *Act to*

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[54] "A Supplemental Act to a Former Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes," April 21, 1676. CO 30/2, 114-125.

[55] Hall, *Acts, Passed in the Island of Barbados*, 112–121.

[56] Acts reprinted in Hall, *Acts, Passed in the Island of Barbados*.

*keep inviolate and preserve the freedom of Elections* acknowledged that "it hath not been hitherto fully and plainly ascertained how the Inhabitants of this Island shall be qualified to render them capable to Elect or be Elected Members of the Assembly or Vestry-Men, or to try real Actions." As a result, "manifold Disputes and Controversies have arisen." While the Act did not explain what the "disputes and controversies" were, the existence of non-white free Christians may have been one of the "disputes." After this preamble, the Act offered a definition of free-holders for the first time in the island's history:

> Be it Enacted by the Honourable the President and Council, and Representatives of this Island, and by authority of the same, that every *white Man* professing the Christian Religion, the free and natural born Subject of the Kind of *England*, or naturalized, who hath attained to the full Age of One and Twenty Year, and hath Ten Acres of Freehold...shall be deemed a Freeholder, and shall and may be capable of Electing Representatives or Vestry-Men, or of being Elected a Representative or Vestry-Man in the Parish wherein such his Estate lieth, or to serve as a Juror to try real Actions…[57]

The Act departed from English law by specifying that a free-holder had to be white in order to be eligible for voting rights.

While the 1697 Act defined a freeholder as "white," the next *Act*, passed twelve years later in 1709, went a step further. The second version of the *Act to keep inviolate, and preserve the Freedom of Elections* added a clause that narrowed the possible interpretation of "white":

> And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That no Person whatsoever shall be admitted as a Freeholder, or an Evidence in any Case whatsoever, whose original Extract shall be proved to have been from a Negro, except only on the Tryal of Negroes and other Slaves…[58]

This clause excluded not only slaves, but all freemen who had any African ancestry, from enfranchisement. Significantly, it also rejected the testimony of non-white individuals from court "except...on the Tryal of Negroes and other Slaves."

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[57] *The Laws of Barbados*, 203–4. Emphasis added.

[58] *Acts of Assembly, Passed in the Island of Barbadoes, From 1648, to 1718*, 237–8.

The 1709 Act is the first evidence of the "one drop rule" in Barbadian law. Instead of using "whiteness" as a physical descriptor or even a general ethnic category, it restricted citizenship to individuals with only European ancestry. It condemned free Christians, whether mixed race or mulatto, to underclass status, regardless of their religious affiliation or cultural practice.

By the early eighteenth century the concept of "whiteness" had been transformed. While the term "white" had been used sparingly in the 1660s, 1670s, and 1680s, it was primarily a physical descriptor: "negros" had to be escorted by a "white man" if they wanted to leave their plantation without a ticket, for example. Christianity, rather than whiteness, was the defining feature of the Euro-Caribbean population on the island in the mid seventeenth-century. Servants were distinguished from slaves because they were "Christian" and slaves were forbidden to commit "any violence to any Christian." Over time, however, this taxonomy proved to be insufficient – or at least increasingly ambiguous. As a small number of slave owners chose to manumit favored slaves, many of these newly freed men and women recognized the political, social and spiritual significance of Christianity, and sought out baptism for themselves. Once free and baptized, their presence created an implicit challenge to the standard taxonomy on the island: could all free, Christian and propertied men be accepted as citizens and freeholders? Or should those "English" liberties be reserved for Englishmen alone? The Acts passed in the late 1690s answered those questions. They redefined the term "freeholder" to include "whiteness" as a prerequisite to enfranchisement, thereby excluding all free black Christians. In 1709, the revised *Act to keep inviolate, and preserve the Freedom of Elections* cleared up any doubt about the definition of "whiteness" by adding the clause that "no Person whatsoever shall be admitted as a Freeholder…whose original Extract shall be proved to have been from a Negro…"[59] By the early eighteenth century, then, "whiteness" had been reified into the most

[59] Ibid.

potent social and political category on Barbados, replacing "Christianity" as the most salient axis of difference. While the parish church continued to maintain and reinforce planter power, it was "whiteness," rather than Christian status, that signaled power, prestige, and mastery in eighteenth century Barbados.

## CHAPTER TWO

## 'Gospel Family Order': Quaker Slavery and the Transatlantic Debate on Slave Conversion, 1670-1700

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When George Fox, widely regarded as the founder of Quakerism, arrived in Barbados at the beginning of October 1671, he was deeply troubled by the effect of slave owning on his followers. He expressed his concerns in a sermon to Barbadian Quakers that was later published under the title *Gospel Family-Order, Being a Short Discourse Concerning the Ordering of Families, both of Whites, Blacks and Indians*. The tract provides great insight into Fox's thoughts on slavery, freedom and the proper order of the world. Fox described how his "Spirit [was] troubled…to see that Families were not brought into Order." Responding to what he considered to be slave promiscuity, he reminded his followers, "God made…Male and Female, not one Man and many Women, but a Man and a Woman." Fox believed that the "polygamous" behavior of black slaves was corrupting the sacred Quaker household. In order to combat corruption, he encouraged Friends to "preach the everlasting Covenant, Christ Jesus, to the *Ethyopians,* the *Blacks* and the *Tawny-Moors*…in your families." Introducing slaves to Christianity would allow them to "be free Men indeed."[1]

Fox's concern for family order—and his tacit acceptance of slavery—has traditionally been interpreted within the context of Quaker antislavery thought. While some scholars have argued that Fox's comments reveal proto-abolitionist sentiment, pointing to Fox's suggestion that Friends limit the terms of their slaves' service, others have seen Fox's position as a disappointing anomaly for an

[1] George Fox, *Gospel Family-order, Being a Short Discourse Concerning the Ordering of Families, Both of Whites, Blacks and Indians* ([London: s.n.], 1676).

otherwise egalitarian radical.[2] Few have considered Fox's comments within the context of the seventeenth-century Atlantic World, where debates about slavery and Christianity were becoming increasingly important and tense in both colony and metropole. This chapter argues that Fox's commentary is best understood within a transatlantic and multidenominational context and that his stance on slavery should be interpreted as an effort to reconcile slavery with Christian practice, rather than as an antecedent of antislavery and abolition. While eighteenth-century Quakers played a central role in the abolitionist crusade, seventeenth-century Quakers like Fox were at the forefront of the attempt to adapt African slavery to Christianity. Fox's tracts were read not only by other Quakers, but also by Anglicans on either side of the Atlantic. In England and the Americas, Fox's pro-conversion stance sparked controversy by forcing Protestants – both Quaker and non-Quaker – to consider how slavery could be reconciled with Christian living. After Fox published a polemical pamphlet against the Anglican ministers in Barbados in 1672, his invective was answered not only by the ministers themselves, but by the traveling Anglican missionary Morgan Godwyn, who began his *Negro and Indian's Advocate* with a response to Fox's complaints. Fox, Godwyn, and other concerned Protestants were part of a transatlantic dialogue debating the place of Christianity within the burgeoning English slave societies in the Americas. This chapter investigates that debate and shows that while Anglicans in England were generally receptive to Fox's arguments, going so far as to draft a Parliamentary bill that would confirm the legitimacy of Christian slavery, ministers and planters in Barbados moved in the opposite direction. When a slave rebellion was discovered on the island four years after Fox's visit, the plantocracy legislated against Quaker evangelization, breaking new ground in their anti-conversion sentiment. In 1676, they passed *An Act to prevent the people called Quakers, from bringing Negroes to their Meeting*, which claimed that Quakers were at fault for the attempted rebellion

[2] Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America*, 4–6; Frost, "George Fox's Ambiguous Anti-Slavery Legacy"; Carey, "'The Power That Giveth Liberty and Freedom': The Barbadian Origins of Quaker Antislavery Rhetoric, 1657-76."

because they brought enslaved men and women "into their Meetings" and taught them the Gospel. As a result, they wrote, "the safety of this Island [was] hazared."[3] By highlighting the Quaker's proselytizing efforts rather than their refusal to bear arms and join the militia, which had been the focus of attacks in the past, the Council of Barbados linked slave rebellion to religious conversion. In the year following the attempted rebellion, Quakers were persecuted for allowing their slaves to meet for worship. These arrests marked the first time any Protestant group in the British West Indies had been persecuted for missionary activity.

The conceptual connection between proselytizing and slave rebellion had major implications for the perception of missionary work in the British West Indies. As big planters in the British Caribbean grew increasingly anxious about how to control the growing number of black slaves, they took precautions to shield their human property from potentially disruptive social and religious forces. Once missionaries were associated with rebellion, it became increasingly difficult for proselytizing Christians to convince fearful slave owners that converted slaves would not, as the Governor of Barbados put it in 1675, "rebel and cut their Throats."[4] By 1680, the Barbadian planters' stance on conversion was in marked contrast to the sentiment in England. When William Blathwayt, on behalf of the Lords of Trade and Plantations in London, wrote to the merchants of Barbados to inquire as to "the unhappy state of the negroes and other slaves in Barbadoes by their not being admitted to the Christian religion," the self-titled "gentlemen of Barbados" were able to explain that "the conversion of their slaves to Christianity would not only destroy their property but

[3] Reprinted in Hall, *Acts, Passed in the Island of Barbados*, 97–8.

[4] William Edmundson, *A Journal of the Life, Travels, Sufferings and Labour of Love in the Work of the Ministry* (London: Bagster and Thoms, 1829), 78.

endanger the island, inasmuch as converted negroes grow more perverse and intractable than others."[5]

*Quaker Expansion*

Quakers did not intend to become central to Atlantic debates about slavery. But the missionary impulse of the early Quakers, combined with the political structure of the English Atlantic in the mid-seventeenth century, meant that the largest community of Quakers outside the British Isles was in the slave and sugar-rich island of Barbados. It was in Barbados—not in the northern colonies—that the first "publishers of Truth" found the greatest success. When Ann Austin and Mary Fisher, the first Quaker missionaries to arrive in the West Indies, landed on the island in 1655, their first converts included slave owning planters, merchants, indentured servants and craftsmen.[6]

Upon their arrival, the Quaker movement was less than a decade old. Quakerism was one of a handful of radical religious groups that responded to the disruptions of Civil War and the collapse of the monarchy by awaiting the imminent return of Christ.[7] Early Friends followed the lead of George Fox, a young man from the English Midlands who claimed to know "nothing but pureness, and innocency."[8] Fox rejected the "hireling ministers" of the established Church and preached that "tender" people could claim spiritual authority by giving themselves over to the seed of the indwelling Christ. He rejected social conventions that validated earthly hierarchies and urged his

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[5] CSP, Vol. 10 (1677-1680), no. 1535, 611

[6] For more on the origins and growth of the Quaker community on Barbados, see Barbara Ritter Dailey, "The Early Quaker Mission and the Settlement of Meetings in Barbados, 1655-1700," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 39 (1991): 24–46; Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados*.

[7] See Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, chap. 1.

[8] Cited in Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados*, 15.

followers to stop doffing their hats to superiors and to replace the honorific term "you" within the more informal "thou."

Early Quakerism was born in itinerancy and a number of its earliest converts left England to spread the Truth across the seas. These first "publishers of truth" included both men and women and they brought the Truth not only to Barbados, but also to Europe, Turkey, North Africa and the Puritan stronghold of New England, among other places. Indeed, Mary Fisher and Ann Austin were en route to New England when they arrived in Barbados. For while their fervor drew them to the Puritan colony, their reliance on English shipping networks meant that the Caribbean would be a site of central importance for the travelling Quakers who were intent on carrying Truth to northern America.

In 1655, when Fisher and Austin arrived on the island, Barbados was in the midst of a "sugar revolution" that transformed the demography and economy of the small island.[9] While the first English settlers on Barbados had concentrated on tobacco production and relied on the labor of both European indentured servants and African slaves, the turn to sugar production beginning in the 1640s turned the island's planters increasingly to slave labor and away from European servants. The harsh demands of sugar production and the growing numbers of black slaves led to the creation of a brutal regime of white supremacy in the latter half of the seventeenth century, marked by the introduction of oppressive labor laws in 1661 and 1688.[10] In 1655, however, the island had not reached the extremes of violence and terror that were to characterize it fifty years later. When they arrived in the mid-seventeenth century, Mary Fisher and Ann Austin encountered a colony with a labor force that included both slaves and white (often Irish) indentured servants who performed

[9] For a full description of the sugar revolution, see Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*.

[10] Gaspar, "With a Rod of Iron: Barbados Slave Laws As a Model for Jamaica, South Carolina, and Antigua, 1661-1697."

field and domestic work. Many Friends were, themselves, indentured servants or political exiles who found themselves sent to the Caribbean island.[11] Such had been the case with Lewis Morris, one of the earliest converts to Quakerism in Barbados, who began his career as an indentured servant for the puritan Providence Island Company. While Morris had amassed wealth and political power by the time he was "convinced" by traveling Quaker missionaries in Barbados, other Friends were less fortunate.[12] By 1680, however, at least eighty percent of Quaker converts in Barbados owned at least one slave.[13]

Barbados was, like much of the English Atlantic, roiled in religious dissent. It was perhaps due to the plethora and variety of religious dissenters that Quakers found such fertile ground on the island. While Quakers had difficulty gaining a foothold in New England, Barbados was more lenient on religious radicals like Quakers. In fact, Henry Fell, a Quaker missionary who arrived on the island in 1656, wrote that the "Governour is a moderate man where by [Quaker] persecution (as to Imprisoning) is restrained." In the same letter, he described how Mary Fisher and Ann Austin had been "very cruelly used and searched for Witches" in New England before they were forced to sail back to Barbados.[14] Quakers were not the only dissenters to find success on the island. Henry Fell noted that "Joseph Salman (who was a ringleader of ye Ranters in England) is gotten here to speake," and that "heare are others as Baptists some are convinced of the truth."[15]

Quaker missionaries attracted a number of planters, merchants and craftsmen on Barbados. Within a year of Fisher and Austin's arrival, Henry Fell wrote that "pretty many people [are]

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[11] Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*; Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*.

[12] Block, *Ordinary Lives in the Early Caribbean*, 149.

[13] Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados*, 124–5.

[14] Henry Fell to Margaret Fell, 3/9/1656. FHL Swarthmore Mss. 1.66.

[15] Henry Fell to Margaret Fell, 3/9/1656. FHL Swarthmore Mss. 1.66.

convinced of the truth," and that Friends "meet together in silence in 3 severall places." While the names and backgrounds of many of these early converts is unknown, the most dedicated new Friends included Col. Thomas Rous and Col. Lewis Morris, two wealthy sugar planters who had lived on the island since 1638.[16] With the patronage and protection of these powerful planters, Quaker missionaries were somewhat shielded from abuse by non-Quaker whites.[17]

*Quakers and Slavery, 1657-1670*

Despite the growing number of Quaker slave owners, there is no evidence that Barbadian Friends ever considered slavery to be at odds with their new convictions. Nor did travelling Friends who visited Barbados remark on the existence of black slaves in Quaker plantations. The first person to comment on the topic of Quakers and slavery in writing was George Fox, who wrote an epistle in 1657 "To Friends beyond the Sea that have Blacks and Indian Slaves." Despite the fact that Fox had never seen the colonies in person, he was "moved to write" to Friends in "all the plantations" that "God is no respector of persons," and that "he hath made *all nations of one blood*." The Epistle was a reminder to Friends not to neglect the spiritual lives of their subordinates. While Fox did not give explicit instructions—his only direct order was to "be merciful"—he had a clear vision of the universal Gospel: "the gospel is preached to every creature under heaven; which is the

[16] Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados*, 39. For a more in depth biography of Col. Lewis Morris, see Block, *Ordinary Lives in the Early Caribbean*, pt. 4; Kristen Block, "Faith and Fortune: Religious Identity and the Politics of Profit in the Seventeenth-century Caribbean" (Ph.D., Rutgers University, 2007), 225; Kristen Block, "Cultivating Inner and Outer Plantations: Property, Industry, and Slavery in Early Quaker Migration to the New World," *Early American Studies, An Interdisciplinary Journal* 8, no. 3 (2010): 515–548.

[17] In 1656, for example, Henry Fell wrote that he was "abused & beaten" on his was to see Col. Morris in his house. When he informed Morris of what had transpired, Morris "tould me he would have the men before the Governour & sayd that ye Governour he was sure would punish them & would not suffer any to abuse me if he knew of it." Henry Fell to Margaret Fell, 19/10/1656. FHL Swarthmore Mss 1.67.

power that giveth liberty and freedom, and is glad tidings to every captivated creature under the whole heaven."[18] The 1657 Epistle reflected Fox's conviction that the spirit was universal, yet it is important to note that he never questioned the social hierarchy that allowed Friends to have "Blacks and Indian Slaves." The social hierarchy was acceptable as long as Friends embraced spiritual equality.

The distinction between social and spiritual equality is also evident in Fox's approach to language. In his book on grammar, entitled *A Battle-door for Teachers & Professors to Learn Singular & Plural*," Fox elaborated upon his belief that Friends should change their speech to embrace the informal pronoun "thou" while disregarding the more formal "you." The pronoun "you" was originally the second personal plural in English, but it had become standard as a way to address a singular individual as a form of respect. Fox argued that the use of "you" to address individuals was a "popish" invention and that true Christians should purge it from their speech. Fox argued that the distinction between "thou" and "you" was in conflict with the Quaker belief that "God is no respecter of persons." Using the pronoun "you" was too deferential and it paid homage to worldly political and social distinctions:

> And now you that say *thou* to your servants of mean account (as you call it) and *you* to your servants of the better rank, and *your worship* to all others…Ye who through your ambition speak contrary to your own Grammars, Teaching and Bible; and so are fallen into respect of persons, saying to your Negers and Slaves *thou,* but to your better servants *ye* or *you,* and to one another *your worship;* Is not this the Antichrist, who is exalted above all that is called God?[19]

Fox's critique of English pronouns provides another perspective on his ideas about slavery and

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[18] George Fox, "To Friends Beyond the Sea That Have Blacks and Indian Slaves," in *Selections from the Epistles of George Fox*, ed. Samuel Tuke (Trustees of Obadiah Brown's Benevolent Fund, 1879), 64–5.

[19] George Fox, John Stubbs, and Benjamin Furly, *A Battle-door for Teachers & Professors to Learn Singular & Plural You to Many, and Thou to One, Singular One, Thou, Plural Many, You* (London: Printed for Robert Wilson, 1660), 6.

spiritual equality. Here, he *seems* to support an egalitarian view of society, disregarding social distinctions by promoting the universal use of the informal pronoun "thou," but his theology actually accepts social hierarchy. Fox did not urge Friends to emancipate their "Negers and Slaves"; he simply reminded them that even the lowliest slave was spiritually equal to his or her master in the eyes of God.

Aside from Fox's two references to "Negers and Slaves," the only other commentary on Quaker slavery during this period came from Richard Pinder, a Friend who published a *Loving Invitation (To Repentance and Amendment of life) Unto all the Inhabitants of the Island of Barbadoes* in 1660. Pinder warned "Masters, and Owners of the severall Plantations" who have "Slaves, and Bond-Men" that "they are of the same Blood, and Mould, you are of," and that they should not be allowed to "perish, or suffer." Pinder also advised Masters to prevent their overseers from "rul[ing] in such Tyranny over your Negroes." "If you do," he continued, "you will bring blood upon you, and the cry of their blood shall enter into the eares of the Lord of the Sabbath...and it shall cause his wrath to break forth upon you..." By criticizing the increasing brutality of the labor system in Barbados, Pinder sought to reform slavery, not to end it. He, like Fox, aimed to make slave owning – and indentured servitude – compatible with Christian discipline and he believed that excessive violence undermined the order of society and threatened the stability of Christian households.[20]

Both Fox's texts and Pinder's *Loving Invitation* suggest that Quakers never questioned the legitimacy of slavery as an institution during the mid seventeenth century. Instead, they sought to reform slave-holding practices by making them more Christian. Fox reminded Friends that even their lowliest "Negers and Slaves" should be treated with the same respect as people of higher rank

[20] Richard Pinder, *A Loving Invitation (to Repentance, and Amendment of Life) Unto All the Inhabitants of the Island Barbados Before the Lords Sore Judgements Come Upon Them, Which Is Seen to Be Nigh, and Which They Cannot Escape, Except Fruits Meet for Repentance, and Amendment of Life Be Brought Forth. With Somthing More Particularly to the Heads, and Owners, of the Several Plantations.* (London: Printed for Robert Wilson, 1660).

while Pinder, who had more experience with Caribbean slavery, criticized the brutality of Atlantic slavery and warned slave masters not to "rule in Tyranny." Such violence, he argued, would cause God's wrath "to break forth."

*Quaker Sufferings*

Aside from Fox's texts and Pinder's *Loving Invitations*, Quakers were largely silent on the issue of slavery until Fox's visit to the West Indies in 1671. Yet Friends were certainly not silent about their own sufferings. After Cromwell's death and the beginning of Restoration in England, colonial governments began to pass laws against Quakers and other dissenters. In Barbados, the first anti-Quaker law was passed in 1660, just as Restoration was beginning in England. Within the space of four sentences, the Barbados Council announced not only that the "patents from Oliver or Richard Cromwell [were] declared…to be void," but also named "Reasons…against the being and sect of the Quakers within Barbadoes" and "[imposed] fines…upon all willfully refusing to serve in military affairs."[21] Aside from their refusal to bear arms, which was the primary reason for their persecution, Quakers drew scorn on two other counts: their refusal to take oaths, and their refusal to pay church dues. Quakers also interrupted Anglican services and created resentment among the Anglican clergymen living on the island.[22] Joseph Besse, a Quaker hagiographer who recorded his people's sufferings around the world, documented 237 cases of Quaker persecution in Barbados between 1658 and 1695.[23]

Friends were either fined or sent to prison for their disobedience. Most of the Quaker "sufferers" were men, although there are some cases of female persecution, like that of Elizabeth

[21] CSP, Vol. 1 (1660), no. 2646, 483.

[22] Campbell, *The Church in Barbados in the Seventeenth Century*, 73.

[23] Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 104.

Piersehouse, a widow who was fined 1500 lbs. of sugar "for not sending Men to serve in the Militia."[24] Fines were paid in sugar, slaves, or both. Though sugar was the more common fine, Richard Gay was forced to give up "one of his best Negro Men and one Horse, appraised at 7500 lb. of Sugar…for not sending his People to help build Forts, and for what they called Church-dues." The fate of the seized slaves is unclear, though the individuals who collected the fines probably kept them. In the Gay case, Besse reported that "John Steart and Nathanael Maverich, Commissioners," ordered the seizure while "Joseph Hobbs, Constable," made the collection. "The whole [fine]," Besse continued, was "by them kept."[25]

In Besse's *Collection of Sufferings*, which were compiled in the eighteenth century but based on correspondence from the seventeenth, one sees the uncontroversial nature of slave holding among Quakers in Barbados. Slaves are, like other commodities, taken from the possession of Friends in retribution for their refusal to pay tithes or support the militia. But Besse's *Collection* is also evidence of an important institutional development within Quakerism in the 1660s and 1670s: the effort to record and catalogue the sufferings of Friends, which culminated in 1675 with the establishment of the London-based "Meeting for Sufferings" that lobbied the King and Parliament on behalf of Friends in the British Isles and abroad. The collection of sufferings reflected and reinforced a tendency among Quakers to see themselves as victims of the world. By focusing on the sufferings inflicted upon their own kind, Quakers strengthened their identity as a religious group but neglected to develop an institutional structure that recognized the sufferings of others.

[24] Joseph Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (London: Printed and sold by Luke Hinde, 1753).

[25] Ibid.

*Slaves and the Quaker Household*

The effort to catalogue sufferings was part of a broader attempt to solidify an institutional structure of Monthly, Quarterly and Yearly Meetings for Friends. In the late 1660s, George Fox and other Quaker leaders wrote to all Friends and urged them to establish regular meetings and to inform the London Yearly Meeting of their questions, concerns, and activities. As Frederick Tolles has written, these Meetings "provided the real foundation for the structure of Quaker church government whose apex was the Yearly Meeting at London."[26] When George Fox travelled to Barbados in 1671, his primary intention was to solidify the institutional structure of Quakerism by "[bringing] the transatlantic Quaker communities into line with the Society at home, both in practice and Church government."[27]

Fox's trip to Barbados had far-reaching consequences. It was the first time that the Quaker leader had visited the West Indies, and it had a profound effect on his ideas about slavery. While Fox had reminded Friends in 1657 that "all nations" were of "one blood," he did not actually instruct Friends on how to act on this conviction. After a month in Barbados, however, Fox gave a sermon to Friends on the island in which he updated his reaction to slavery using metaphors of order, authority, and familial structure. The sermon, which was later published under the title *Gospel Family-Order, Being a Short Discourse Concerning the Ordering of Families, both of Whites, Blacks and Indians*, critiqued both Quakers and slaves and focused on the family as the primary object of reformation. Fox was troubled that "Families were not brought into Order," and he specified slave behavior as particularly worrisome. Like later Protestant missionaries, Fox was concerned that many enslaved

[26] Frederick Barnes Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York: Octagon Books, 1980), chap. 2. I agree with Tolles' argument that the early Quakers, though they believed in individual revelation, were not "individualistic." Comparing the Quaker community to a body, Tolles identified the itinerant ministry as its "bloodstream" and the hierarchy of meetings as its "bony structure." Ibid., 29.

[27] Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 267.

African did not practice monogamy and that men often had more than one wife. As he wrote in *Gospel Family Order*, "God made…Male and Female, not one Man and many Women, but a Man and a Woman."[28]

Fox's focus on family order was representative of a larger development within Quakerism. In 1652, George Fox travelled to Swarthmore Hall, the home of Margaret Fell. Swarthmore Hall became the vital center for a dispersed network of itinerant Quaker preachers. In their communications, Margaret Fell and George Fox took on the roles of the Mother and Father for the children of Truth. The earliest letters from Friends in Barbados display this developing familial network within the transatlantic Quaker community. In the mid-1650s, Mary Fisher wrote to George Fox as her "deare father" and identified herself as "thy child begotten into the truth."[29] Henry Fell, another early missionary to Barbados, wrote, "we are of one houshould, & have one ffather whose care is over all & provides for all, and soe are all his children like unto him."[30]

When Fox aimed to organize the fledging sect into an ordered denomination, the ideal of the household took on increased significance.[31] Since Fox envisioned the true Christian life to be one that included a godly household, slave "polygamy" was not only immoral; it was a threat to the most fundamental Quaker institution. The only solution was to reform the household from the inside out. The process required the conversion and reformation of every individual. Thus Fox's command to

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[28] Fox, *Gospel Family-Order*.

[29] Mary Fisher to George Fox, 30 March 1755[?]. FHL Swarthmore Mss. 4.193

[30] Henry Fell to Margaret Fell, 3/9/1656. FHL Swarthmore Mss. 1.66

[31] As Barry Levy has written, "Swarthmore Hall provided a model for the ideal Quaker family…Private experience of the Truth led to new tenderness and sharing in the household. As people warmed to each other, the religious experiences grew deeper, which led to more tender sharing…servants and blood relatives also discovered the magic of uniting "holy conversation" and family life, especially when that family life was charismatically guided by a comely and truly spiritual woman." Barry Levy, *Quakers and the American Family: British Settlement in the Delaware Valley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 68.

"preach the everlasting Covenant, Christ Jesus, to the *Ethyopians,* the *Blacks* and the *Tawny-Moors*…in your families" was an urgent one because the fate of the master depended on the piety of his subordinates. Introducing slaves to Christianity not only allow enslaved Africans to "be free Men indeed" – it would also allow slave-owning Quaker families to mimic the piety of Swarthmore Hall, the ideal Quaker household.[32]

Due to Fox's influence, at least some Friends took steps to carry the gospel to their slaves. In December of 1671, while Fox was still on the island, John Stubbs wrote to Margaret Fell Fox:

> The truth is frely preached both to white people and black people Solomon and I have had severall meetings among ye Negroes in ye plantations…But thy husband…hath had more then any of us we feel the lords presence and power in that service as well as [when] we speake among the white people &c…Thy husband had ye first meeting wth them. And then after a while it fell upon me and Sollomon and it was a great crosse at ye first but now its made more easy.[33]

As Stubbs acknowledged, it was Fox who "had ye first meeting wth [blacks]." This suggests that prior to Fox's visit, Friends had made no active effort to convert their slaves to Christianity. Stubbs also confirmed that Friends continued to meet with blacks after Fox's departure, although this had been "a great cross at ye first." The difficulty that Stubbs had proselytizing to blacks is not surprising, given the disparities in culture, language and social position that divided Friends from their slaves. As a result, it is difficult to know how effective their meetings may have been, though Stubbs insists that they had been "made more easy" with time.

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[32] Fox, *Gospel Family-Order*. Fox also encouraged Friends to limit the terms of their slaves. While some have argued that this is evidence of nascent antislavery sentiment, it is better understood as an attempt to modify and reform the slave system. In the late seventeenth-century, slavery was still in the process of becoming defined as life-long, inheritable and race-based. Seventeenth-century Quakers, a number of whom had been slaves as well, would have been particularly attuned to the malleable definition of slavery at the time.

[33] John Stubbs to Margaret Fox, 2 December 1671. FHL Abraham Mss. 15

Later missionaries also mentioned the slave meetings in their travel narratives. In 1691, Joan Vokins included the following description in her published account, *God's Mighty Power Magnified: As Manifested and Revealed in his Faithful Handmaid*:

> And when I arrived, I met with many Friends in Bridg-Town…most Days I had two or three Meetings of a Day, both among the Blacks, and also among the White People: And the Power of the Lord Jesus was mightily manifested, so that my Soul was often melted therewith, even in the Meetings of the Negro's or Blacks, as well as among Friends. And when I had gone through the Island, and was clear, having been well refreshed with Friends, in the feeling of the Heavenly Power; and in the strength of the same I came aboard the Ship for my Native Land again.[34]

From these sources, it is clear that Friends on Barbados made a concerted effort to organize Meetings for their slaves, though it is less clear how their slaves responded to these efforts. Indeed, there is a significant and persistent lack of information about the actual functioning of the slave owning Quaker household. No meeting records have survived from the West Indies, but there are dozens of surviving epistles and letters. These documents, however, tend to rely on conventional expressions of love and tenderness and never venture into pointed observations of Barbadian slavery or slave culture.

While there is little evidence from the West Indies regarding how the slave-owning Quaker family functioned, a small number of records have survived from Quaker settlements elsewhere in the Atlantic World. Friends in North America used their connections to Barbados to import slaves into Maryland, Virginia, East and West Jersey and, after 1682, Pennsylvania.[35] Like Barbadian

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[34] Joan Vokins, *God's Mighty Power Magnified as Manifested and Revealed in His Faithful Handmaid Joan Vokins, Who Departed This Life the 22d of the 5th Month, 1690, Having Finished Her Course, and Kept the Faith: Also Some Account of Her Exercises, Works of Faith, Labour of Love, and Great Travels in the Work of the Ministry, for the Good of Souls* (London: Printed for Thomas Northcott, 1691), 43. See also Hilary Hinds, "An Absent Presence: Quaker Narratives of Journeys to America and Barbados, 1671-81," *Quaker Studies* 10, no. 1 (September 2005): 14.

[35] Quakers settled in Maryland as early as 1658. Like their co-religionists in Barbados, they were quickly persecuted for their refusal to take oaths and support the militia, but they were not persecuted for any attempts to convert their slaves. On Quakerism in Maryland, see Kenneth L. Carroll, "Maryland Quakers in the Seventeenth Century," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 100, no. 1

Quakers, they struggled to bring slavery in line with their religious discipline. In Maryland, Quakers congregated in Annapolis, Somerset and what is now known as Talbot County. Many of the Friends who settled on the Eastern Shore had worked the favorite Quaker circuits of the day. Wenlock Christison, one of the most influential leaders of Maryland Friends, had spent time in Barbados and been sentenced to hang in Boston before he settled in Maryland. Christison used his ties with Friends in other colonies to acquire "some negroes…out of Barbadoes."[36]

Like Friends elsewhere, North American Quakers sought to balance their anti-war testimony with the increasingly brutal norms associated with slave control and punishment. These tensions came to the fore in 1699 when Nathan Newbie, a member of the Chuckatuck Meeting in Lower Virginia, was accused of beating his slave to death. In a letter addressed to the mens' and womens' Meetings at Chuckatuck, he defended himself:

> Whearas There hath been many Scandalous Reports that I have been the death of my negroe: this is to satisfie all persons that will belive the truth of the matter that I doe solemly declare in the presence of God that I never intended his death neither did I give him any Blow wch I thought might Take his life but this I must Confese that not many days before hee died I did Correct him sharply hee giveing mee great occation for the same.[37]

Newbie's letter speaks to an aspect of Quakers and slavery that is rarely discussed: the problem of violence within the slave owning Quaker family. Since most scholars interested in Quakers and slavery focus on anti-slavery, the experiences of Quaker slave owners, which include the difficulty of

(2005): 81–96. For the slave trade in Pennsylvania, see Darold D. Wax, "Quaker Merchants and the Slave Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 86, no. 2 (April 1, 1962): 143–159; Darold Wax, "The Negro Slave Trade in Colonial Pennsylvania" (PhD, University of Washington, 1962).

[36] "Third Haven Monthly Meeting Minutes 1676-1871," 2/7/1681. HQC HV Film 73; SW Box 132.

[37] "Lower Virginia Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1673-1723" (Carbon Copy), 11/8/1699. HQC HV 1116/Box HW-43.

keeping a peace testimony while disciplining slaves, are rarely mentioned.[38] It seems that Friends tolerated a certain amount of violence within households but that Newbie crossed the line: the death of his slave, just days after he had been "corrected," meant that he had gone too far.

Newbie claimed to be sorry for what he had done, though he seemed more sorry that his name had been sullied:

> [S]orrow did Arise in mee wch was not easly Removed. Upon this the Enemy of mens soul came in like A flood and sharp Triall I and greauicus [grievous] Temptations for A Long Time I was Under hee indeavering by his Craft to begett mee into deadnes and Coldnes this and the black Clouds of infamous Reports wch hanged over mee.[39]

It was the "infamous Reports" of his actions that bothered Newbie more than the death of his "negroe." Still, it is clear that he been too brutal in his treatment of his slave, and the members of his Meeting presumably disciplined him (the Minutes do not include systematic information on discipline). Yet despite his transgressions, Newbie remained a Friend. In 1707, eight years after writing his letter of defense, Newbie became a traveling minister. Even then, he had problems with his reputation. Though the minutes to not say why, they record that "some friends [were] Disattisfied as concerns Nathan Newby's testimony."[40] Eventually, Newbie was approved for the ministry, but other Friends continued to have doubts about him.

The Newbie episode shed light on the difficulties that Quakers had even when they accepted slavery. How, for example, should a Quaker slaveholder treat his or her slave? How should slaves be disciplined? And how could the Quaker community maintain its' peace testimony in a slave society?

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[38] Michael Goode's recent dissertation is one of the only studies to address this relationship between Quaker peace testimony and colonial violence. See Michael John Goode, "Gospel Order Among Friends: Colonial Violence and the Peace Testimony in Quaker Pennsylvania, 1681-1722" (Ph.D., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2012).

[39] "Lower Virginia Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1673-1723 (Carbon Copy)," 11/8/1699. HQC HV 1116/Box HW-43.

[40] "Lower Virginia Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1673-1723 (Carbon Copy)," 9/8/1707. HQC HV 1116/Box HW-43.

These questions followed Quakers into Pennsylvania. As new settlers set up households, farms and shops in the Delaware Valley, slaves became a common presence in Pennsylvania Quaker households. Meeting Minutes rarely mentioned slaves or servants, but again, an anomaly provides insight into one Quaker community in newly founded Pennsylvania. In April 1693, the Dublin Monthly Meeting noted:

> The business conserning John Gilberts Commiting adultery with ye Widdow fforres Negro, as is Comonly reported, being debated & several circumstances appearing of his bad behaviour with other women, The judgment of ye Meeting is, that he is not a clear man: and therefore is requested to give forth a paper of Condomnation for ye clearing of truth & ffriends and till such tim as he do it ffriends can have no Unity with him.[41]

This disciplinary minute represents the only reference to a specific slave or free black in the entire Minute book for the Dublin Monthly Meeting. In it, John Gilberts is disowned by the meeting for "bad behavior" with women. The first proof of his bad behavior is that he had committed "adultery with ye Widdow fforres Negro," a woman who was never named in the record. Though the note did not mention the legal status of this woman, it is clear that she belonged to the Widow Ffores, implying that she was enslaved. The minute then proceeded to reveal Gilberts' relation with the Widow's slave had been "debated" by members of the meeting. Only then is it revealed that Gilberts had also behaved badly with "other women." The Meeting deemed Gilberts out of unity, but it is clear that his relations with "ye Widdow fforres Negro" were of the most interest to Friends. The imbalance in reporting suggests that the Abington Friends were uncomfortable with the place of black slaves in their households and communities. They condemned all types of adultery, but adultery with a slave was more threatening to the community because it undermined the patriarchal family and transgressed an unwritten, still-evolving racial boundary.

While Friends struggled to balance the tension between their religious convictions and the physically and sexually violent practices associated with Atlantic slavery, how did enslaved men and

[41] "Abington Monthly Meeting (Mens) Minutes 1682-1746," 27/1/1693. HQC HV Film 138A.

women respond to becoming "members" of Quaker households? Following the work of Kristen Block, I suggest that historians must build on a variety of historical sources, from literature on West African cultural and religious practices, to hints about a particular slave's background, in order to gain insight into the experiences of enslaved people in Quaker families. Scholars must use their imaginations carefully but aggressively to consider the variety of responses enslaved Africans may have had to Quaker proselytizing. If Quakers had, as George Fox prescribed, taught their slaves about Quaker doctrine, for example, what would theological terms such as the "indwelling Christ" have meant to Africans and creoles in the West Indies? It is possible that Quaker theology, which focused on a "spirit" that could commune directly with an individual, could have been easily adapted into the Coromantee belief system, which was centered on a variety of greater and lesser spirits (*obosum* and *sumang*) that could be harnessed by individuals for good or evil purposes.[42] If the Quaker Spirit was interpreted as a type of *obosum* or *sumang*, Quaker meetings among slaves may have taken a form similar to Coromantee religious ceremonies, led by an *obeah* man who now dealt in Quaker Spirit, *obosum* and *sumang*. Alternatively, if Friends urged enslaved men and women to meet separately from whites, slaves may have used unsupervised Quaker meetings for political purposes. They could have discussed options for revolt, escape or a post-rebellion form of government, as well as other strategies for improving their situation. Meetings may also have performed both religious and political functions.

In her innovative study of Quakers and slavery on Barbados, Kristen Block used a combination of historical sources and careful elaboration to imagine how two enslaved Africans, Nell and Yaff, might have responded to the Quaker faith. Nell and Yaff were both enslaved to Lewis Morris, a wealthy and prominent Quaker living on Barbados in the late seventeenth century.

[42] John K Thornton, "War, the State, and Religious Norms in 'Coromantee' Thought: The Ideology of an African American Nation," in *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America*, ed. Robert Blair St George (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000), 192.

Nell and Yaff are mentioned only once in the written record when they are both described as "faithful" servants in Morris' will. Building on research done on African ethnicities and Quaker practice, Block imagined the lives and experiences of Yaff and Nell within Morris' Quaker household. She suggested that Nell and Yaff may have been attracted to points of overlap between West African and Quaker religiosity, and that these similarities may have helped them forge religious bonds with their master. The centrality of dreams and portents, the Quaker denunciation of the white planter "Pride, Drunkennesses, Covetousness, Oppression and deceitful-dealings," and the society's rules of deference that leveled social distinctions may all have contributed to Nell and Yaff's interest in Quakerism.[43] Block's research suggests that enslaved men and women could take an interest in Quaker practice for both religious and social reasons, and that there were a handful of common characteristics between Quaker and Afro-Caribbean practices.

While some domestic slaves may have participated in Quaker meetings and family-based worship sessions, Friends never succeeded in spreading their faith to the enslaved population at large. Their failure can partially be attributed to their preoccupation with behavioral and cultural practices such as marriage, which led Friends to spend more time disciplining their slaves' behavior than evangelizing. The Quaker rejection of sacramental practices such as baptism may also have weakened the attraction of their faith. Later Protestant missionaries like the Moravians found that baptismal ceremonies were often in high demand among the enslaved population. Without such rituals, Quakerism may have appeared to be ineffectual and unattractive. Finally, Quaker evangelists failed to provide enslaved men and women with leadership roles within their religious communities. By emphasizing the patriarchal family and the role of the master in cultivating a godly household, Friends reaffirmed and strengthened the system of slavery while weakening their appeal to the enslaved.

[43] Block, *Ordinary Lives in the Early Caribbean*, 157.

*Atlantic Repercussions: Anglican Discourses on Slavery and the Quaker Negro Act*

When George Fox called for the conversion of slaves in Barbados, he helped to spark a debate on both sides of the Atlantic about the relationship between Protestantism and slavery. The debate demonstrated a growing distance between the Anglican clergy in the West Indies and the Bishop of London. As increasing numbers of ecclesiastical and governmental representatives in England expressed concern about the lack of evangelization to the enslaved population in the colonies, planters in Barbados and elsewhere showed increasing resistance to slave conversion. The second major effect of Fox's new doctrine emerged in 1676, after the island's planters survived an attempted slave revolt. In the wake of the attempted rebellion, Barbadian planters blamed Quaker proselytizing for slave unrest and passed a new law to prevent Quakers from bringing slaves to their meetings. The Quaker Negro Act, as it was called, linked Quaker Meetings with slaves to the threat of rebellion and heightened Protestant planter fears about the dangers of slave conversion.

Fox's stance on slavery and evangelism crystallized upon his return to England, when he published a pamphlet in response to his experience in Barbados, an eighty-page diatribe addressed *To the ministers, teachers and priests (so-called and so stiling your-selves) in Barbadoes.* In addition to berating the non-Quaker spiritual leaders for immoral behavior and the disorderly nature of non-Quaker English households, Fox attacked the Anglican ministry for refusing to convert slaves and Indians, asking, "And if you be Ministers of Christ, are you not Teachers of Blacks and Taunies (to wit, Indians) as well as of the Whites? For, is not the Gospel to be preached to all Creatures?" By making evangelization the lynchpin of his attack on the Anglican Church in Barbados, Fox inserted himself

into the dialogue about the relationship between Protestantism and slavery.[44] The publication of *Gospel Family Order* in 1676 further emphasized Fox's insistence on slave conversion.

The debate about the religious lives of slaves in the English Empire had been going on for at least fifteen years before Fox published *To the Ministers*. With the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the Church of England finally clarified its position on slave conversion and made it clear that all slave owners should actively seek to convert their slaves to Christianity. In 1661, the British Parliament instructed Lord Willoughby, the reinstated governor of Barbados, to "[win] such as are purchased…as slaves to the Christian faith and [make] them capable of being baptized thereinto."[45] Lord Willoughby complied with this request and in 1663, introduced a bill "recommending the christening of Negro children, and the instruction of all adult Negroes, to the several ministers of this place."[46] Despite these instructions, the ruling planter class in Barbados ignored the bill.

The gulf between metropole and colony would only grow wider with the added influence of George Fox and the Quakers.[47] Indeed, Fox's remarks produced different reactions on either side of the Atlantic. Morgan Godwyn, an Anglican clergyman who visited Virginia and Barbados in the 1670s, argued that blacks and Indians could and should be converted to Christianity in *The Negro's and Indians' Advocate* (1680). *The Negro's and Indians' Advocate* was a direct response not only to the plantation life Godwyn had observed in the Americas, but also to Fox's invective against the ministers and preachers of Barbados. Godwyn joined Fox in his sharp criticism of the clergy in

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[44] George Fox, *To the Ministers, Teachers, and Priests, (so Called, and so Stileing Your Selves) in Barbadoes* ([London: s.n.], 1672).

[45] "Minutes of the Council for Foreign Plantations," 11 February 1661. CSP, Vol. 5 (1661-1668), no. 24, 6-7.

[46] "Minutes of the Council of Barbadoes," 23 November 1663. CSP, Vol. 5 (1661-1668), no. 587, 169

[47] Campbell, *The Church in Barbados in the Seventeenth Century*, 82–3.

Barbados who refused to baptize slaves or teach them the gospel. Blacks, he wrote, were allowed only in "the most distant part of the [Christian] meeting place…the necessity and benefit whereof they were never taught."[48] Also like Fox, Morgan did not suggest an end to slavery but argued that Christian slaves would be more obedient.

In order to develop his argument, Godwyn recounted his discovery of Fox's pamphlet. The anecdote, which is described in the introduction to Godwyn's 174-page text, explains how "a petty Reformado Pamphlet was put into my hand by an officious FRIEND, or Quaker of this Island." Godwyn then quoted Fox's pamphlet for a full two pages, admitting that the "Quakers Harangue," as he called it, made him "question with my self, If the gospel be *good Tidings*, why should it be concealed, or hid?"[49] With this chastening introduction, Godwyn then proceeded to make his argument that "the Negro's (both slaves and others) have an *equal Right* with other men to the Exercise and Privileges of Religion; of which 'tis most unjust in any part to deprive them."

Godwyn's choice to begin *The Negro's and Indians Advocate* with a lengthy quotation from Fox's *To the ministers* demonstrates how the Quaker name could be invoked to motivate the Anglican audience in England. It also shows how Quakers were being identified with the position to convert slaves to Christianity. Godwyn's use of Fox's pamphlet was intended to shame the Anglican clergy into recognizing their own failures by highlighting the virtues of their enemies.

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[48] Morgan Godwyn, *The Negro's [and] Indians Advocate, Suing for Their Admission into the Church: Or A Persuasive to the Instructing and Baptizing of the Negro's and Indians in Our Plantations. Shewing, That as the Compliance Therewith Can Prejudice No Mans Just Interest; so the Wilful Neglecting and Opposing of It, Is No Less Than a Manifest Apostacy from the Christian Faith. To Which Is Added, a Brief Account of Religion in Virginia* (London: Printed by J[ohn] D[arby], 1680); Campbell, *The Church in Barbados in the Seventeenth Century*, 88.

[49] Godwyn, *The Negro's [and] Indians Advocate, Suing for Their Admission into the Church*, 4–6.

*Parliamentary Efforts to Encourage Slave Conversion*

Morgan Godwyn wrote *The Negro's and Indians Advocate* sometime between 1672 and 1675. His timing coincided with the introduction of a series of bills in Parliament that encouraged the conversion of slaves.[50] These documents, which were recently discovered among the papers of Robert Boyle, are not attributed to a particular author, but it is possible that Godwyn penned the documents himself. Among other potential authors are Sir Robert Southwell, who discussed the issues of slavery and Christianity with Godwyn, and Robert Boyle.[51] Either way, the arguments used to support slave conversion in the bills are reminiscent of *The Negro's and Indians Advocate* and the presence of the draft bills shows that ideas similar to those articulated in *The Negro's and Indians Advocate* were circulating in England.

The parliamentary bills, which were drafted in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, show how Anglicans responded to the troubling descriptions of colonial Christianity circulated by Fox and Godwyn. Instead of attacking colonial ministers, as Fox and Godwyn had, the authors of these documents responded to anti-conversion sentiment by confirming the legality of Christian slavery. The draft of one bill, entitled "An Act on Barbados," noted that "few or none of [the slaves in Barbados] are or are like to be converted to the Christian Religion because if they are soe converted they become free." The bill concluded that in order to "encourag[e slaves] to turn to and receive the Christian Religion," slave owners must be assured that they would "not loose their property." The most expedient solution to promote slave conversion would be for Parliament to confirm that "all and every Negroe and Negroes…who shall turne to the

[50] Though many of the bills are undated, Paley, Malcolmson and Hunter date them to the period after Restoration and before 1688. Ruth Paley, Cristina Malcolmson, and Michael Hunter, "Parliament and Slavery, 1660-c.1710," *Slavery & Abolition* 31, no. 2 (June 2010): 257–281.

[51] The documents are reprinted in Ibid. Paley, Malcolmson and Hunter tentatively link Godwyn to these bills. See Ibid., 261–2.

Christian faith and be baptized" would remain the property of their owners "as if they had never turned to the Christian faith or been baptized."[52] A later draft was more pointed in its attempt to convince slave owners to overcome their hesitation to convert their slaves. "An Act to remove certain discouragments & Hinderances of the Conversion of the Infidels" echoed Fox's appeal to the "Masters of Families" by calling on their sense of "Duty" to "take care of their Families and Servants." The document warned that it was not only a "great Reproach to the Church of England" to keep slaves ignorant of Christianity, but could also "provoke some severe judgment of God."[53] A third document, which compiled a series of "Proposals for the propagating of the Christian Religion and converting the Slaves, whether Negroes or Indians, in the English plantations," addressed more specific issues that were raised by Fox and Godwyn. Regarding the question of slave marriage, the authors concluded that if Christian Slaves were "marry'd," they should "not be sold separately, nor dispos'd of or transported, but so as they may live together, or so near to one another, as that they may live a Christian & conjugal life." The document also proposed some checks to a master's cruel treatment, and stated that all masters must "not only allow their slaves to be instructed, but be oblig'd to take some suitable care to cause or instruct & catechise their Slaves in the Principles of the Christian Religion."[54]

Although these two documents sought to protect slaves and reform slave holding practices by limiting the power of masters, a final bill returned to an apologist stance by emphasizing a master's right to his enslaved property even after baptism. This bill, drafted sometime between 1702 and 1714, declared that "no Negro or other Servant who shall hereafter be baptiz'd, shall be thereby

[52] Paley, Malcolmson, and Hunter, "Parliament and Slavery, 1660-c.1710," 268–9.

[53] Ibid., 269–71.

[54] Ibid., 271.

Enfranchis'd."[55] Found among the papers of Thomas Tenison, the archbishop of Canterbury at the time, this document suggests that by the turn of the century, Fox's and Godwyn's concerns about slave conversion had instigated a broad attempt to confirm the legality of Christian slavery in the English Parliament. While the bills were unsuccessful, their presence illustrates the existence of an extensive and far-reaching debate about the role of Protestantism and slavery in the English Atlantic that reached the upper echelons of the ecclesiastical and political hierarchy of the English government.

While these early bills did not specifically mention George Fox's *To the Ministers*, a later document reinforced the significance of the Quaker specter in Anglican debates about Christianity and slavery. In 1710, *The Observer*, a Whig newspaper, published an imaginary conversation between "A Gentleman" and *The Observer*. In response to the Gentleman's question about whether the issue of slavery and Christianity had every been raised before, the *Observer* answered:

> We had a Book printed many Years since, call'd, *The Negroes and Indians Advocate*; and a Supplement to it afterwards, by M.G. a Presbyter of the Church of England…And our Ministers in Barbadoes, were upbraided by the Quakers there, whom they would not allow to be Christians, and ask'd by them, Who made you Ministers of the Gospel to the white People only, and not to the Tawneys and Blacks also? So that in short, by this more than heathenish Practice, we not only become a Reproach to all that bear the Christian Name, but even to the Pagans themselves, who by this, and our barbarous Usage of them, are strengthen'd in their Aversion to our holy Religion.[56]

As these documents suggest, George Fox's endorsement of slave conversion and his attack on the Anglican clergy aided the development of a pro-conversion discourse in England. Fox's pamphlet incited Morgan Godwyn into action. Godwyn, in turn, used the Quakers rhetorically to motivate his readers. Although the efforts of Godwyn and other concerned Anglicans did not lead to a successful bill in Parliament, the debate had long-term implications for the role of Christianity in the British

[55] Ibid., 271–2.

[56] Ibid., 275.

Empire. Specifically, it linked the argument for slave conversion, propagated by Fox and Godwyn, with an adamantly pro-slavery position that sought to reaffirm the rights of slave owners by divorcing Protestantism from freedom and affirming that Christian slaves were still the legal property of their masters.[57]

*Attempted Rebellion and the Quaker Negro Act*

While Fox's message, articulated through Morgan Godwyn, had a generally positive reception in England, ministers in Barbados reacted with outrage and indignation. Following Fox's visit in 1671, six ministers sent a "Humble Petition and Address of the Clergy of Barbados" requesting the suppression of the Quakers who continued to interrupt church services and attack the Church of England for being "both in doctrine and discipline false, erroneous and anti-Christian."[58] Despite the ministers' outrage, the Barbados Council took no action against Quaker proselytizing. Their inaction suggests that, as late as 1672, the Barbados Council did not share the same concerns as the Anglican ministers.[59]

The Barbados Council was more interesting in preventing a slave rebellion than keeping Quakers from proselytizing to their slaves. While the Quakers were preaching conversion and practicing disobedience, the Barbados Council was in the process of creating and implementing new slave laws and strengthening the militia. Their Slave Codes of 1661 and 1688, which would later be used as a model for slave laws in Jamaica and Antigua, were characterized by "tyranny and the need

[57] Travis Glasson makes a similar argument regarding the Yorke-Talbot Opinion of 1729. See Glasson, "'Baptism Doth Not Bestow Freedom'."

[58] Cited in Campbell, *The Church in Barbados in the Seventeenth Century*, 73.

[59] Cited in Ibid., 72.

for constant vigilance" and "built on mutual fear and suspicion."[60] Reinforcing a militia system that had been in place since the 1630s and 1640s, the Council called on all "planters and Christian servants" to be "provided with arms, mustered and trained with power in case of insurrection."[61] The militia was responsible for patrolling the island, searching slave quarters, hunting runaway slaves, and building forts, of which there were probably multiple. Unfortunately for historians, the only Surveyor on Barbados was Richard Forde, a convinced Quaker who refused to include the military forts on his 1673/4 map of the island, so there is no way to know exactly how many forts existed in the 1670s.[62]

While the Barbados Council seemed unconcerned with Quaker proselytizing in 1672, their position changed three years later in the wake of an attempted slave rebellion that rocked the small island. In May of 1675, a group of enslaved male Africans planned to take over the island and crown "an ancient Gold-coast Negro" named Cuffy as the king of the island.[63] The plot, which was to occur on June 12, 1675, was for slaves to kill their English masters and take control of the island. It was to be executed at night, coordinated by "trumpets…of elephants teeth and gourdes [which were] to be sounded on several hills."[64] After successfully taking control of the island, Cuffy was to be crowned "in a chair of state." Jerome Handler has suggested that Cuffy "may have been an *obeah*

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[60] Hilary Beckles, *Black Rebellion in Barbados: The Struggle Against Slavery, 1627-1838* (Bridgetown, Barbados: Antilles Publications, 1984).

[61] Cited in Ibid., 31.

[62] "Governor Sir Jonathan Atkins to Lords of Trade and Plantations," May 21, 1680. CSP, Vol. 10 (1677-1680), no. 1362, 532-536.

[63] Anon., *Great Newes from the Barbadoes, or, A True and Faithful Account of the Grand Conspiracy of the Negroes Against the English and the Happy Discovery of the Same with the Number of Those That Were Burned Alive, Beheaded, and Otherwise Executed for Their Horrid Crimes: With a Short Discription of That Plantation.* (London: Printed for L. Curtis, 1676). Women and Creoles were excluded from the plot.

[64] Cited in Jerome S. Handler, "The Barbados Slave Conspiracies of 1675 and 1692," *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 36, no. 4 (1982): 314.

man, a prominent figure among Barbados's plantation slaves" and that the chair of state "was of fundamental significance to the Ashanti and other Akan peoples as a symbol of political authority and group permanence and identity."[65] The symbolic meaning of the chair of state suggests that the rebellion, which excluded both women and creoles, was organized by first generation male slaves who gained inspiration from their experiences prior to European enslavement.

To the relief of Barbadian planters, the plot was discovered by a house slave named Anna/Fortuna two weeks before it was to take place.[66] Anna was a domestic servant in the home of Gyles Hall, one of the first settlers of South Carolina who had been in absentia for much of the 1670s.[67] One of Hall's other slaves, a young man of about eighteen from the Gold Coast, had been involved in planning the rebellion but would "[not] consent to the killing of his master" and had, as a result, returned home. According to the narratives of the rebellion, Anna/Fortuna overheard this slave "discoursing with another Cormantee Negroe working with him…*He would have no hand in killing the* Baccararoes *or White Folks*."[68] Sometime afterward, she informed her superiors. Word of the impending rebellion spread quickly among the planter class, which acted quickly and violently: 107 slaves were accused of involvement and 42 were found guilty and executed publicly. Five others

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[65] Ibid., 315.

[66] The house slave is referred to as Anna in one of the narrative sources, but as Fortuna in the *Calendar of State Papers*. Handler writes, "as was not uncommon, she easily could have been known by both names." Ibid., 313.

[67] Richard Waterhouse, *A New World Gentry: The Making of a Merchant and Planter Class in South Carolina 1670-1770* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2005), 29–30.

[68] Anon., *A Continuation of the State of New-England; Being a Farther Account of the Indian Warr, and of the Engagement Betwixt the Joynt Forces of the United English Collonies and the Indians, on the 19th. of December 1675. With the True Number of the Slain and Wounded, and the Transactions of the English Army Since the Said Fight. With All Other Passages That Have There Hapned from the 10th. of November, 1675. to the 8th. of February 1675/6. Together with an Account of the Intended Rebellion of the Negroes in the Barbadoes* (London: Printed by T.M. for Dorman Newman, 1676), 9; Anon., *Great Newes from the Barbadoes*, 10.

"hanged themselves, because they would not stand trial."[69] Anna, meanwhile, was granted her freedom "in recompense of her eminent service in discovering the intended rebellion of the negroes."[70]

Within a year, the Council of Barbados had passed a series of laws designed to secure the island against any future insurrections. In April of 1676, it added a supplement to the 1661 Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes that contained new features and specified consequences for rebellious behavior. The daily policing of slaves was increased while slaves' freedom of movement was limited. To prevent slaves from meeting without supervision, the Council revamped their ticket system by requiring "slaves leaving their estates…to carry a ticket signed by their owners." Disobedience was treated severely. A first offense carried a punishment of severe whipping, a fourth, execution.[71]

The extreme punishments were typical of a tyrannical slave regime. But the Council of Barbados also made a third unexpected move: a month before passing the "act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes," the Council passed "An Act to prevent the People called Quakers, from bringing Negroes to their Meeting."[72] This Act asserted that "many Negroes have been suffered to remain at the Meeting of Quakers as hearers of their Doctrine, and taught in their Principles, whereby the safety of this Island may be hazared." If, the act continued, "any Negro or Negroes be found with the said People called Quakers, at any time of their Meeting, and as hearers of their Preaching that such Negroe or Negroes shall be forfeited." The "seizing party" would

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[69] Cited in Handler, "The Barbados Slave Conspiracies of 1675 and 1692," 313.

[70] "Minutes of the Assembly of Barbadoes," November 25, 1675. CSP, Vol. 9, no. 712, 303.

[71] Beckles, *Black Rebellion in Barbados*, 38.

[72] CO 30/1, 94-100. The full text of the Act is available in Harriet Frorer Durham, *Caribbean Quakers* (Hollywood, FL: Dukane Press, 1972), 22–3.

receive "one-half" of the slaves seized. The same Act required all teachers on the island to take the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy before the Justice of the Peace, an initiative intended to bar Quakers from teaching, since Quaker refused to take oaths. Within a year, Ralph Fretwell was "prosecuted for eighty Negroes being present at a Meeting in his House" and Richard Sutton was taken to court "for thirty Negroes being present at a Meeting."[73]

Quakers defended themselves against Anglican attacks by arguing that conversion taught slaves to be peaceful. When William Edmunson, a Quaker minister who visited the island in 1675, was attacked by an Anglican minister named Ramsey and subsequently by Governor Atkins for "making the Negroes Christians, and [making] them rebel and cut their Throats," Edmundson replied that "[i]t was a good Work to bring them to the Knowledge of God and Christ Jesus, and to believe in him that died for them, and for all Men, and that would keep them from rebelling or cutting any Man's Throat." According to Edmundson's journal, Governor Atkins was convinced by his argument and the minister Ramsey "ask'd them Forgiveness."[74] Though this seems unlikely, given that Jonathan Atkins would, just months later, endorse the Quaker Negro Act, it demonstrates the tactics Quakers used to defend themselves against attacks: they argued that knowledge of the gospel would prevent rebellious behavior, not incite it.

Despite their argument that Christian slaves would be obedient and docile, Quakers failed to convince slave owners that they should convert their slaves and by 1680, a strongly anti-conversion opinion had been established in Barbados. Meanwhile, sentiment in England had been moving in the opposite direction. The Lords of Trade were convinced that the role of religion in the West Indies needed to be improved. When the "gentlemen of Barbados" responded to a letter from the

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[73] Besse, *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, 2:310–11.

[74] Edmundson, *A Journal of the Life, Travels, Sufferings and Labour of Love in the Work of the Ministry*, 75–79.

Lords of Trade and Plantation in October of 1680, which had asked them to consider "means whereby [slaves] might be admitted and encouraged [the Christian religion] without prejudice to the freeholders," they rejected the idea firmly, stating that "the conversion of their slaves to Christianity would not only destroy their property but endanger the island, inasmuch as converted negroes grow more perverse and intractable than others."[75]

*"We are a Remnant Left"*

While Quakers led the campaign to convert slaves to Christianity in the 1670s, their influence on the island faded in the 1680s and 1690s, as did commentary about their slave conversions. Although Joan Vokins mentioned that she attended Meetings "among the Blacks" in 1691, the Barbados Council ceased persecuting Friends for bringing slave to their Meetings in the 1680s, focusing instead on their refusal to support the militia, pay tithes and swear. There are a number of possible explanations for this shift. Friends may have lost their fervor for conversion, though they certainly did not cease their efforts completely, as Vokins' comments reveal. Another possibility is that the Council lost interest in the Act, though this is doubtful since it was renewed in 1678 and 1681.[76] Friends may also have changed their methods. While the Quaker Negro Act prevented Friends from "bringing Negroes to their Meetings," Vokins' observations suggest that Meetings for Friends and Meeting for slaves were separate. Perhaps the Anglican establishment was not as threatened by separate meetings or perhaps it was more difficult to prove that Friends were breaking the Quaker Negro Act. What is clear, however, is that the Quaker community began a long period of decline during the last two decades of the seventeenth century. In the early 1680s, the Quaker community was torn apart by internal disagreements and John Rous, one of the leading

[75] CSP, Vol. 10 (1677-1680), No. 1535, 611

[76] Hall, *Acts, Passed in the Island of Barbados*, 102–4.

Friends on the island, revealed to George Fox that a group of "Separates" were spreading false papers around Barbados. While this was not the first time disunity had spread to Quakers in Barbados, Friends on the island claimed that the discord in the early 1680s "had done more hurt than either James Naylour or John Perrot," the two previous causes of conflict.[77]

In the late 1680s and early 1690s, Friends suffered from devastating bouts of smallpox. In 1694, Richard Hoskins wrote that it had "pleased ye Lord to Remove from amongst us so many of our antient and honourable Brethren" and that a "pestalential Distemper" had "Raged several years.[78] Beginning in the 1680s, a number of Barbadian Quakers also immigrated to the newly founded Quaker colony of Pennsylvania, where German and Dutch Quakers would introduce new antislavery ideas to the transatlantic Quaker community.[79] By 1706, the Quaker community on Barbados had declined so significantly that the Quarterly Meeting informed the London Yearly Meeting, "we are a Remnant left as a few after ye shaking of a Tree in an orchard some of us childless, some fatherless, some widows, some orphans, and a poor afflicted people here hath been." [80] As the Quaker community decreased, persecution also declined. After 1688, Friends benefited from the more tolerant government of William and Mary and they reported fewer sufferings to the London Yearly Meeting. In their 1706 Epistle they wrote, "Our Publick sufferings have been Eased under ye Queens authority in ye latest Governments." Quakers continued to be a presence on

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[77] John Rous to George Fox, George Whitehead & Alexander Parker, 25 December 1681. FHL A.R. Barclay Ms. 48

[78] Richard Hoskins to George Whitehead, 19/11/1694. FHL Epistles Received 1.217.

[79] Katharine Gerbner, "'We Are Against the Traffik of Men-Body': The Germantown Quaker Protest of 1688 and the Origins of American Abolitionism," *Pennsylvania History* 74, no. 2 (2007): 149–172; Katharine Gerbner, "Antislavery in Print: The Germantown Protest, the 'Exhortation,' and the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Debate on Slavery," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 9, no. 3 (2011): 552–575. For the influence of Barbadian Quakers on Pennsylvania society, see Block, "Cultivating Inner and Outer Plantations."

[80] Epistle from Barbados, 24 March 1706/7. FHL Epistles Received 1.438

Barbados for several decades but as they gained eventual acceptance, they ceased to play a central role in conversations about slavery and Protestantism in the West Indies.

Despite their declining influence on Barbados, Quakers had made their mark on the ideology of Christian slavery. They argued that Christian influence would promote proper marriage and social order and they insisted that Christian slaves would be more obedient, more productive, and less rebellious than others. They put these ideas in print and circulated them as they travelled throughout the Atlantic World. In doing so, they helped to instigate a transatlantic debate on slave conversion, influencing Anglican missionaries and ministers who grudgingly agreed with Quaker criticism.

The ideas that emerged out of the Quaker community in Barbados were not only central to the emerging discourse about Christian slavery in the English Atlantic World. They also helped to polarize the transatlantic Anglican community, pitting Anglican ministers in England against colonial ministers and planters. As ministers in England embraced the ideal of Christian slavery, colonial ministers and slave owners resisted the calls for conversion coming from the metropole and insisted that mission work would endanger the safety of their fragile society. While eighteenth-century Friends eschewed any role in this history, members of the Society of Friends helped to create and circulate the ideology of Christian slavery in the Atlantic World. They embraced a vision of enslavement that promoted evangelization and patriarchal order while urging masters to treat their slaves as fellow Christians.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Institutionalizing Slave Conversion: Christopher Codrington, Franco-English Exchange, and the Founding of the SPG

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Christopher Codrington is best known for his death. Despite the fact that he served as the Governor-General of the Leeward Islands, was a major landowner in Barbados, and distinguished himself as one of the most dedicated book collectors of his time, it is his Last Will and Testament that has garnished the greatest attention. Much of the document is standard: Codrington gave the lion's share of his property to his nearest kinsman and singled out close friends for smaller amounts. In a more unexpected move, he bequeathed his massive collection of books, along with £10,000 for the construction of a library, to his alma mater, All Souls College, Oxford. But the most unusual element of Codrington's will was his decision to leave two of his Barbados plantations, part of the island of Barbuda, and over two hundred slaves to a newly formed Anglican missionary organization, which he incorrectly named "the Society for propagation of the Christian Religion in Forreighn parts."[1]

Codrington's bequest transformed the SPG into a major slave-owning organization and gave the Society the chance to evangelize to the hundreds of enslaved men and women they now found

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[1] The full text reads as follows: "I give and Bequeath my two Plantations in the Island of Barbados to the Society for propagation of the Christian Religion in Forreighn parts, Erected and Established by my Late good master, King William the Third, and my desire is to have the Plantations Continued Intire and three hundred negros at Least Kept always thereon, and A Convenient number of Professor and Scholars Maintained there, all of them to be under the vows of Poverty Chastity and obedience, who shall be oblidged to Studdy and Practice Physick and Chyrurgery as well as divinity, that by the apparent usefulness of the former to all mankind, they may Both indear themselves to the People and have the better oppertunitys of doeing good To mens Souls whilst they are Takeing Care of their Bodys. But the Particulars of the Constitution I Leave to the Society Compos'd of good and wise men." Reprinted in Vincent Harlow, *Christopher Codrington, 1668-1710* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 218.

in their possession. The opportunity was unprecedented: for decades, concerned Anglicans had argued that the "heathen" slaves that populated their colonies should be introduced to Christianity. Yet they were met with resistance from slave owners who claimed that baptized slaves would demand freedom, incite rebellion, and neglect their work. With Codrington's two plantations and hundreds of slaves of their own, the Society finally had the chance to prove the planters wrong. As William Fleetwood expounded in his 1711 annual sermon for the Society, Codrington's bequest would allow them to preach "*by Example"* to a "hard and unbelieving World, blinded by Interest." Even if "all the Slaves throughout *America*, and every *Island* in those Seas, were to continue Infidels for ever," he concluded, "yet *ours alone must needs be Christians*."[2]

Despite great expectations, the SPG's efforts were a failure. Over the past several decades, scholars have debated the fate of Codrington's bequest, the SPG's management of the estate, and the dismal results of the SPG's slave conversion program.[3] Yet Codrington's original intentions have

[2] William Fleetwood, *A Sermon Preached before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, at the Parish Church of St. Mary-le-Bow, on Friday the 16th of February, 1710/11* (London: Printed and sold by Joseph Downing, 1711), 30–2.

[3] In 1949, Frank Klingberg published an edited volume entitled *Codrington Chronicle: An Experiment in Anglican Altruism on a Barbados Plantation, 1710-1834*, which viewed the SPG's efforts as a rising tide of humanitarianism – a perspective that now, as Travis Glasson has put it, seems "fundamentally flawed." Klingberg, *Codrington Chronicle: An Experiment in Anglican Altruism on a Barbados Plantation, 1710-1834*; Glasson, "Missionaries, Slavery, and Race," 230. J. Harry Bennett, one of Klingberg's students, focused on Codrington as a case study for plantation slavery, though he also examined the SPG's failed evangelization attempts. J. H. Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops; Slavery and Apprenticeship on the Codrington Plantations of Barbados, 1710-1838* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958). Andrew Beahrs viewed the failure of the Society's slave mission as a clash between colonial and metropolitan ideologies of slavery. Andrew Beahrs, "'Ours Alone Must Needs Be Christians': The Production of Enslaved Souls on the Codrington Estates," *Plantation Society in the Americas* 4, no. 2/3 (April 1997): 279–310. Most recently, Travis Glasson has provided new insight into the cultural and ethnic origins of the enslaved population on Codrington's estates and argued that the missionaries' failure at Codrington cannot be ascribed to apathy, but rather "the vibrancy and vitality of the slaves' own cultural and religious lives." Glasson, "Missionaries, Slavery, and Race," 287; Glasson, *Mastering Christianity*.

received almost no attention.[4] This chapter focuses on Codrington's life rather than his death. It asks why a third-generation Anglo-Barbadian would have chosen to bequeath multiple plantations and hundreds of slaves to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel – an organization less than two years old when Codrington composed his will. This approach places Codrington's life into historical context, connecting him to some of the most significant social and cultural developments of his time. From his upbringing on Barbados during the meteoric rise of the sugar economy to his participation in the culture of moral reform in late seventeenth-century England, Codrington's life provides insight into the struggle to reconcile the institution of slavery with an evangelical Protestant vision.

Christopher Codrington was a man of both colony and metropole. Raised in Barbados as the heir to one of the wealthiest sugar planters in the English empire, he was intimately acquainted with the ideology of West Indian slavery and the culture of religious exclusion that kept enslaved men and women outside of the Anglican Church. Yet unlike most white creole planters, Codrington was educated in England and spent much of his life in Europe. In London and Oxford, he encountered the pro-conversion stance that was common among elite Anglicans at the time. His Oxford tutor, George Smalridge, would later become an early member of the SPG, while Smalridge's brother John served as the long-time manager on Codrington's Barbados estates. These connections gave Codrington unique insight into the entrenched challenges to slave conversion in the colonies as well as the insufficient and misguided metropolitan plans to promote Christianity among slaves. His bequest was one in a series of attempts that Codrington made to bridge the gulf between colonial and metropolitan views of slave conversion and it should examined within the context of Codrington's life and experiences, rather than through the SPG's actions.

[4] The major exception in this is Vincent Harlow's biography of Codrington, published originally in 1928. Harlow, *Christopher Codrington, 1668-1710*.

A study of Codrington's life brings attention to the significance of inter-imperial exchange on Protestant ideas about slavery and Christianity. Codrington spent many years both fighting and befriending the French. He participated in the Nine Years War in continental Europe as well as several expeditions against the French in the West Indies. During the brief period of peace between the Treaty of Ryswick and the War of Spanish Succession, he travelled between Paris and London, enjoying both English and French society. When he was appointed Governor-General of the Leeward Islands, he lived on St. Christopher, a tiny island that was split into French and English sections. These experiences profoundly influenced Codrington's vision for a Christianized slave system. In the French example, Codrington saw an answer to the problem of slavery in the English colonies. Rather than relying on solitary ministers and missionaries, he recognized that Christianizing the English Empire would require considerable institutional support. Accordingly, he wrote in his will that his plantations should serve as a college to train "Professors and Scholars" who were under "vows of Poverty Chastity and obedience."

The reference to vows of poverty, chastity and obedience were identical to those taken by Jesuits and exposed the depth of Codrington's admiration for French Catholic practices. They also embodied Codrington's accumulated insight into the culture of slavery in the English Caribbean. Like the concerned Anglicans he befriended in England, he believed that English slaves needed to be Christianized. Yet his upbringing on Barbados and familiarity with planter ideology gave him a realistic sense of the challenges facing any missionary endeavor. He found the local clergy to be hopelessly unprepared to convert slaves to Christianity and he feared that baptizing slaves wantonly would be "pernicious." His solution emerged from his experiences bridging divides: between colony and metropole, between French and English, and between Protestant and Catholic.

*The Rise of the Anglo-Barbadian Elite, 1628-1688*

Christopher Codrington was the third person in his family to hold his name: his father was named Christopher, as was his grandfather. Christopher Codrington the eldest was one of the pioneer colonists of Barbados. He arrived in 1628, just after the first settlement of the island. He married the sister of Sir James Drax, a prominent settler of Barbados who helped to introduce sugar cultivation on the island. Codrington I followed his brother-in-law's lead by becoming one of the first sugar planters in the English Caribbean. Christopher Codrington II, who was born on Barbados in 1640, took advantage of his father's early connections and land to amass a huge amount of wealth as a planter, soldier, and politician. He became a member of the Barbados Council at twenty-six and was appointed deputy-governor in 1669 at age twenty-nine. He also extended his reach beyond Barbados, purchasing large tracts of land in Antigua and Barbuda with his brother John.[5]

The Codrington family's rise to wealth and prominence in Barbados paralleled what Richard Dunn has called the "rise of the planter class." Studying the consolidation of capital and power in the English West Indies, Dunn noted that of the 159 families that constituted the planter "elite" in 1680, 62 of them already held property on the island in 1638. Codrington and Drax were among those 62 elite families whose timely investment in sugar cultivation and early entrance into the political sphere allowed them to take full advantage of the economic boom that made Barbados the wealthiest colony in the English empire by the late seventeenth century. Following the lead of the Portuguese and Dutch in Brazil and Surinam, they imported large numbers of enslaved Africans to feed the demand for labor on the newly founded sugar plantations. White indentured servants were quickly replaced with black slaves as planters purchased items of luxury, such as tables, silver, cushions, carpets, and four-poster beds, to show off their newly acquired wealth.[6]

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[5] Ibid., 6–37.

[6] Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves*, 58.

Codrington III, who was born in 1668, spent the first twelve years of his life at his family's estate in St. John's parish, one of the less populated regions of Barbados. Codrington's letters from later in life provide some small insights into the estate that his father ran as well as his father's relationship with the enslaved men and women who served him. In 1701, two years after his father's death, the younger Codrington wrote a letter to the Council of Trade and Plantations that described his father's approach to slave discipline:

> My Father, who had studied the genius and temper of all kinds of negroes 45 years with a very nice observation, would say, Noe man deserved a Corramante that would not treat him like a friend rather than a slave, and all my Corramantes preserve that love and veneration for him that they constantly visit his grave, make their libations upon it, hold up their hands to Heaven with violent lamentations, and promise when they have done working for his son they will come to him and be his faithful slaves in the other world.[7]

This brief passage about "Coromantee slaves," suggests that Codrington's father had very specific views about how to best run a plantation. He believed that cultural differences among Africans meant that slaves from different regions needed separate treatment. Coromantees, according to Codrington, were "intrepid to the last degree" and they would "stand to be cut to pieces without a sigh or groan, grateful and obedient to a kind master." The elder Codrington and his son believed that while well-treated Coromantees would be "grateful and obedient," badly treated ones would be "implacably revengeful."

Codrington's comment about Coromantees suggests that he was brought up with a well-honed idea about the proper relationship between masters and slaves that included obligations of fair treatment on the part of the master. It also shows that the younger Codrington respected and admired his father's ideas about slave management and sought to replicate them himself. What we do not know is whether either Codrington - father or son - sought to educate any of their slaves in Christian doctrine. While the younger Codrington would later bequeath his father's plantation to the

[7] CSP, Vol. 19 (1701), 720-2.

SPG, there is no evidence that he actually tried to convert any of his own slaves to Christianity. In 1699, he suggested that while baptizing slaves was an important goal, it was "useless" if not accompanied with instruction. He also wrote that "the very ill qualified clergymen who goe to the islands are not only insufficient for such a work, but can doe noe service to the whole Heathens they find there by their teaching or example."[8] As this letter suggests, Codrington had little faith in the island clergy to teach the slaves about Christian practice and doctrine. Yet it leaves open the possibility that Codrington or his father singled out some "favorite" slaves for education and baptism. Unfortunately, the records from the St. John's parish church have not survived, so there is no way to know whether any slaves from the Codrington estate were ever baptized. Still, it seems that the Codrington family developed an ethic of slaveholding that prized both firmness and what they considered to be fair treatment.[9]

*Becoming English*

Christopher Codrington's views on slavery and mastery were not just an outgrowth of his childhood experiences on Barbados and his admiration for his father's management skills. Like other elite West Indian boys, Codrington was sent to England for education at the age of twelve, where he was influenced by the social thought of the day. The opportunity to attend a private school in England set Christopher III apart from his father and grandfather. The elder Codringtons had focused their efforts on building the family fortune in the West Indies and neither had the time nor the inclination to return to England for schooling. When Christopher III was born in 1668, the social standards of the Barbadian elite had begun to evolve. As big planters consolidated their power, they sought new ways to assert their prestige through both wealth and cultural practice.

[8] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 458, 252-3.

[9] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 458, 252-3

Central to their sense of identity was the concept of "Englishness." As Larry Gragg has written, Anglo-Barbadians "consciously sought to replicate the ways of their homeland, to make their Caribbean colony truly English."[10] One of the ways they did this was to send their sons back to England to be educated in the elite institutions of the mother country. Thus like other successful West Indian planters, Christopher Codrington II decided to send his young son to school in England to renew and reassert his family's English identity.

As a third generation Anglo-Barbadian, Christopher Codrington III would have been one of the first Anglo-West Indians to participate in this ritual of reconnection. He arrived in England in 1680 at the age of twelve and was educated first at Dr. Wedale's school in Enfield before continuing on to Oxford in 1685. At Oxford, Codrington developed a love for books, theater, and other literary engagements. He wrote a number of poems and acted in *Auctio Davisiana,* a dramatic satire about book auctions. He also became a bibliophile in his own right, amassing a large collection that would only grow with the decades. In 1687, like other wellborn young men, he was admitted to Middle Temple, where he combined a study of the law with his courses at Oxford. He also met a number of influential individuals who remained life-long friends. Among these were his tutor, George Smalridge; Robert Boyle's great nephew Charles Boyle; the politician and writer Joseph Addison; and the classical scholar Thomas Creech. Charles Boyle would later defend Codrington against attacks, while George Smalridge's brother John became the manager of Codrington's Barbados plantations.[11]

In 1692, Codrington was granted a leave from Oxford to volunteer for military service in the Antilles, where King William hoped to expel the French from the area. He arrived in Barbados on February 28th, where he reunited with his father. The elder Codrington had increased both his wealth

[10] Gragg, *Englishmen Transplanted*, 9.

[11] Harlow, *Christopher Codrington, 1668-1710*, 50.

and his prominence during his son's absence. Now, as Governor-General of the Leeward Islands, he contributed troops and ammunition to the military expedition. The mission succeeded in raiding French sugar mills and settlements in Martinique, but it was eventually abandoned after illness, military failures, and waning supplies weakened the troops. In late April, Governor Codrington sailed back to the Leewards with his son so the two men could examine the military resources on Antigua, Nevis, and St. Christopher – an experience that would prove valuable when the younger Codrington replaced his father as Governor-General.[12]

After a month of travel, Codrington III departed for North America and then England with his regiment. The expedition itself had been a failure, but Codrington returned to Oxford with important experience and a captaincy title. He graduated from Oxford the following January with a Master of Arts, thereby bringing his formal education to a close. In the spring of 1694, Codrington continued his military engagement as a private captain in King William's effort to expel the French from Flanders. Once peace was declared in 1697, the twenty-nine year old Codrington travelled between Paris and London, where he spent time with his friends Charles Boyle, Spencer Compton, and Matthew Prior.[13] His days were largely spent writing poetry, collecting books, and socializing. He helped to produce a number of plays, such as *The Fate of Capua* by Tom Southerne, and he wrote and contributed to several poems. Aside from literary and theatrical pursuits, Codrington became

[12] Ibid., 64–7.

[13] Matthew Prior served as the secretary to King William at the Hague in 1690 before being appointed Secretary to the Ambassadors at the Treaty of Ryswick. In 1700, he became one of the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations. From this post, he would defend and support his friend Codrington during his tenure as Governor-General of the Leeward Islands. Ibid., 86–7. See also Frances Mayhew Rippy, "Prior, Matthew (1664-1721)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

acquainted with John Locke and continued to deepen his love for philosophy that he had cultivated at Oxford.[14]

*Moral Reform and the Founding of the SPCK*

Christopher Codrington's tenure at Oxford and subsequent work as a soldier coincided with a period of major religious and political transformation in England. In 1688, the Catholic-leaning James II fled to France and William of Orange and his wife Mary, the daughter of Charles II, captured the crown in the so-called Glorious Revolution. The new rulers moved quickly to affirm the Protestant culture of the country and they provided freedom of worship to nonconforming Protestant denominations in the Toleration Act of 1689. The Toleration Act secured the Church of England's privileged place as the national church, but by officially tolerating dissent, it weakened the coercive power of the church and led to fears that moral and social turmoil would follow. In this new environment, Anglican churchmen took it upon themselves to promote their church's role in English life by founding their own voluntary societies.

During the decades after the Glorious Revolution, Anglicans and nonconformists alike showed a heightened concern for manners and moral reform and they founded voluntary societies to combat perceived vices. The early 1690s saw the establishment of the Society for the Reformation of Manners (SRM), the first of many such organizations that aimed to reduce heterodox thinking and sinful behavior by prosecuting offenses like drunkenness, prostitution, and swearing. As Shelley Burtt has argued, the SRMs melded religious and secular aims by focusing on public order – a

[14] Harlow, *Christopher Codrington, 1668-1710*, 73–85, 99–100.

strategy characteristic of the period. By 1694, there were sixteen similar societies with nearly three hundred members (almost all male) operating in London and Westminster.[15]

The most important Anglican visionary of the day was Thomas Bray, an English clergyman who feared the influence of Quakers and other nonconformists on the national English character. In the wake of the Toleration Act, he wrote:

> [T]he Enemy has...enter'd through our Breaches into the very heart of our City (as St. Austin calls the Church of God)...All the Grand and Fundamental Articles, both of Natural and Revealed Religion, are now either most furiously storm'd by Atheists, Deists, and Socinians on the one hand, or secretly and dangerously undermined by Enthusiasts and Antimoniams on the other.[16]

Bray hoped to strengthen the Anglican Church by founding lending libraries and creating a central body to promote the Church of England.

In accordance with this vision, Bray joined together with other concerned churchmen in 1699 to form the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), the forerunner of the SPG, which was founded two years later. The SPCK counted among its ranks both high and low churchmen, Tories and Whigs. As a result of this complex political make-up, the SPCK sought to remain somewhat disconnected from the political strife of the late seventeenth century and focused on broad, consensus-oriented goals that would strengthen the role of the clergy within English society. They promoted catechisms, literacy, and moral teaching in order to reinvigorate the Anglican Church.

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[15] Shelley Burtt, "The Societies for the Reformation of Manners: Between John Locke and the Devil in Augustan England," in *The Margins of Orthodoxy: Heterodox Writing and Cultural Response, 1660-1750*, ed. Roger D. Lund (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 149–169.

[16] Bray, *A Course of Lectures Upon the Church Catechism in Four Volumes*, vi–vii; Craig Rose, "The Origins and Ideals of the SPCK 1699-1716," in *The Church of England C.1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, ed. John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 178.

It is likely that Christopher Codrington knew of the SPCK when it was founded in 1699. While he was not a member of the organization, his Oxford tutor, George Smalbridge, would later become an influential member of SPG, the SPCK's sister organization. Either way, he was certainly influenced by the prevailing culture of religious voluntarism and the concern for moral reform that pervaded elite English society. Like other reformers, he was worried about the religious state of the English colonies. But unlike Bray, who focused his efforts on converting English people at home and abroad, Codrington was more interested in the prospect of slave conversion.

Codrington voiced his concerns as early as 1699, the same year that Bray formed the SPCK. In 1698, Codrington received the news that his father had died suddenly in Antigua and in February 1699, he was rewarded for his military service with his late father's post as Governor-General of the Leeward Islands. In his official instructions as Governor-General of the Leewards, Codrington was told to "see that Divine Service" was kept "according to the Church of England," to make sure that churches were "built and kept orderly" and "to encourage the conversion of negroes."[17] The reference to slave conversion was pro forma by the late seventeenth century, but Codrington's response was not. "The instruction I am most inclined [to follow]," he wrote to William Popple, "I shall be least able to observe." Codrington's comments revealed a long-held ambivalence about the culture of slavery as well as the role of Christianity in the British colonies. He referred to the treatment of slaves as "barbarous," thereby building on a stereotype of West Indian depravity that he would have heard in London and Oxford. Yet he was also aware that it would be difficult to change the customs on his home island and that his power even as Governor was extremely limited. Speaking specifically about the instruction to encourage slave conversion, he wrote, "I shall be

[17] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 766, 422-4.

certainly opposed by all the Planters…much more if I should promote the baptising of all our slaves."[18]

Codrington sympathized with both colonial and imperial positions regarding slave baptism. While he was in favor of conversion in principle, he recognized the validity of the planter's position:

> [I]n this the Planters have much to say for themselves, for 'tis certain the christening of our negroes without the instructing of them would be useless to themselves and pernicious to their masters, and 'tis evident the few and the very ill qualified clergymen who goe to the islands are not only insufficient for such a work, but can doe noe service to the whole Heathens they find there by their teaching or example.[19]

Like most West Indian planters, Codrington believed that slave baptism would be "useless" and "pernicious" because the island clergy was unqualified for such a venture. Yet unlike his West Indian peers, he sought an alternative solution. "[A] work of this nature," he continued, "is only fit for a regular clergy who are under vows of poverty and obedience."

The suggestion that a "regular clergy…under vows of poverty and obedience" would be best suited to converting slaves suggests that Codrington had already taken note of French and, perhaps, Spanish approaches to slave conversion. Vows of poverty and obedience were typical for the Catholic orders, such as the Jesuits, Dominicans, and Franciscans, and would have sounded decidedly "papist" to most English Protestants. Yet Codrington was quite convinced of his plan's potential, and found it to be perfectly consistent with the Church of England. He asked William Popple to "humbly propose" his idea to "the Archbishop and Bishop of London." If they were able to find "a number of apostolical men who are willing to take much pains for little reward," Codrington would promise both "protection and countenance." The degree of Codrington's commitment is evident in his concluding statement:

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[18] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 458, 252-3.

[19] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 458, 252-3.

> I am very sincere in this matter….noe consideration of interest shall hinder me from promoting boldly and impartially a design that may be pleasing to God and truely beneficial to my fellow-creatures.[20]

By the end of the seventeenth-century, then, Christopher Codrington had already identified slave conversion as a key element of concern. Unlike many of his compatriots in London, however, he was sympathetic to the concerns of West Indian planters and recognized the difficulties involved in converting enslaved men and women to Christianity. With his Barbadian upbringing and English education, he brought a new perspective to the debate on Protestantism and slavery.

*Franco-English Relations*

Before departing for the West Indies as Governor-General, Codrington spent two more years in London defending his late father's honor. The elder Codrington had been embroiled in political controversy before his death and his son fought furiously to defend his father posthumously. He forced his father's enemy, John Lucas, to issue an apology for "his disrespectful behaviour," and demanded that the Treasury pay his father's four years of back salary.[21] His insistence on retribution was representative of the honor-based culture that held sway over much of English and West Indian gentry life. It was also a sign of things to come. As a Governor and colonial authority, Codrington was quick to be offended by any sign of insult and, like his father before him, became embroiled in a number of heated controversies.

Even as he remained in London working to protect his father's reputation, Codrington began conducting affairs as the Governor-General of the Leewards. Of chief concern during this time was the island of St. Christopher. With a total area of just 65 square miles, St. Christopher had

[20] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 458, 252-3.

[21] For the resolution of the Codrington-Lucas controversy, see CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 344, 195. For Codrington's refusal to depart for the Caribbean before being paid his father's back pay, see CSP 17 (1699), no. 925, 507-8.

long been split between the French and English. The result was a fraught coexistence in which both English and French inhabitants were at the mercy of imperial politics and wars beyond their control. In 1666, the French had conquered the entire island, but the Peace of Breda reversed their victory and restored English claim to half the island. In 1690, the English repaid the favor and drove the French from the island. The Treaty of Ryswick, however, returned the island to its prewar status, meaning that the English were forced to return part of the island to French control. It was during this moment of transition that the younger Christopher Codrington was appointed Governor-General.[22]

The process of transference was complicated by a number of factors. First was the French accusation that the English had intentionally burned their plantations after the Treaty was signed, thereby depriving the French of their livelihood. In a letter from two French officials to the Council of Trade and Plantations in London, the officials complained that when the French returned to the island, "they found all the houses and shops ruined and demolished, wells spoiled and filled, reservoirs burst, sugar canes eaten by cattle or burnt, all within six or seven months." They demanded that "instructions should be given to M. de Codrington to compel the individuals who have done this shameful damage or who have made a profit out of it to indemnify the French proprietors or at least to replace at their own expense the materials they have removed."[23]

The Council of St. Christopher's predictably disputed these accusations and wrote that much of the destruction had occurred before peace was declared and in accordance with the instructions

[22] James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 49.

[23] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 264, 147-8.

of the elder Codrington. Anything afterwards was done "without any authority and not known, and might be as well by negroes as white men."[24]

The second complication involved runaway slaves. During their conquest of the island, the English had captured a number of enslaved men and women belonging to the French. When the French returned to the island, they demanded that their slaves be returned to them. The English responded that the slaves were their legitimate war spoils, though a number of the captured slaves ran back to their French masters of their own accord. Apparently, some of the runaway slaves included several from the Codrington estate. In 1699, the President and Council of Nevis reported that "21 negroes belonging to Col. Codrington and Col. John Hamilton of Antigua" had run away to the French "since the conclusion of the peace." The report went on to note that the English feared that their slaves, many of whom were taken from the French during the war, would continue to run away.[25]

Codrington was unwavering in his support for English imperial interests, which aligned nicely with his own. In a letter to the Council of Trade and Plantations dated July 10, 1699, Codrington insisted, "the negroes became the property of the conquerors, were fairly divided between the fleet and army and sold off…" He maintained that the English position was "founded on the Law of Nations" and added, "the negroes are as much our property as our cattle." The most intriguing element of Codrington's response, however, related to religion. At some point, the French must have referred to the fact that many of their slaves had been baptized as Catholics. They likely argued that Catholic slaves should remain under Catholic – and French – imperial control, rather than English. To this, Codrington answered:

[24] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 282, 159-60.

[25] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 74, 39-46.

> The pretence of religion is idle. Christianity does not alter the condition of men nor destroy the right of tenure by which slaves are held. This is incontestable in the Civil Law and the French practise in consequence of it.

These sentences indicate that Codrington knew about the debate regarding the role of Protestantism in the English slave colonies and that he believed firmly that the issue had been resolved in law. Codrington also criticized French practice, noting that while they "baptise all their slaves," he "dare[d] not say they make them Christians." He, like many other Englishmen, was skeptical of Catholic baptismal practices. Baptized slaves in the French colonies, he suggested, could not be considered true Christians because they were not sufficiently educated and prepared. This was a judgment he shared with many early members of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel who believed that Catholic baptism of slaves was a cursory rite.[26]

Codrington's comments show that he grasped the political ramifications of the debate on slave baptism. Conversion could be used to mobilize support for an imperial regime or to justify an attack on an enemy island. He was particularly critical of the French argument that it was religious "conscience" that led them to "keep our negroes." As he elaborated in a letter to the Lords of Trade and Plantations,

> Suppose, My Lords, five hundred or a thousand or ten thousand negroes should get off Barbados to Martineque and applying themselves to the Monks would undoubtedly admit them to baptism, and the negroes would of course be good Roman Catholicks, the French might then say, though they could not keep our negroes as slaves, yet they were obliged to protect them as men and Christians desiring to live as good Roman Catholicks, and who, if restored to the English would not be allowed the practice of that religion.[27]

Codrington feared that Catholic baptism could be used to lure enslaved men and women away from the English and into French hands. The French could then use the slaves' Catholic status to retain

[26] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 628, 337-8.

[27] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 628, 337-8.

them on the grounds that if they were "restored to the English," they "would not be allowed the practice of [Catholicism]."

As Codrington recognized, slave conversion was not just a matter of imperial concern. It also affected the decisions of enslaved men and women who were aware that the Catholic Church offered benefits and opportunities that were not available in Protestant colonies. As Codrington explained in a letter to the Council of Trade and Plantations, "a great number of negroes will certainly get off in sloops and boats, both from a natural desire of changing their masters upon the least severe usage, and upon the encouragement of these many holydays the French allow their slaves."[28] Apart from a greater number of holy days, Codrington was probably aware that slaves in Catholic colonies were sometime able to appeal to priests to gain protection from violent masters or to resist being sold away from their families – opportunities that were not available in English islands.[29]

*Governor-General*

Codrington finally departed for the West Indies in August of 1700, more than two years after his initial appointment.[30] After arriving in the Leeward Islands, he began to implement a series of administrative and infrastructure reforms intended to improve the functioning of the colonial government. He assured the representatives in the Assemblies that he was "sincerely determined to doe them all…real service" and that he would accept no "bribes or presents w[ha]tsoever." He promised to pass "good laws for ye encouraging English settlers and not foreigners, for well

[28] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 576, 308.

[29] See, for example, Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico*; Block, *Ordinary Lives in the Early Caribbean*, pt. 1.

[30] CSP, Vol. 18 (1700), no. 720, 486-7.

disciplining and providing [the] militia," and for "establishing short and certain methods for ye distribution of Justice." He had some success initially, refusing to tolerate the blatant flouting of the Navigation Acts, dismissing the corrupt Lieutenant-General of St. Christopher's, and exhorting the Lords of Trade to increase the salary of colonial governors in order to make bribery less of a temptation. Yet he was wary of the "tempers" of those he "ha[d] to deal with."[31]

His wariness was well founded. On June 30, 1701, less than a year after his arrival, Codrington wrote that his actions had "gained [him] the esteem of all the honest men," but that "some overgrown Knaves" were "angry" with him.[32] One of the "overgrown Knaves" was William Mead, a major landowner on Nevis. Codrington had inadvertently slighted him by placing his name at the bottom of the list for the new council. Thereafter, they continued to clash over smuggling and illegal trading. But their feud reached new heights when Codrington intervened during a hearing for the case *Herbert v. Mead* at the Nevis Court House. Soon after this confrontation, Mead sailed for England to complain to the Lords of Trade and Plantation.[33]

Hearing of Mead's intentions, Codrington responded with characteristic self-righteousness and fury. In a letter to Lieutenant-Governor Elrington, Codrington wrote that he "despise[d] Mr. Mead so heartily" that he neither "care[d] whither he is gone, nor what his b[u]s[i]nes[s] is." Moving from high-mindedness to insult, he added that Mead was "much fitter for his original occupation of selling punch than managing the King's Customes." Indeed, Codrington considered Mead to be so far below him that he was "much more worthy of footman's cudgel than a gentleman's resentment."

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[31] CSP, Vol. 19 (1701), no. 26, 27-9. It was common for colonial Governors throughout the English Atlantic to supplement their income by accepting bribes from merchants in order to trade with the French or Dutch. See Harlow, *Christopher Codrington, 1668-1710*, 116–7.

[32] CSP, Vol. 19 (1701), no. 600, 326-9.

[33] Harlow, *Christopher Codrington, 1668-1710*, 130–7.

He was confident that his own reputation with the Lords of Trade would prevail, though he realized that Mead would "have the first word."[34]

While his imperious manner won him a handful of devoted enemies, Codrington took solace and pride in his own perceived fair conduct. Many of his letters include references to the sacrifices that he made – both pecuniary and personal – to be a conscientious official. He insisted that he acted only "in the publick good," that he refused "all presents publick and private," that he "defended the poor against the rich," and did "justice to servants against their masters, where [he] was able."[35] In August of 1701, he wrote that he had secured the passage of "two Acts" – one to allow the poor to use the public ponds, and another "to provide land for ye soldiers and other small settlers, and to furnish them with necessaries."[36] Such victories, while small, fed Codrington's sense of self by allowing him to identify as an honest and principled man in the midst of avarice and corruption.

Codrington's pity for the underdog sometimes extended to slaves. Though he had no doubt about the legitimacy of slavery as an institution, he regretted the excessive cruelty displayed by many slave owners. In December of 1701, for example, he sympathized with a group of Coromantee slaves who had killed their master, an Antiguan planter named Major Martin. The enslaved attackers, who were described as "about 15 new Calamantee negroe men," confronted Mr. Martin in his chamber in front of his wife and a number of other white men and women. According to later accounts, they "barbarously murthered him" with "knives and bills" and then decapitated him. Witnesses reported that the Coromantee men poured rum over Martin's head "and triumphed over

[34] "Governor Codrington to Gov. Elrington," July 5, 1701. CSP, Vol. 19 (1701), no. 652 i.

[35] CSP, Vol. 19 (1701), no. 600, 326-9.

[36] CSP, Vol. 19 (1701), no. 744, 418-420.

it." One of the assailants was killed at the scene, but the rest "ran into the canes."[37] Island leaders immediately formed search parties and fears were rampant that rebellion was brewing.

When Codrington described the event in a letter to the Council of Trade and Plantations, he did not leap to conclusions about a widespread revolt, but rather blamed the late Major Martin for abusive behavior. While he acknowledged that Martin was "a very useful man" who was "willing to take the most pains in public bus[i]nes[s]," he was "guilty of some unusual act of severity" and "indignity towards the Corramantes." Coromantees, according to Codrington, were "not only the best and most faithful of our slaves," but they were "all born Heroes…grateful and obedient to a kind master, but implacably revengeful when ill-treated." In conclusion, Codrington noted that he was "far from being surprised at what has happened," and wondered only why "attempts of the same nature" did not happen "every day." He dismissed the concerns of planters that there was a "design" on any other individuals, because if there had been, they would already be "chopt…to pieces."[38]

Instead of blaming the slaves, Codrington used the event to advocate for more military support in the case of a French attack. When planters on Antigua moved to establish search parties, they found that "there was scarce a man could find a gun, and he that could had neither powder nor ball nor sword."[39] The lack of weapons and preparedness boded ill for any enemy invasion, as Codrington was quick to remind the Lords of Trade. Citing his previous comments on the topic, he wrote that he "had reason to complain of our want of small arms," and that "the arms which are sent us from the Tower are so slight that they are only an expence to the King and noe service to the Islands." He hoped he would now be able to persuade the Antiguans to assent to such an Act of

[37] "Mr. Gamble to Governor Codrington." CSP, Vol. 19 (1701), no. 1132 ii.

[38] CSP, Vol. 19 (1701), no. 1132.

[39] "Mr. Gamble to Governor Codrington." CSP, Vol. 19 (1701), no. 1132 ii.

Militia as I would have" and warned that, "without more power," he could "neither hope to defend the King's hands or my own honour."[40]

As Codrington's letters make clear, enemy invasion represented the greatest threat to the Leeward Islands at the turn of the eighteenth century. The Treaty of Ryswick, which brought the Nine Years War to a close in 1697, resulted in a tenuous peace in Europe and the colonial empires. By 1700, however, when Codrington departed for the West Indies, conflict was brewing yet again. The newly appointed Governor-General sought to prepare as early as 1699. In a letter to William Popple, Codrington informed him about the lack of defenses available in the Leewards. Basing his comments on his previous visit to the islands, when he toured with his father, Codrington noted that "all the Forts in our islands, except Montserrat…are but poor little platforms and ill provided with artillery."[41] In May 1700, Codrington wrote again, this time to the Council of Trade and Plantations, begging them to take "some measures" to secure the islands by sending two companies of 100 men to Antigua to defend against Indian raids. He warned that "the French have never less than five companies on their part" of St. Christopher's.[42] Upon arrival in the Leewards, he added that he was "putting this Island into as good a condition of defence as I can without men, arms or ammunition." The French were "extreamly well armed and well officered," while the English had squandered the last of their gunpowder during a drunken evening.[43]

[40] CSP, Vol. 19 (1701), no. 1132, 720-2.

[41] CSP, Vol. 17 (1699), no. 863, 462-3.

[42] CSP, Vol. 18 (1700), no. 499, 299-300.

[43] CSP, Vol. 19 (1701), no. 401, 192-6.

*Friendship with Frenchmen*

While colonial politics were a source of constant frustration, Codrington cultivated meaningful friendships during his years as Governor. In 1700, he met Francis Le Jau, a French Protestant from Angers, France, who had been educated at Trinity College in Dublin. Le Jau would later become known as one of the most successful early missionaries for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Before then, however, he served as a parish minister in the Leeward Islands. He arrived in Montserrat in March 1700, just months before Codrington. It is unclear when the two men met, but Le Jau reported later that the Governor was his "great friend" and that Codrington "did what he could to relieve him" of the miseries of his post. As Le Jau explained, the parish system in the Leeward Islands was in great disrepair. In Montserrat, he found only one minister serving four parishes. In St. Christopher's, Le Jau himself was responsible for three parishes and, like other colonial ministers, he was dependent on the inhabitants for his maintenance. While they provided him with a "house built with wild Canes & Thatcht," the structure was "never finish'd," and he did not receive the £60 sterling per year that he had been promised.

In their meetings together, Le Jau and Codrington discussed the state of Christianity in the islands, among other things. Like Le Jau, Codrington felt that ministers should be provided with a salary from London so that their position was not so "precarious." When churchmen were "at the Mercy of the People," they were unable to "do their duty without fear." The tension between ministers and lay people was particularly acute with regard to slave treatment and baptism. While Le Jau found "the Negroes [to be] generally sensible & well disposed to learn," he felt it was "the Barbarity of their Masters which makes 'em stubborn." Lacking food or clothing, slaves were forced to steal to survive. The only time they were able to work for themselves was on Sunday, meaning that any minister who "proposed the Negroes should be Instructed in the Christian faith" would be

met with resistance. Furthermore, Le Jau had "2000 Negroes in his parishes," which was clearly "too much for one Minister to instruct."

In contrast to the English, "the French papists" on St. Christopher's had "5 or 6 Ministers [for the same] Number of Negroes." Enslaved and free blacks could be "baptiz'd & married in their Churches," they "kept Sundays and holy days" free, and "had officers to hear & redress their Grievances." This was due, in part, to the fact that the French clergymen "had their Maintenance ascertain'd." The existence of baptized slaves in the French and Spanish colonies, he continued, was well known to English planters. So while many planters claimed that baptism would "make [their] Negroes free," this was purely deceitful. The real source of anti-conversion sentiment, Le Jau believed, was that "the Planters would be obliged to look upon [their slaves] as Christian Brethren, & use 'em with humanity."[44]

Le Jau's report provides insight into Codrington's own experiences and opinions during his tenure as Governor. Codrington's letters from 1699 – before he departed for his post – show that he was already concerned about the "souls" of slaves. It is no surprise, then, that he became "great friend[s]" with Le Jau, a minister who shared his concerns. While the actual content of their conversations is a matter of conjecture, the two men certainly influenced each other's thoughts and convictions on the subject. The fact that Le Jau would go on to become one of the few missionaries to actively pursue an agenda of slave conversion in North America while Codrington would bequeath an unprecedented fortune to the SPG is hardly a coincidence. The two men took seriously the role of Christianity in a slave society, and both sought to improve the Protestant example.

Le Jau's comments point to the significance of inter-imperial exchange for English ideas about slave conversion. While English and French people intermingled throughout the Atlantic

[44] "The Abstract of Dr. L'Jaus Papers relating to the Condicon of the Clergy, and other material Things in the Leeward Caribbean islands, offered to the consideracon of the Society p. ppaganda fide." RHL SPG-J Appendix B, no. 67.

World, St. Christopher fostered a unique level of fraught intimacy. With the French settled on either end of the island and the English in the middle, colonists on St. Kitts were compelled to coexist with an unusual level of closeness. Interactions between French and English settlers were common, particularly during peacetime, and cultural differences in slave holding practices were in full display. The high level of familiarity between English and French colonists was evident in Le Jau's comments. He reported extensively not only on the French practice of baptizing slaves and funding colonial priests, but also gave a detailed description of the French part of the island. Like the English, the French had split their colony into six parishes. But while the English churches were made of "wild canes & thatch'd," the French had "2 stately stone churches."[45]

The French were also well aware of English precedent. One particularly astute observer was the French priest Jean-Baptiste Labat, a Dominican monk who served in the French Antilles from 1694 to 1705. Initially appointed as a parish priest in Martinique, Labat went on to become the *Procureur Synic* of the Martinique mission and, in 1702, the Superior of the Guadeloupe Mission. He later published an account of his life in the West Indies entitled *Nouveau voyage aux isles de l'Amerique.*[46] During his decade in the West Indies, Labat travelled extensively, visiting Dominica, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, San Domingo, and St. Christopher's, among others.[47] In 1700, he travelled to Barbados, where he observed that the English clergy "do not instruct [the slaves] and do not baptise them." In his opinion, the English regarded their enslaved laborers "as beasts to whom every licence is allowed." They permitted their slaves to "have several wives and to leave them as they please."

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[45] RHL SPG-J Appendix B, no. 67.

[46] Jean Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau Voyage Aux Isles de l'Amerique: Contenant L'histoire Naturelle de Ces Pays, L'origine, Les Mœurs, La Religion & Le Gouvernement Des Habitans Anciens & Modernes. Les Guerres & Les Evenemens Singuliers Qui y Sont Arrivez Pendant Le Long Sejour Que L'auteur y a Fait. Le Commerce & Les Manufactures Qui y Sont Établies, & Les Moyens de Les Augmenter...* (Paris: P. F. Giffart, 1722).

[47] Jean Baptiste Labat, *The Memoirs of Père Labat, 1693-1705*, trans. John Eaden (London: F. Cass, 1970), xviii.

Punishments were severe, leading many slaves to rebel against the "ruthless tyrants" and forcing the English to "resort to arms" to suppress revolt.[48] While Labat's text was intended to valorize the French colonial venture at the expense of the English, it is significant that many of his observations correspond with those made by Le Jau and Codrington, as well as other English observers. Both French and English authors agreed that the English provided very little support for colonial ministers and that English planters generally refused to baptize their slaves.

Labat's thoughts about English slave culture are of particular interest because Labat met Codrington in late 1701, about a year before Codrington wrote his will. En route between Guadeloupe and Santo Domingo, Labat stopped in St. Christopher's, where he dined at the home of an English officer. By coincidence, Codrington called on the officer the same evening and Labat reported it was "a piece of pure good fortune" because he had "long wished to meet" the Governor-General.[49] Labat's description of the evening provides another perspective on Codrington's comportment and behavior as the Governor of the Leeward Islands. Before his arrival, "trumpets were heard," a common practice to announce the Governor's presence. Aside from the two trumpeters who "rode in front," Codrington was accompanied by eight servants and "nine or ten negroes" who "ran in front of the trumpeters." At dinner, Labat introduced himself to Codrington as "an engineer" and he was amused to hear that Codrington's companion, who was clearly a "chaplain," also introduced himself as an engineer. Labat's thinly veiled disguise – and his ability to recognize other disguises – is suggestive of the broader culture of interaction between French and

[48] Jean Baptiste Labat, "Father Labat's Visit to Barbados in 1700," trans. Neville Connell, *Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society* 24, no. 4 (1957): 168–9.

[49] Labat, *The Memoirs of Père Labat, 1693-1705*, 212.

English. By turning a blind eye to religious identity, imperial representatives could interact more easily with their "enemies."[50]

At the dinner table, Labat was impressed and flattered by Codrington's willingness to speak French, but found him and the other Englishmen "vain." He was particularly appalled by the way the Governor spoke about the Irish. Codrington, for his part, asked the priest a "hundred questions about [his] voyage." He spoke "so quickly" that Labat could not keep up. "He asked two or three questions before I had time to answer," the priest wrote afterwards. Labat also noted that Codrington "was far more sober than are most of his nation as a rule." Labat's comments give an impression of a man who was serious, curious, and self-important. Codrington was legitimately interested to hear about Labat's experiences and travels, but he spoke with arrogance about other nations, and thought highly of himself.[51]

Labat did not mention whether he discussed religion with Codrington, though it is possible that he did. Regardless, it is clear that Codrington's thoughts on slave missions were greatly influenced not only by French precedent, but also by his personal relationships with French Catholics on St. Christopher's. These day-to-day interactions between English and French settlers had consequences – not only for imperial politics, but also for the culture of West Indian slavery and on the thoughts, convictions, and beliefs of specific individuals.

*Last Will and Testament*

On May 4th, 1702, the newly crowned Queen Anne formally declared war against Louis XIV, thereby joining the War of Spanish Succession. When Codrington heard the news, he moved quickly to expel the French from St. Kitt's and Nevis. After succeeding in this initial endeavor, he hoped to

[50] Ibid., 212–215.

[51] Ibid.

move on to Martinique and Guadeloupe. Yet months passed before reinforcements from England arrived. Codrington urged his home government to move quickly, emphasizing the importance of swift action. While he waited, he raised troops of his own on St. Christopher's, though his efforts were frustrated by deep-seated resentments and divisions within the colonial population. So when a sickly and inadequate force of English troops finally arrived in Antigua in February of 1703, Codrington was deeply disappointed. The delays had given the French time to prepare for their attack and Codrington's opportunity to attach his name to a great military victory was receding quickly.[52]

It was at this moment that Christopher Codrington decided to write a will. On February 22, 1703, Codrington sat down to compose a "Last Will and Testament" in which he disposed of his "worldly Estate." He dispersed a number of his plantations to his "nearest Kinsman," the Lieutenant Col. William Codrington, providing smaller amounts to other friends and family members. To his alma mater All Souls College, Oxford, Codrington gave his book collection along with £10,000 to be used for the construction of a new library. And to the "Society for propagation of the Christian Religion in Forreighn parts," he gave his Barbados plantations and part of the island of Barbuda. His "desier" was:

> To have the Plantations Continued Intire and three hundred negros at Least Kept always thereon, and A Convenient number of Professors and Scholars Maintained there, all of them to be under the vows of Poverty Chastity and obedience, who shall be oblidged to Studdy and Practice Physick and Chyrurgery as well as divinity, that by the apparent usefulness of the former to all mankind, they may Both indear themselves to the People and have the better oppertunitys of doeing good To mens Souls whilst they are Takeing Care of their Bodys. But the Particulars of the Constitution I Leave to the Society Compos'd of good and wise men.[53]

[52] Harlow, *Christopher Codrington, 1668-1710*, 147–156.

[53] Reprinted in Ibid., 217–220.

This short paragraph, tucked in the middle of Codrington's will, would later challenge the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to redefine itself as slave-holding organization. Yet the text itself puzzled many early readers – particularly its reference to "vows of Poverty Chastity and obedience," which seemed oddly Catholic. In order to decipher this passage, it is important to recognize how Codrington's experiences in both England and the Caribbean influenced his thoughts and hopes for the English empire and its colonial citizens. In bringing a "number of Professors and Scholars" to his Barbados plantation, Codrington aimed to transport some small part of Oxford to the West Indies and to cultivate Barbados as a center for learning and education. The obligation "to Studdy and Practice Physick and Chyrurgery as well as divinity" was a recognition of the physical challenges presented by life in the West Indies. Sickness and death were a matter of daily life and Codrington himself had battled a number of serious illnesses. Furthermore, with "three hundred negros" on the plantation, Codrington hoped that medicine and religion would work together by "doeing good To mens Souls whilst…Takeing Care of their Bodys."

Finally, Codrington revealed the enduring influence of his French Catholic acquaintances when he insisted that all scholars should be under "vows of Poverty Chastity and obedience." As the Rev. William Gordon would later explain to the SPG, Codrington hoped his estate would be filled with "monks and missionaries" who would be "employed in the Conversion of Negroes and Indians." He developed this idea, Gordon wrote, "from his Conversation with a Learned Jesuit of St. Christophers," with whom he exchanged "several letters about ye Antiquity, Usefulness, and Excellency of a Monastic Life." Whether the learned Jesuit was Labat or another priest, the influence of the Catholic orders and their role in New World slave societies was powerful.[54]

[54] RHL C/WI/COD/1, 3-6.

*Religious "Others" and the Mission of the Early SPG*

When Christopher Codrington composed his will in 1703, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts was not yet two years old, suggesting that Codrington was closely connected to the circle of concerned Anglicans in London who worried about the future of their national church. Yet despite his connections to the Anglican elite, Codrington's vision of a monastic college in the West Indies clashed with the SPG's strategy at the time. The Society was focused primarily on the northern American colonies, rather than the West Indies, and it targeted Quakers and other "unchurched" Protestants rather than enslaved Africans. The conversion of non-Europeans was also an objective for the SPG, but it was secondary to the needs of English men and women. In one of the SPG's first annual sermons, given in 1704, Gilbert Burnet outlined these priorities concisely:

> Our Designs upon Aliens and Infidels must begin in the Instructing and Reforming our own People, in opening Schools every where, in sending over Books of good Instruction, and above all things, in encouraging and preparing many Labourers to go into that Harvest.[55]

For Burnet, as for other members of the SPG, the English, who were in great need of books, schools, and orthodox ministers, were the first priority.

Between 1701, the year that the SPG was founded, and 1710, when Codrington's bequest was revealed, two individuals were largely responsible for encouraging the Society to make slave conversion a more central part of its' mission: Elias Neau, a New York merchant, and Francis Le Jau, Christopher Codrington's "great friend" who relocated to Goose Creek, South Carolina in 1706. The similarities between the two men are striking: Both were born in France to Protestant families and both emigrated in their early adulthood due to religious persecution; both spent time living and working in the West Indies, where they would have seen the differences between English, French,

[55] Gilbert Burnet, *Of the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. A Sermon Preach'd at St. Mary-le-Bow, Feb. 18. 1703/4. before the Society Incorporated for That Purpose* (London: printed for D. Brown; and R. Sympson, 1704), 20.

and Spanish slave holding practices; and both responded to the Society's directions with a new and fervent vision, urging the SPG to make enslaved Africans a higher priority for evangelization.

Elias Neau was born around 1661 in Rochefort, France to a family of Huguenot sailors. In 1679, when he was eighteen years old, he left France "upon account of [his] Religion" and proceeded to St. Domingo. It is unclear how much time he spent in the Spanish West Indies, but at some point in the next twelve years, he moved to New York, where he married and set to work as a merchant. Neau's ties with the West Indies remained strong and in 1692, he sailed from New York to Jamaica. While en route, French privateers captured his ship and Neau, who refused to denounce his religious beliefs, spent the next five years as a galley slave. When he was finally released in 1697, he published an account of his experiences, entitled *An Account of the Sufferings of the French Protestants, Slaves on board the French Kings Galleys.*[56] His publication circulated among Protestants throughout Europe, including several members of the SPG.[57] Impressed with Neau's fervent commitment to Protestantism, the Secretary of the Society wrote to Neau to recruit him as a lay catechist.

Neau responded to the Society's request with a suggestion: he was eager to reach out to the "great Number of Slaves which we call Negroes of both Sexes & of all ages, who are without God in the World and of whom there is no manner of Care taken." In the following years, Neau worked to reform and convert the black population in New York, providing them with catechisms and other texts. Like Godwyn and Fox, however, he met with severe resistance from slave owners who feared that baptism would make their slaves free. As Neau wrote to John Hodges, "[S]everal believe that if the Negros were Baptised, they could be no longer [be] kept as Slaves after they are admitted into

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[56] Elias Neau, *An Account of the Sufferings of the French Protestants, Slaves on Board the French Kings Galleys* (London: Printed for Richard Parker, 1699).

[57] Travis Glasson has identified the Society's first Secretary, John Chamberlayne, as well as Sir John Phillips, and Dr. Josiah Woodward as early supporters of Neau. Glasson, "Missionaries, Slavery, and Race," 149–50.

the Christian Church." Masters were also concerned that baptism would "Ruin…[their] Plantations," because they "Subsist only by the Labor of those Slaves."[58]

Neau communicated these difficulties to the Society and embarked on an ambitious program to pass legislation that would ensure that baptized slaves would remain in bondage. As he wrote to the SPG in 1703, "if there were a law which permitted the Inhabitants to cause their Negroes to be Instructed and Baptized, I believe that would be of great Advantage provided that the Slaves might have no Right to pretend to a Temporal Liberty." Neau's efforts were rewarded in 1706 with a New York law affirming that "the Baptizing of any Negro, Indian or Mulatto Slave shall not be any Cause or reason for the setting them or any of them at Liberty."[59] Neau's letters also motivated the members of the Society in London to develop their own legislative efforts to "Draught…a Bill to be offer'd to Parliament for the conversion of the Negroes in the Plantations to the Christian Faith." While the bill was never passed, Travis Glasson has shown that the SPG's ongoing efforts to encourage legislation supporting slave baptism culminated with the influential Yorke-Talbot Opinion of 1729, which stated that a slave travelling to Britain would "not become free" and that baptism "doth not bestow Freedom upon him, nor make any alteration in his temporal Condition in these Kingdoms."[60] As these examples show, concerned Protestants often reacted to anti-conversion sentiment by seeking to strengthen and solidify a system of slavery that embraced Christianization and perpetual bondage.

Like Neau, Francis Le Jau was also influential in turning the SPG's attention to slave conversion. After spending three years as a parish minister in St. Christopher where he met frequently with Christopher Codrington, he returned briefly to England. On November 12, 1705, he

[58] Cited in Ibid., 147, 157.

[59] Cited in Ibid., 164.

[60] Glasson, "'Baptism Doth Not Bestow Freedom'," 279.

"presented a paper concerning religion in the Caribbee Islands" where he commented on the miserable state of the established Church in the Leeward Islands, the barbarism shown toward slaves, and the inability of ministers to even "propose" the education and baptism of slaves. He also drew on the French and Spanish example, suggesting that English planters were well aware that slavery was compatible with Christianity, but that planters refused to accept slaves as "Christian Brethren" because it would force them to "use 'em with humanity." Le Jau's presentation coincided with the SPG's efforts to pass parliamentary legislation on slave conversion and his comments surely reinforced the need for action.[61]

Soon after his presentation, Le Jau accepted a position as an SPG missionary in Goose Creek, South Carolina. For the next eleven years, he updated the Society with regular accounts of his struggles to convert blacks, whites, and Indians in the low country. Like Neau, Francis Le Jau had trouble convincing Masters that their slaves should be baptized. In March 1709, he complained that "[m]any Masters can't be perswaded that Negroes and Indians are otherwise than Beasts." Even those who were instructed were unable to be baptized due to their masters' intransigence. "Several sensible and sober slaves have asked me … to be baptised and marryed according to the form of our holy Church," he wrote, but he "cou'd not comply with their desire without the Consent of their Master." While he exhorted the slaves "to perseverance and patience," he was frustrated with the "unjust, profane & inhumane practices" among slave owners.[62]

Eventaully, Le Jau confronted the problem by forcing all adult slaves to make the following declaration before their baptism:

> You declare in the presence of God and before this Congregation that you do not ask for the holy baptism out of any design to free yourself from the duty and Obedience you owe to

[61] LPL SPG Papers, Vol. I: Minutes, 1701-1708, no 71, 12 Nov 1705.

[62] RHL A4/142: Le Jau to the Secretary, 22 March 1708/9.

> your Master while you live but meerly for the good of your Soul and to partake of the Graces and Blessings promised to the Members of the Church of Jesus Christ.[63]

While Le Jau's solution differed from Neau's legislative efforts, both men offered members of the SPG a window into the intensity of anti-conversion sentiment in the American colonies and the challenges to their mission.

The influence of Neau and Le Jau is evident not only in the Society's minutes and legislative efforts, but also in its annual sermons, which were published and distributed in both Europe and America. Until 1706, the SPG's annual sermons made no mention of slaves, focusing instead on the plight of Protestantism among the English at home and abroad.[64] In 1706, however, the conversion of slaves took on a more public role with John Williams' sermon. Williams acknowledged that slaves were "too often discouraged, and refused to be made Christians," and he made a biblical case for slavery, emphasizing that Christianity did not give a slave "Authority to claim his Liberty from the believing Master."[65] William Beveridge's sermon the following year went even further in encouraging slave conversion, claiming that the reason that "[m]ultitudes of Heathens are brought out of *Africa* every Year, and made Slaves to Christians in *America*" was so that they could be "taught the Principles of the Christian Religion." He also hoped that some would eventually "be fit to be sent back again into their own Country, with full Instructions to preach the Gospel to those Nations."[66]

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[63] RHL A5/49: Le Jau to the Secretary, 20 Oct 1709.

[64] Gilbert Burnet's annual sermon from 1704 spent some time comparing English attempts to convert the "heathens" to those of Catholic Spain, but he referred primarily to Indians rather than slaves. See Burnet, *Of the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. A Sermon Preach'd at St. Mary-le-Bow, Feb. 18. 1703/4. before the Society Incorporated for That Purpose.*

[65] John Williams, *A Sermon Preached before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts on February 15. 1705/6.* (London: printed by John Downing, 1706), 21.

[66] William Beveridge, *A Sermon Preach'd Before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, at the Parish Church of St. Mary Le Bow, February 21st, 1706-7* (London: Printed by Joseph Downing, 1707), 21.

These sermons suggest that slave conversion became an increasingly important component of the SPG's mission after Le Jau and Neau began communicating with members of the Society. The fact that two French-born Protestants, both with Caribbean connections, were largely responsible for the turning the SPG's attentions to slave conversion is a reminder of the importance of cross-cultural exchange, French influence, and pan-European Protestantism on English ideas about slavery and Christianity. Yet Le Jau and Neau were not the only sources of influence. In December 1706, the same year that William Beveridge gave his sermon encouraging slave conversion, the SPG minutes included a reference to Morgan Godwyn's *Negro and Indians Advocate*. According to the note, "Mr. AD Kennet produced a Book intiteled the Negros & Indians Advocat &c by Morgan Godwyn." The phrasing of the minute suggests that Godwyn's book was unknown to most Society members and had only recently been rediscovered by Mr. Kennet. It was "Agreed to lay the sd Book before the Society & move them for their Directions therein."[67] The rediscovery of Godwyn's book at this crucial time shows the enduring influence of Godwyn's ideas, even as his texts were periodically forgotten and then rediscovered. It also shows the malleability of the SPG as individual members or colonial missionaries brought attention to new concerns and questions.

Frustrated by the anti-conversion sentiment described by Le Jau and Neau and reminded of Godwyn's thoughts on the subject from decades before, the SPG in these years aimed to both reform and reinforce the institution of slavery. The sermons given by Williams and Beveridge illustrate this dual objective. While neither man questioned the legitimacy of slavery, both criticized the culture of slavery that had developed in the Americas and implied that only moral Christian

[67] LPL SPG Papers, Vol. I: Minutes, 1701-1708, no. 137: 16 Dec 1706; LPL SPG Papers, Vol. I: Minutes, 1701-1708, no. 138-9: 20 Dec 1706. White Kennett preached the annual sermon in 1712, in which he built on Godwyn's texts to criticize impediments to slave and Indian conversion. White Kennett, *The Lets and Impediments in Planting and Propagating the Gospel of Christ. A Sermon Preach'd before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* (London: Printed and sold by Joseph Downing, 1712).

masters had a right to own slaves. This edge is evident in Beveridge's comment that Christian slaves had no "Authority to claim his Liberty from the believing Master." The addition of the adjective "believing" in this case suggested that an un-Christian master had no such right. Similarly, Beveridge suggested that the entire justification for African slavery lay in christianization, implying that God "would never have suffered" such an institution if slaves were to remain "heathens."[68]

*Codrington Plantation and Transition to Slave Ownership*

On April 7, 1710, Christopher Codrington died in his childhood home at the age of forty-two. He was buried the following day in St. Michael's Church, Barbados, where the Rev. William Gordon gave his funeral sermon. Gordon heaped praise on Codrington for knowing the "True Value of Learning and Piety," characterizing him as "an Accomplish'd Well-bred Gentleman" and a "Universal Scholar" who had an "Affection of a Monastic Life." After learning of Codrington's bequest to the SPG, Gordon added an introductory letter to his sermon and dedicated it to the members of the Society. In his introduction, Gordon wrote that Codrington's will would "set a Noble PATTERN to all those, whom Providence hath Blessed with Plentiful Fortunes, arising from their Commerce with the *yet Dark and Unbelieving Parts of the World*." He hoped that others would "Consecrat[e] some Part of their Great *Estates*, to the Conversion and Instruction of those *Infidels*, to whose Labour, under Providence, they owe their Wealth and Affluence."[69]

Codrington, who died unexpectedly of fever, may have intended to compose a longer and more explicit will. As the attorneys of the estate wrote the following year, his was "a Soldier's Will"

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[68] Beveridge, *A Sermon Preach'd Before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, at the Parish Church of St. Mary Le Bow, February 21st, 1706-7*, 21.

[69] William Gordon, *A Sermon Preach'd at the Funeral of the Honourable Colonel Christopher Codrington, Late Captain General and Governor in Chief of Her Majesty's Carribbee Islands; Who Departed This Life at His Seat in Barbadoes, on Good-Friday the 7th of April 1710 and Was Interr'd the Day Following in the Parish Church of St. Michael.* (London: Printed for G. Strahan, 1710), 20–1, 3–4.

written while Codrington was "in his boots" preparing for the expedition to Guadaloupe.[70] William Gordon felt that if Codrington had been "more Apprehensive of his Death," he would have "done yet Greater Things for the advancement of Learning and Piety."[71] As it was, it was left to the living to interpret and execute Codrington's last wishes. Unfortunately for the SPG, the unusual language of his bequest – particularly the reference to "vows of poverty chastity and obedience" – provided grounds for dispute. Soon after his will was made public, Lieutenant William Codrington, Codrington's closest kinsman, presented a litany of arguments against the legality of Codrington's bequest. These included that the Society was not legally qualified to take the estates; that Codrington's bequest was "popish & consequently …void"; and that 70 of the slaves on his estate had been purchased after his death and thus belonged to his heir at law.[72]

As controversy brewed, William Gordon wrote to the SPG, informing them of the situation and providing critical information about Codrington's intentions. It is from Gordon, rather than the text of Codrington's will, that slave conversion is listed as a principal concern and Codrington's French Catholic influences are explained. As Gordon wrote, "the design of the bequest was the maintenance of Monks and Missionaries" who were to be "employed in the Conversion of Negroes and Indians." Codrington's ideas were taken "from his Conversation with a Learned Jesuit of St. Christophers" with whom he had exchanged "several letters about ye Antiquity, Usefulness, and Excellency of a Monastic Life." Gordon also noted that he had sent his funeral sermon to London to be printed and that Dr. George Smalridge, Codrington's Oxford tutor, would "present it to them,

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[70] Woodbridge and Ramsay to the Secretary, 20 June 1711. RHL A6/111.

[71] Gordon, *A Sermon Preach'd at the Funeral of the Honourable Colonel Christopher Codrington*, 4.

[72] Frank Joseph Klingberg, "Of the Noble and Generous Benefaction of General Christopher Codrington," in *Codrington Chronicle: An Experiment in Anglican Altruism on a Barbados Plantation, 1710-1834,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 23.

on [his] behalf."[73] On November 17, 1710, the Secretary of the SPG reported that he had received "several copies of a Sermon preach'ed by the Reverend Mr. William Gordon at the funeral of General Codrington (which sermon was dedicated to the Society)" by Dr. Smalridge. Smalridge wanted the Secretary to distribute the sermon to "every Member."[74]

Codrington's bequest flooded the members of the Society with optimism about the prospect of slave conversion. While their mission to slaves had been stymied by the un-Christian behavior of slave owners, they now had the opportunity to become masters in their own right and display to the world the potential of a truly Christianized slave system. This optimism is evident in William Fleetwood's sermon from 1711. Fleetwood articulated a radical vision of Christian slavery that went further than previous SPG sermons in its condemnation of English slave-holding culture. Pivoting between bold criticisms of slavery and profoundly pragmatic approaches to the demands of trade and national progress, he dismantled three "excuses" that slave owners had given to defend their anti-conversion sentiment. To the claim that baptism would make slaves free, Fleetwood answered that the "Liberty of Christianity is entirely Spiritual." To the argument that Christian slaves would have to be treated with "less Rigour," Fleetwood replied that it was a "great Mistake" to treat even a "*Savage*" or an *"Infidel*" with "Inhumanity." And to the pretence that it would be unlawful to sell a Christian slave, Fleetwood insisted that the "growth of *Christianity*" was all that mattered: "let the Christians," he continued, "be Sold, and Bound, and Scourged, condemn'd to Bonds and Imprisonment, to endure all Hardships and Disgrace, *and to enter into Heaven, Blind, and Halt, and Maimed*, rather than having two Eyes, and Hands and Feet entire, to perish Miserable. That is the Sum of all I have been saying." Fleetwood's comments united tropes

[73] RHL C/WI/COD/1, pp. 3-6.

[74] Papers of the Barbados Committee, 17 Nov. 1710. RHL SPG X-Series, Vol. 1.

of martyrdom with a fervent passion for Christian expansion.[75]

Fleetwood's vision for a Christianized slavery culminated with a description of Codrington's bequest and the possibilities it offered to both the SPG and the British Empire. "We are now, by the Munificence of a truly *Honourable Gentleman*," he revealed to his audience, "our selves become the *Patrons* of at least *Three Hundred Slaves*." Fleetwood believed that the bequest was an act of providence. "I see," he continued "and cannot but adore, the gracious Hand of God." It was at Codrington's plantations that the SPG could implement its vision: "We must instruct [the slaves] in the Faith of Christ," Fleetwood stressed, "bring them to Baptism, and put them in the way that leads to everlasting life." In so doing, they would set a precedent for the rest of the world: "This will be preaching *by Example,* the most effectual way of recommending Doctrines, to a hard and unbelieving World, blinded by Interest, and other Prepossessions." Even if "all the Slaves throughout *America*, and every *Island* in those Seas, were to continue Infidels for ever," he concluded, "yet *ours alone must needs be Christians*."[76]

Fleetwood's sermon marked the high point in optimism about Codrington plantation. Two years later, the Society sent a single man, the Cambridge-educated Joseph Holt, to serve as both missionary and medical practitioner on the Society's lands. Despite best intentions and a good salary, Holt's mission was a "dismal failure" and he abandoned his post after a year. Many of his successors died soon after their arrival and it was not until 1726 that a single slave was baptized. Even in the late 1720s and 1730s, when Thomas Wilkie, the SPG's new catechist, and Arthur Holt, Joseph Holt's son, made a concerted effort to convert slaves, the entangled goals of profit and

[75] Fleetwood, *A Sermon Preached before the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, at the Parish Church of St. Mary-le-Bow, on Friday the 16th of February, 1710/11*, 18–28.

[76] Ibid., 30–2.

proselytizing undermined the Society's appeal to slaves.[77] Within this context, as Travis Glasson has argued, resistance to slavery became resistance to Christianity, and the enslaved men and women on Codrington rejected the Anglican message. Furthermore, as Andrew Beahrs has demonstrated, metropolitan ideals clashed with colonial realities and the Society's missionaries were unable to bridge the chasm that Codrington had identified during his life.[78] As a result, the Society's grand intentions of "preaching *by Example*…to a hard and unbelieving World" became an embarrassment.

The SPG's missteps in Barbados were not the only reason for the mission's failure. Upon receipt of Codrington's will in 1710, the Society made a critical change that altered the substance of its author's intentions. As noted previously, Codrington's reference to "vows of poverty Chastity and obedience" raised eyebrows among many, and became fodder for one of William Codrington's many arguments against the document's legitimacy. Several members of the Society also questioned the meaning of the phrase. As Codrington's friend, Bishop Tanner, wrote in a letter, the reference seemed "very monastic," a subtle but damning comment.[79] Archbishop Tenison addressed the issue as well. While he didn't outright claim that the phrase was "popish," he did tactfully reject Codrington's wishes, citing a lack of "stock":

> As to the proposal of breeding up poor Boys in order to their being Missionaries, it was spoken of at the beginning of the Society, but the stock was too slender to Admit of it. Now we have another expedient of that kind, Col. Codrington's College … The cutting of any other Channels, will (I fear) drain our Stock too much.[80]

As this passage shows, Archbishop Tenison reinterpreted Codrington's vision of scholars who

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[77] Glasson, *Mastering Christianity*, 155–7.

[78] Beahrs, "Ours Alone Must Needs Be Christians"."

[79] Cited in Harlow, *Christopher Codrington, 1668-1710*, 213.

[80] RHL A6/38: Archbishop Tenison to the Secretary, 22 March 1710/11.

were under "vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience" as a call to "breed…up poor Boys." Recruiting and training poor boys for work in the mission field was a more palatable option for Anglicans and, as Tenison mentioned, the Society had considered such an option at the beginning of the century. Yet neither option was feasible: As Tenison noted, such a plan would "drain our Stock too much." In the end, the reference to "vows of Poverty Chastity and obedience" was quietly deleted from Codrington's will.

This alteration, while seemingly minor, was indicative of the SPG's failure to correctly interpret and enact Codrington's intentions. Instead of creating a robust missionary institution on Codrington's estates, the Society sent only one catechist to combat the entrenched opposition of colonial planters. In doing so, the SPG followed their own precedent, rather than Codrington's wishes. Yet the reason for this was not just religious. Tenison's reaction provides insight into the full complexity of the problem: not only did Codrington's plan sound too Catholic, it also required too much investment. The SPG did not have the ability to support the education, training, and deployment of the number of missionaries that could enact Codrington's plan.

The SPG's interpretation of Codrington's will signaled an underlying problem in the Protestant missionary enterprise: lack of infrastructure. Unlike the Catholic orders, Protestant missions lacked the bureaucracy, funding, and experience to enact their intentions. And while financing could not ensure success, the lack of institutional support and the insufficient missionary supply plagued the SPG in Barbados and elsewhere. It was this dual problem – of financing and philosophy – that doomed the Society's program of slave conversion in the Caribbean.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Inner Slavery and Spiritual Freedom: German Pietism and the Critique of Black Christianity on St. Thomas, 1730-1735

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On October 6, 1731, Anton Ulrich, an Afro-Caribbean servant living in Copenhagen, wrote a letter to Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, the leader of the Moravian Church. In it, Ulrich thanked the Count for inviting him to Herrnhut, the village on the Count's estate that served as headquarters for the Moravians. "I will never forget that I was in your blessed home," he wrote, "and whenever I think about the practice of Christianity among you, all I want to do is think about my sins, and love the dear Lord…"[1] Ulrich had just returned from a two-month visit to Herrnhut where he worshipped among the Moravian brethren and described life in St. Thomas, the island in the Danish West Indies where he had been born as a slave. Ulrich "spoke plaintively about his sister and the other blacks in St. Thomas" and urged the brethren to come to the aid of the enslaved men and women who, he insisted, desperately "wanted to learn about God and become Christians."[2] The response to Ulrich's appeal was recorded directly on a copy of his letter: "This is the letter from the Black, Anton Ulrich…He created the opportunity for the St. Thomas [mission]."[3]

Anton Ulrich went down in Moravian history as the "doorway to the heathen," the man who initiated the Moravian missions to enslaved Africans. His place in the church's history was not incidental: he was entered consciously into the Moravian archive by, among others, the Moravian scribe who not only recopied Ulrich's letter, but also added a short introduction to explain his

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[1] Anton Ulrich to Zinzendorf, October 6, 1731. UA R.15.Ba.3.1. All translations are my own.

[2] Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp, *Historie der caribischen Inseln Sanct Thomas, Sanct Crux und Sanct Jan, insbesondere der dasigen Neger und der Mission der evangelischen Brüder unter denselben*, ed. Gudrun Meier et al., vol. 2 (Berlin: VWB - Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, 2002), 18.

[3] Anton Ulrich to Zinzendorf, October 6, 1731. UA R.15.Ba.3.1

significance. Ulrich's status as a former slave allowed the Moravians to claim that they had received a direct invitation to evangelize, providing them with legitimacy they did not receive from slave owners. Even two decades later, when the Moravians began to plan a new slave mission on Jamaica, they remembered "the negro Anton," who "gave us the opportunity to begin our mission in St. Thomas," comparing him to a black visitor from Jamaica who, like Anton, asked the brethren to preach the gospel to his family in the Caribbean.[4]

The Moravians needed the promise of slave support to initiate their mission to St. Thomas because Protestant slave conversion lacked both institutional and state backing. Unlike their Catholic competitors, Protestant empires were late in developing a centralized policy of religious engagement with enslaved Africans. Without a uniform plan to encourage or enforce the baptism and evangelization of enslaved workers, the status of Christianity in the Protestant colonies was left largely in the hands of slave owners, most of whom avoided or outright rejected the idea that their human property should – or could – be converted to Christianity. While some masters quietly introduced favored slaves to Christianity, sometimes granting them manumission after baptism, Quakers, Anglicans and Moravians were the only Protestant denominations to implement policies of slave conversion between 1660 and 1740. While Quakers promoted slave conversion as an afterthought and Anglicans saw their slave missions as ancillary to their larger goal of reclaiming British America for the Church of England, the Moravians were first and foremost interested in "reaching the heathen." By the end of the eighteenth century, Moravian global missions had become a major force not only in the Americas, but also in Africa, and they provided an evangelical model for conversion that was copied by other Protestant groups.

This chapter asks why a small Protestant group from eastern Saxony decided to make enslaved Africans a primary target of their global missions and how the ensuing mission forced the

[4] *Gemein Nachrichten*, Vol 1. (1754), 378-380. UA GN 1754 1 A.34 (I-XII).

missionaries – and the Moravian church – to adjust their ideas about slavery, race and freedom. It also highlights a tension in the emergence of black Protestantism that is often overlooked: the conflict between black Christians who had been baptized within the established churches of the colonies, such as the Dutch Reformed or Anglican, and the pietist and evangelical missionaries like the Moravians who embraced both slavery and spiritual equality. While a number of scholars have shown how the evangelical Protestant denominations, such as the Moravians, Methodists, and Baptists, brought enslaved and free blacks into their fold with their ideas of salvation and their affective worship practices, we know less about the difficulties that these same missionaries had when they met blacks who had already converted to one of the established churches.[5] As I showed in Chapter 1, slave conversion in the Protestant colonies was largely left in the hands of slave owners who tended to view conversion as a destabilizing and unpredictable force; at the same time, many masters chose to introduce favored slaves to Christianity, teaching them to read and allowing them to be baptized in the established church. As a result, Protestantism was reserved for the most "elite" slaves, some of whom were eventually emancipated by their masters. When a new wave of radical pietists and evangelical Christians arrived in the colonies hoping to bring the gospel to enslaved Africans in the 1730s and later, their vision of conversion was at odds not only with white colonists in the established churches, but also with the black Christians they met. The conflict between these two radically different visions of Protestantism represents not only an important factor in the history of black Christianity, but also a major shift in the relationship between Protestantism and slavery in the Atlantic World.

[5] See, for example, Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*; Randy J. Sparks, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks: Evangelicalism in Mississippi, 1773- 1876* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994); Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*. Frey and Wood acknowledge the efforts of the SPG to convert slaves, but characterize their attempts as a failure. While this is mostly true, an overemphasis on missionary efforts obscures the conversion of "elite" slaves who were offered special privileges by their masters.

This chapter examines this broader transformation in Atlantic Protestantism by focusing on the first four years of the Moravian mission to St. Thomas, led by Leonhard Dober and David Nitschmann. Dober and Nitschmann initially sought to sell themselves into slavery in order to evangelize to slaves, a plan that was later rejected when the missionaries were told that white people were not allowed to be slaves. The missionaries' original plan can be seen as a sign of naiveté but it also hinted at a radical rejection of earthly standing that would lead to their acceptance of slavery and a dismissal of the majority of the West Indian population, whether black or white, as true Christians. Indeed, with their pietist leanings and their strong belief that only conversion could lead to true freedom, Dober and Nitschmann introduced a radical new type of Christianity to the Danish West Indies. They divorced conversion from manumission while simultaneously undermining the racial hierarchy on the island in new and important ways that were sometimes compelling but often threatening to both slaves and masters.

When Dober and Nitschmann arrived on St. Thomas in 1732, they found a number of free blacks and Christian slaves who had already been baptized. The missionaries criticized these black Christians for placing too much emphasis on learning without reforming their family structures and behavior. While the black Christians they met, like most whites in the Caribbean, associated Christianity with increased status and emancipation, Dober and Nitschmann rejected these connections. They argued that "inner slavery" was not connected to "outer slavery" and that a slave could be a better Christian – and more "free" – than his or her master. Unsurprisingly, the Moravians' brand of Christianity did not appeal to the existing population of black Christians on the island, most of whom had worked hard to increase their social and religious standing. This chapter parses the exchanges between black Christians and Moravian missionaries and argues that pietist Christianity initially appealed to non-elite slaves, while elite slaves were more likely to join established churches such as the Dutch Reformed or Anglican.

Finally, while most scholarship on the Moravian missions has emphasized the radicalism of the early missionaries, I argue that the meaning of radicalism must be reexamined.[6] While the Moravian missionaries were radical in their pietist critique of Reformed Christianity, criticizing both black and whites Christians for excessive formalism and too little "heart-felt" religious conviction, they were not radical in their view of slavery. As Moravian missionaries like Dober and Nitschmann adapted to Caribbean society, they concluded that "outer" slavery was of little consequence. Whether in bondage or not, Afro-Caribbeans could become "free" by embracing Christ, not by receiving their free papers. When they returned to Europe, Dober and Nitschmann brought with them a commitment to the slave system that surprised many of the European pietists they met. Insisting that slaves could remain slaves even when they were Christian, they helped to organize and define the nascent Moravian missionary infrastructure and philosophy that emphasized the insignificance of "outer" slavery. These missionaries aimed to integrate African slavery into Christian practice with a determination unmatched by even slave owners, who often feared that Christian slaves would have to be freed. As proponents of Christian slavery, Dober and Nitschmann helped build the theological foundation not only for the Moravian missions, but also for Protestant slave missions more broadly.

*Mission History: A Note on C.G.A. Oldendorp and Moravian Sources*

In May of 1767, thirty-five years after Dober and Nitschmann landed on St. Thomas, the Moravian historian Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp arrived in the Danish West Indies to conduct research for his church-sponsored history of the mission. He remained there for seventeen

[6] Jon Sensbach argued that it was not until Count Zinzendorf's arrival on St. Thomas in 1739 that the Moravians embraced the institution of slavery whole-heartedly. While Zinzendorf's arrival did mark a turning point for the mission, I argue that the Moravian embrace of slavery occurred in the first weeks of the mission, when Dober and Nitschmann arrived in St. Thomas. See Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*, 157.

months, interviewing slaves, missionaries, and masters, and collecting information about natural history, culture, and language. His observations, which have rightfully been identified as one of the most significant first-hand accounts of eighteenth century Caribbean slave society, have largely governed historical accounts of the Moravian mission to St. Thomas. As the single most important source on the Danish West Indies and the Moravian slave missions in the eighteenth century, Oldendorp's text serves me as both a source of information and a location of analysis. Comparing the original letters and diaries written from 1731-1735 with the newly released version of Oldendorp's *Historie*, this chapter reinvestigates the founding of the Moravian mission to St. Thomas by paying close attention to the conscious creation of the Moravian archive.[7]

[7] Oldendorp's *Historie*, like David Cranz's *Historie von Grönland*, was one of a series of books intended to illuminate the methods and objectives of their global missions. Unlike Cranz's history of the Greenland mission, however, Oldendorp's *Historie* was not published for nearly a decade and then, in a form that the author considered to be highly unsatisfactory. Oldendorp listed his grievances in a series of letters to the Ältestenconferenz. The letters are reprinted in Ingeborg Baldauf, "Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp Als Historiker," in *Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp: Historie Der Caraibischen Inseln Sanct Thomas, Sanct Crux Und Sanct Jan: Kommentarband*, ed. Gudrun Meier et al. (Herrnhut: Herrnhuter Verlag, 2010), 81–140. Oldendorp's original manuscript was voluminous: divided into two sections, it included firsthand interviews with slaves, a natural history of the islands, and a detailed history of the mission together with careful observations about the Danish West Indian slave society. Oldendorp's manuscript was criticized for focusing too heavily on the natural and social histories of the Danish islands. His text was also too long and too expensive to print. See the notes from the Generalsynode on 29. Okt 1770 reprinted in Ibid., 67–8. When neither the original nor an edited version of the manuscript proved to be acceptable to the Moravian Elders, Johann Jakob Bossart was appointed to prepare the Oldendorp's history for publication. Bossart's edited version of Oldendorp's *Historie* was significantly shorter than the original and it focused primarily on the details of the mission. Until the 21st century, it was the only version easily accessible to scholars, and it remains the only version translated into English. See C. G. A. Oldendorp, *A Caribbean Mission*, ed. Johann Jakob Bossart, trans. Arnold R. Highfield and Vladimir Barac (Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, 1987). Oldendorp's original manuscript was published for the first time in German in 2000 and 2002. Before then, the manuscript version was available only at the Unitätsarchiv der Evangelischen Brüder-Unität in Herrnhut, Germany. See Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp, *Historie der caribischen Inseln Sanct Thomas, Sanct Crux und Sanct Jan, insbesondere der dasigen Neger und der Mission der evangelischen Brüder unter denselben*, ed. Gudrun Meier et al., 2 vols. (Berlin: VWB - Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, 2000 & 2002).

*The Renewed Unity*

In 1727, the Moravian Brethren, also known as Unitas Fratrum, were both the oldest and the youngest Protestant group in existence. Claiming descent from the 14th century martyr Jan Hus, a Czech reformer who anticipated many of Luther's later critiques of the Catholic Church, the Renewed Brethren were deeply influenced by German Pietism, a movement within the Lutheran church that sought to emphasize personal piety and faith. These two traditions were united by the Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, a German nobleman who allowed a group of persecuted Moravian and Bohemian brethren to settle on his estate in eastern Saxony. Zinzendorf had received a Pietist education in Halle where Philipp Jakob Spener, the "father of pietism," had established a university. Zinzendorf was intrigued by the beliefs and practices of the refugees and, in 1722, he allowed them to establish a settlement just up the hill from his own castle. The settlement was named Herrnhut, or "under the care of the Lord."

Herrnhut became a refuge for a variety of persecuted Protestants, mostly from Bohemia and Moravia.[8] In 1727, after a period of discord and struggle, the community went through a religious transformation that marked the founding of the Renewed Unitas Fratrum, also known as the Moravian Church.[9] The renewal was preceded by a community reorganization initiated by Zinzendorf: men and women were split into separate "choirs" based on their age, gender, and marital status and twelve elders were chosen to have spiritual oversight over the settlement. The

[8] Sensbach notes that the first group of refugees were "not Czech, but the descendants of German Waldensians who had migrated to Moravia and joined the Unity in 1480. They thus constituted the historical link between the old Unitas Fratrum and what would soon become, under Zinzendorf's patronage, the Renewed Unity of the Brethren." Jon F. Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 24.

[9] For details on the social and religious conflicts leading up to the Renewal, see W. R. Ward, "The Renewed Unity of the Brethren: Ancient Church, New Sect or Interconfessional Movement?," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 70, no. 3 (October 1988): 77–92.

Herrnhut community also introduced the use of the lot to make decisions, a method that was intended to allow the Brethren to determine God's will.

As an ancient Protestant church that was heavily influenced by German pietism but also dependant on feudal protection, the Renewed Unity of the Brethren combined a radical rejection of earthly stations with a Lutheran commitment to social hierarchy. In other words, social standing was considered unimportant to spiritual salvation, but nevertheless fixed. This combination of radical and conservative beliefs about class and human difference served as an important foundation for the Moravian missions to slaves, as well as other non-European peoples. The Moravians were primed to see the potential for spiritual salvation everywhere, and they were zealous in their rejection of status as a significant factor in demarcating religiosity. Indeed, they tended to see more spiritual potential in "simple" people, particularly the poor.[10] As for ideas about race, the Herrnhutters left few clues as to how they regarded physical difference in the 1730s because "race" was not yet a salient category for Moravians. Instead, they divided the world into Christian and heathen. They also relied heavily on the term "nations" to organize the different populations of the world and they took inspiration from Matthew 28:19, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Almost immediately after their Renewal, members of the Moravian church began to travel around Europe to spread word of their revival. Seeking to "establish bonds of fellowship with the 'children of God' in other cities, lands, and churches," Moravian emissaries were sent to England, Denmark, and throughout Germany.[11] The Moravians' far-flung connections proved to be of utmost importance as they became increasingly unpopular in Saxony. As the influence of the Herrnhuters and their revival spread, local clergy lodged complaints that their parishioners were being tempted

[10] Sensbach, *A Separate Canaan*, 27–9.

[11] Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England, 1728-1760*, 8.

away from the established churches and in 1732, Augustus the Strong, King of Poland and elector of Saxony, banished Zinzendorf and required him to sell his property.[12] When Augustus the Strong died the following year, his successor granted clemency, but the effect of the episode on the Moravians was strong: they "had no option but to become a missionary body."[13]

While the Moravians' increasingly precarious political position in Saxony was a major factor in the development of new missions and settlements, the form and content of their missions were by no means fixed or determined. It was left to chance and conviction to determine the direction of Moravian outreach. And as chance would have it, these factors came together in 1731 at the coronation of the King of Denmark, with a meeting between Anton Ulrich and David Nitschmann, a Moravian carpenter travelling with Count Zinzendorf.

*Anton Ulrich and the Caribbean Connection*

Anton Ulrich was born a slave in St. Thomas, where he lived until he traveled to Copenhagen with his master, the Danish Count Laurwig. After a difficult journey in which his wife fell overboard, Ulrich found solace in his baptism, which was performed in Denmark. Ulrich's conversion to Christianity represented a model of slave conversion that embraced both spiritual and earthly salvation. Under this schema, favored slaves could be singled out for attention and education. If the slave proved him or herself to be worthy, baptism and emancipation would often follow. Like the later Moravian convert Rebecca, who was probably granted her liberty after her

[12] Zinzendorf followed Augustus the Strong's mandate by selling his property to his wife. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening.*

[13] Ibid., 129.

education, conversion, and baptism, Anton was manumitted sometime during his stay in Copenhagen and when he returned to St. Thomas in 1734, he was a free man.[14]

In 1731, Ulrich met David Nitschmann, a Moravian carpenter who had accompanied the Count to Copenhagen to attend the King's coronation. Ulrich told Nitschmann that his interest in Christianity had been fostered in St. Thomas, but he criticized the un-Christian behavior of most whites on the island, explaining that the so-called Christians said one thing and did another. This type of criticism appealed to Nitschmann, who agreed that many European Christians were similarly two-faced. As the two men confided in one another, Ulrich told Nitschmann more about Caribbean slavery and the "miserable position of the blacks in St. Thomas." He mentioned that his own sister remained in St. Thomas and desperately wanted to know God, but that she didn't have any opportunity. Nitschmann relayed this news to Zinzendorf, who saw the potential for a missionary venture to the small island. The Count convinced Ulrich's master, Count Laurwig, to allow his servant to visit the Brethren in Herrnhut. After making arrangements, Zinzendorf returned to Herrnhut ahead of Ulrich and Nitschmann, where he reported what Ulrich had told him about the slaves in St. Thomas and their desire to become Christians.[15]

Ulrich and Nitschmann arrived in Herrnhut on July 29, 1731, eight days after the Count. After being introduced to the congregation, Ulrich repeated his description of St. Thomas and told the Brethren about the misery of the slaves and their ignorance of Christianity. Not only did the slaves have very little time "for learning and instruction," but their masters were "openly against it."

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[14] Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*, 36–7.

[15] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:17. Nitschmann recounted the meeting himself in a report about his travels with Dober, though he did not go into as much detail as Oldendorp. "Bericht David Nitschmanns über seine Reise mit Dober," in Rüdiger Kröger, ed., *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission* (Herrnhut: Comenius-Buchhandlung, 2006), 62–3.

One of the brothers in the audience was Leonhard Dober, who "couldn't stop thinking" about the slaves in St. Thomas. Despite resistance from other brethren, who felt that his plan was poorly conceived, Dober insisted that he was called to work among the slaves in St. Thomas. He concluded that if he could find another Brother to accompany him, he would "give [him]self as a slave and tell [the slaves on St. Thomas] what I knew about our Lord."[16]

Dober's willingness to become a slave in order to carry the gospel to St. Thomas revealed a conception of slavery that was not based solely on racial difference. He and Nitschmann, who was also willing to become a slave, conceived of Caribbean slavery as a malleable category that could be entered into by choice or by force. The missionaries' ignorance can be attributed to their lack of familiarity with Atlantic slavery, but it also reveals a general disregard for earthly standing. Nitschmann and especially Dober seemed to relish the idea of becoming slaves in order to spread the Gospel. Their eagerness to toil among the unfree was an early indication of their belief that true freedom was spiritual. It is also important that Dober and Nitschmann did not conceive of the idea to become slaves on their own: it was Anton Ulrich who warned the brethren that the slave masters were so hostile towards learning and instruction that "white people would have a very difficult time talking with or teaching the slaves, and if someone really wanted to do that, he would have to live among them and become a slave like them, so that he would be able to be among them and have the opportunity to instruct them."[17]

Ulrich's suggestion that the Moravian missionaries would need to become slaves perplexed the Moravian historian C.G.A. Oldendorp. Writing thirty years after Ulrich's visit to Herrnhut,

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[16] Leonard Dober, "Mitteilung Dobers an die Gemeine Herrnhut über seine Bereitschaft nach St. Thomas zu gehen. Herrnhut, 16. Juni 1731," in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 28.

[17] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:18. I have not found Oldendorp's source for this description. It may be based on oral interviews he conducted.

Oldendorp commented: "the thought that they would have to becomes slaves was terrifying but also false and unnecessary…It was well known to this Negro [Anton] that no whites could be made or taken as slaves and even if he wanted to become one, he wouldn't be allowed." Oldendorp was sure that Ulrich would have known that only blacks could be slaves, and he was left to ponder what he could have meant: maybe he was "trying to show just how difficult it would be to spend time with [the slaves]"; or "perhaps he thought that they should become a foreman or an overseer…and that this wasn't correctly understood."[18] As Oldendorp suggested, Ulrich may have been trying to explain how difficult it would be for non-slaves to gain access to the slave population. It is also possible that he was testing boundaries of racial difference and religious access.

Oldendorp's horrified reaction to the idea that white Christian missionaries could be slaves is an indication of how the conceptions of race and slavery would change within the Moravian church. Oldendorp's own experiences in the Danish West Indies in the 1760s gave him a thoroughly racial understanding of slavery. Using the Danish term for whites, "blancken," which was ubiquitous on St. Thomas, he denied that whites could ever be "made or taken as slaves," even if they desired it. His disbelief that whites could be slaves was a consequence of his direct involvement in a Caribbean slave society. The same attitude had quietly become the pervasive assumption in the Moravian church. In 1731, however, neither Nitschmann nor Dober (nor Zinzendorf, for that matter) had seen a Caribbean slave society firsthand, and their only window into that world was Anton Ulrich.

Ulrich returned to Copenhagen in September of 1731 after two months in Herrnhut. Dober and Nitschmann followed him the following year, arriving on September 15, 1732. After a year of anticipation and planning, they were eager to reunite with the man who had inspired their mission. Given these expectations, they were surely shocked to learn that Anton Ulrich no longer wanted

[18] Ibid., 2:19. In Bossart's edited version, most of this section is deleted. Oldendorp, *A Caribbean Mission*.

them to travel to St. Thomas. While Ulrich and his new wife initially welcomed the missionaries on the day after their arrival, it later became clear that neither Ulrich nor his master, Count Laurwig, supported their missionary venture. In a letter to Herrnhut written on September 23, 1732, Dober and Nitschmann reported that Count Laurwig "has created a lot of difficulties for us; told us our plan would never work and he said that he would have nothing to do with it."[19] Ulrich later begged the brothers not to go through with their plan, and the Senior Chamberlain von Plessen, one of the directors of the Danish West India Company, asked them how they planned to support themselves on St. Thomas.[20] When Nitschmann replied that they "wanted to work among the Negroes," von Plessen informed him that they "don't let white people do that!" Nitschmann then suggested that he could work as a carpenter, and that Dober could be his assistant. Despite this, von Plessen and Count Laurwig refused the brothers passage on the Danish West India Company's ships and they were forced to find transportation elsewhere.[21]

Dober and Nitschmann's negative reception in Copenhagen can be interpreted in a number of ways. Ulrich, von Plessen, and Laurwig may have been sincere in their attempt to dissuade the missionaries from going through with their mission. For in reality, Dober and Nitschmann's plan to carry the gospel to the slaves in St. Thomas *was* both dangerous and badly planned. With very little money and a dubious plan for earning a living, it was reasonable to suggest that their mission would

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[19] "Brief Dobers Und Nitschmanns [an die Gemeine Herrnhut?]." Kopenhagen, 23. September 1732. Reprinted in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 37–39; Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:29–30.

[20] Oddly, Nitschmann and Dober's original diary does not mention's Ulrich's part in this. It is only later, in a report to the Countess of Stölberg-Wenigerode, that Dober wrote: "the Moor was also very changed when we arrived, and it was because of this that the Count Laurwig concluded that it was impractical to go there." "Mittelung an eine Gräfin zu Stölberg-Wernigerode über die Missionsarbeit in Westindien. Anfang 1740." Reprinted in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 85–90.

[21] "Bericht David Nitschmanns über seine Reise mit Dober. Ca. 1733." Reprinted in Ibid., 62–3.

never get off the ground.[22] The brothers' assertion that they would become slaves themselves, an idea that had been suggested by Ulrich, made them seem ridiculous to the Directors of the Danish West India Company. Yet Dober and Nitschmann's problems in Copenhagen cannot just be ascribed to their bad planning. The Danish West India and Guinea Company was in a period of crisis, and Count Laurwig had stepped down as the President of the Company on September 12, 1732, just days before Dober and Nitschmann's arrival in Copenhagen. The Senior Chamberlain von Plessen was in the process of lobbying for the purchase of St. Croix from the French, an acquisition he hoped would turn the Danish West India and Guinea Company into a stronger and more profitable enterprise.[23] Nitschmann and Dober, with their aspiration of becoming white slaves, were probably seen as liabilities who could potentially cause instability in the Danish islands.

While Laurwig and von Plessen had political and economic reasons for discouraging the missionaries, this does not explain why Anton Ulrich turned away from the Moravians. According to Oldendorp, Ulrich was "taken in by false Brothers and religious people who had clashed with Herrnhut, who were all against the Moravian congregation." Their influence, Oldendorp suggested, caused Ulrich to "take back what he had said and to convince the Brothers not to go through with their plan."[24] Oldendorp may have based this conclusion on Leonard Dober's *Mitteilung an eine Gräfin zu Stölberg-Wernigerode*, written in 1740, eight years after Dober's initial visit to Copenhagen. In his *Report*, Dober wrote, "the Moor was very changed when we arrived, and it was because of this that

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[22] Dober and Nitschmann departed Herrnhut with just three thaler and two ducats. J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth G. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church. The Renewed Unitas Fratrum 1722-1757.* (Bethlehem, PA and Winston-Salem, NC: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education, Moravian Church in America, 1967), 46.

[23] Waldemar Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies Under Company Rule* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 202–3.

[24] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:29–30.

the Count Laurwig concluded that it was impractical to go [to St. Thomas]."[25] Yet the original diaries and letters from 1732 paint a slightly different picture. Nitschmann and Dober suggested that Ulrich had been mistreated by other servants in Copenhagen and that he was more subdued than usual. In their first letter to Zinzendorf, they wrote that Anton "was very serious and has been persecuted by the servants."[26] Dober did not mention if these servants were anti-Moravian, nor did he suggest that Ulrich had joined a separate anti-Moravian group. Moreover, Dober and Nitschmann continued meeting with Ulrich throughout their stay in Copenhagen, a fact that suggests that Ulrich did not reject the missionaries outright.

Another possibility is that Ulrich felt a variety of pressures – from peers as well as his master – that led him to grow more cautious in his dealings with the Moravians. He was mostly likely aware that Count Laurwig and von Plessen had refused to support the Moravians' venture, and it is clear from Dober and Nitschmann's letter that Ulrich was also feeling resentment from his peers. In all likelihood, Ulrich's break with the Moravians occurred slowly and gradually, and it was not due merely to the influence of anti-Moravian factions. The missionaries themselves may have contributed to the growing distance between themselves and the source of their inspiration. Nitschmann and Dober were often critical of their acquaintances in Copenhagen. In their first meeting with Ulrich and his new wife on September 16, 1732, Dober and Nitschmann commented that Ulrich's wife "had a good mind…but she was lacking the correct direction."[27] In another letter, they wrote that they had met "various brothers, one of whom had been awakened for twenty years,

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[25] "Mittelung an eine Gräfin zu Stölberg-Wernigerode über die Missionsarbeit in Westindien." Reprinted in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 85–90.

[26] "Brief Dobers Und Nitschmanns [an die Gemeine Herrnhut?]. Kopenhagen, 23. September 1732." Reprinted in Ibid., 37–39.

[27] "Brief Dobers Und Nitschmanns [an die Gemeine Herrnhut?]. Kopenhagen, 23. September 1732." Reprinted in Ibid., 37–9.

but he lacked a true knowledge of Christ."[28] The missionaries' judgmental mindset may also have been an important factor in their deteriorating relationship with Anton Ulrich. Still, the brethren maintained contact with Ulrich throughout their stay in Copenhagen, praying with him before boarding their ship. Ulrich also gave the missionaries a letter intended for his sister, Anna, a slave on St. Thomas.[29]

Anton Ulrich's relationship with the Moravian brethren worsened over time. In 1734, after Dober had been in St. Thomas for two years (Nitschmann returned after 16 weeks), Ulrich returned to the island of his birth. He was a free man, and he set to work as an overseer (*Meisterknecht*) before purchasing a small plantation and a slave of his own. In St. Thomas, he continued to drift from the Brethren. Dober considered Ulrich to be "too weak in order to stand up to the violence of his sins and stay true to what he knew," though this is clearly a one-sided judgment.[30] What is clear is that Anton Ulrich decided to pursue his own path in St. Thomas as a small-time landowner and slave owner, and that the Moravian brethren were no longer compatible with his convictions or aspirations.

The missionaries' failure to sustain their relationship with Ulrich was an early indicator of the problems they would have attracting educated black Christians into their fold. For Ulrich, like most other black Christians in St. Thomas, being a Christian was very much connected to rising social status and manumission. From Ulrich's point of view, the Moravians had initially provided an opportunity for travel and companionship and he hoped that they would aid the members of his family who were still held in West Indian slavery. But the Moravians' increasingly radical and

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[28] "Brief Dobers und Nitschmanns an Zinzendorf. Kopenhagen, 6. Oktober 1732." Reprinted in Ibid., 40–2.

[29] "Diarium David Nitschmanns und Leonhard Dobers von der Reise und dem Augenthalt in St. Thomas. 5 Oktober 1732 bis 17. April 1733." Reprinted in Ibid., 43–60.

[30] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:114.

marginalized reputation, combined with their condemnation of most Christians as "unawakened" and their embrace of earthly slavery, created a wedge between the missionaries and the man who inspired their mission.

*Free Blacks and Christian Slaves*

When Leonhard Dober and David Nitschmann arrived on the Caribbean island of St. Thomas, they found themselves on an island that was Danish in name only. St. Thomas and St. John, a neighboring island, were the property of the Danish West India and Guinea Company, a joint-stock company that was governed by a small number of directors and a group of stockholders. As a major stockholder, the King of Denmark had some stake in the West Indian venture, but he was only one voice among many.[31] While most of the Danish West Indian ruling class, including the Directors of the Company and many the civil servants, were Danes, St. Thomas and St. John were heavily marked by Dutch culture, so much so that the lingua franca of the Danish West Indies was Dutch – not Danish – and the slaves on the island spoke Dutch Creole. Aside from the Danes and the Dutch, the islands included significant populations of English, Jews, Spaniards, and Frenchmen.

Regardless of their ethnic background, the white inhabitants of the Danish West Indies aimed to make a profit. To this end, they purchased thousands of African slaves and developed scores of plantations. From 1691 to 1755, the white population remained relatively constant (389 in 1691; 325 in 1755) while the population of black slaves jumped from 547 to nearly 4,000.[32] The drive to amass a large slave population was largely due to the demands of sugar production, the crop that

[31] Despite the King's shares, the Company's powers were "almost as absolute within their West Indian sphere as were the powers of the Danish king within his European dominions." Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies Under Company Rule*, 179.

[32] Neville A.T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John and St Croix*, ed. B. W. Higman (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 1992), 5.

had proved to be so profitable in the English islands of Barbados and Jamaica. In 1696, there were seven sugar mills on St. Thomas. In 1715, less than twenty years later, this number had jumped to thirty-two.

As a result of these economic and demographic changes, the white planter class grew increasingly fearful for its safety and security and developed a caste system to control the slave majority. Individuals were stratified not only by their status as black, white or mulatto, but also by their adherence to Christianity. Religion was particularly important for free blacks. According to Johan Lorenz Carstens, a white creole planter who was born on St. Thomas and would become one of the few advocates for the Moravians, free blacks were divided into two groups: free men and free slaves. Free men were blacks who had converted to Christianity. Once baptized and freed, the free blacks "bec[a]me citizens and enjoy[ed] privileges…just as white Christians." These privileges included the ability to build homes in the city, practice "respectable" trades, and wear a limited amount of fine clothing, including "a short vest and long narrow pants, along with stockings and shoes."[33]

Unconverted free blacks were referred to as "free slaves" and while they were technically free (that is, they were in possession of *fribrev* or free papers), they could not obtain full civic rights without baptism. Most free slaves were mulattos, and Carstens believed that most were freed "upon the death of their master or mistress…because the surviving spouse cannot stand them since they are the offspring of the dead spouse's mixing and miscegenation with strangers." Others purchased their freedom. Regardless of their path to freedom, however, "none of the free slaves [could] enter

[33] Johann Lorentz Carstens, "A General Description of All the Danish, American or West Indian Islands," in *The Kamina Folk: Slavery and Slave Life in the Danish West Indies*, ed. George F. Tyson and Arnold R. Highfield, trans. Arnold R. Highfield (Virgin Islands Humanities Council, 1994), 2–3.

any civilian trade, except those which the Christians do not wish to bother themselves with."[34] Free slaves were also limited in their dress and in their choice of living space.

Carstens estimated that the number of free men and free slaves, both male and female, was about 500 in the 1730s. By then, however, the status of baptized blacks had become increasingly tenuous. In the seventeenth century, masters were often expected to grant slaves their freedom immediately after baptism, a standard that was quickly eroded in the first decades of the eighteenth century. When Carstens wrote in the 1740s, he noted that slave owners had become very resistant to granting free papers to their baptized slaves and that while "a Christian, either male or female, cannot be a slave or a servant," masters "do not accept" this. "Even though many of their slaves are accepted and baptized in the Christian congregation," he wrote, "they keep them as serfs for their own purposes…until they eventually can acquire their *fribrev* ["free letter" or "free paper"] either by monetary purchase or with an action of one kind of another."[35] Carstens' comments reveal a slave society in flux: the status of slavery was increasingly defined in racial – rather than religious – terms, and Christianity was no longer a definite signifier of freedom. Yet there was still a strong tradition of association between Christianity, education, baptism and manumission that remained an important component of Danish West Indian society.

When Dober and Nitschmann arrived on St. Thomas in 1732, they met a small number of free Christian blacks and slave converts who had followed a path similar to that of Anton Ulrich: often favored by their masters, they were able to receive some education, which led to baptism and, sometimes, freedom. While the missionaries showed interest in these individuals, they questioned whether they were "true Christians." Just as they had thrown doubt on the religious state of their acquaintances in Copenhagen, Dober and Nitschmann maintained a highly specific standard of true

[34] Ibid., 2.

[35] Ibid.

Christianity among the black converts in St. Thomas. A few weeks after their arrival, they visited "a Moor who had lived in Berlin for 18 years." They noted that he "immediately began to speak to us out of the Bible" and that "he had a lot of knowledge," but they concluded that he was "completely drowned in the lusts of the flesh." Nitschmann told him that not all of those who were baptized could be considered true Christians and read him the 1st Epistle of John, after which "[the moor] became uneasy and annoyed."[36]

A few days later, Dober and Nitschmann met another interesting black whom they described as a "well-known Moor." They "read the 3rd chapter of John to him and told him that the New Birth was the grandest, and without it, one could not see the Lord." Again, Dober and Nitschmann criticized this black Christian, telling him "he had to give more of an effort than just learning everything by heart." In an intriguing comparison, they added: "[The black Christians] place as much importance on learning as the Lutherans do on going to church and communion."[37] By connecting the black Christian interest in learning to the Lutheran emphasis on "church and communion," Dober and Nitschmann applied a pietist critique of religion to the state of Christianity among blacks in St. Thomas. They implied that the desire to learn, like the Lutheran emphasis on church and communion, placed too much emphasis on form and too little on the heart. This analysis is confirmed by Dober and Nitschmann's message to the "well-known Moor." By referring to the "New Birth," which they considered necessary for being able to "see the Lord," the missionaries revealed their strong pietist beliefs that led them to condemn Christians, both black and white, for excessive formalism and inadequate emotion.

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[36] "Diarium David Nitschmanns und Leonhard Dobers von der Reise und dem Augenthalt in St. Thomas. 5 Oktober 1732 bis 17. April 1733." Entry for 25 Dec 1732. Reprinted in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 47–8.

[37] Dober and Nitschmann do not record whether this individual is free or Christian, though it is likely that he was Christian, since they refer to his knowledge of Christian doctrine. If he was not a free black, then he was probably an elite slave, considering that he was "very well-known."

During another encounter, Dober and Nitschmann visited a blacksmith named Alexander who had just been baptized. They dismissed his conversion as illegitimate, claiming "that he had never heard of true, living Christianity." The missionaries told Alexander that "true faith purifies the heart, and makes us into new men," adding that "the moors seem very eager to listen and learn how to read and write."[38] As these meetings suggest, nearly all the black Christians that Dober and Nitschmann mentioned in their journal showed a profound interest in learning. Whether male or female, Dober and Nitschmann noted that blacks often approached them so that they could learn how to read or memorize the Bible. While the missionaries were happy with the attention, they were extremely wary about "learning" - so much so that they often alienated themselves from potential converts and allies.

Dober and Nitschmann's critique of the black Christians on St. Thomas can be seen as an extension of the pietist critique of the confessional churches in Europe. Most of the black Christians on St. Thomas had been educated and baptized within a confessional church, often the Dutch Reformed. Connections of this kind were reflected in the brand of Christianity that these black Christians practiced. More important, however, is the fact that the missionaries did not connect Christianity to emancipation. While many black Christians earned their freedom after receiving Christian education and baptism, Dober and Nitschmann defined true slavery as spiritual. In other words, anyone who engaged in non-Christian behavior was a "slave of the devil," regardless of whether that person was a master or a slave. For the missionaries, true freedom meant conversion, not emancipation, a position that was most likely resented by blacks who either hoped to, or had, earned their freedom after conversion.

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[38] "Diarium David Nitschmanns und Leonhard Dobers von der Reise und dem Augenthalt in St. Thomas. 5 Oktober 1732 bis 17. April 1733." Entry for 31 Dec 1732. Reprinted in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 48.

*Inner Slavery*

Instead of promising emancipation, Dober and Nitschmann emphasized the danger of inner slavery to the small number of converts who showed an interest in them. When Anton Ulrich's sister Anna visited them on January 17, 1733, for example, she "complained that the overseer treated her too harshly." The missionaries refused to comfort her or take any action on her part, telling her that "this could be a great opportunity to truly call on God, so that she could be freed from her inner slavery, since her outward slavery was of little consequence."[39] The missionaries' definition of true freedom had both behavioral and spiritual elements. Aside from experiencing a New Birth, truly "free" Christians were expected to maintain monogamous marriages and refrain from bodily sins. As the missionaries explained to a group of potential converts who hoped to learn how to read, "true conversion is absolutely necessary and when one converts, this person has to refrain from the sins of the body."[40] The missionaries' strict stance on behavior, coupled with their high standards for conversion, won them few friends on the island. Like most other whites, the missionaries considered the type of dancing practiced by most slaves to be "truly heathenish." But they also condemned the common practice of taking multiple partners or having more than one wife, a position that was seen by both blacks and whites as unreasonable.[41] Non-monogamous family structures were common and accepted among most of the enslaved Africans, while white masters often took advantage of their power to initiate or coerce their slaves into sexual relationships, meaning that life-long monogamy was largely a foreign concept on the island.

In their conversations with Alexander, the missionaries tried to convince the blacksmith that he should take only one wife. Reading from Paul, they classed polygamy with prostitution [*Hurerey*]

[39] Dober and Nitschmann, "Diarium," in Ibid., 50.

[40] Dober and Nitschmann, "Diarium," in Ibid., 52.

[41] Dober and Nitschmann, "Diarium," in Ibid., 48.

and warned him to stay true to one woman.[42] During another conversation, they argued that all those who had more than one partner were "slaves of the devil."[43] Alexander, clearly incredulous, explained that "all the citizens and masters who are called Christians engage in such behavior." The missionaries insisted that "these men did not belong to Christ, but to the Devil."[44] Dober and Nitschmann's standards grated on Alexander. After several months of regular meetings, the blacksmith lost his temper with the missionaries, calling them "papists" and telling them that "nobody could live up to their expectations."[45]

By maintaining such high standards of Christian behavior and conversion, the missionaries won few friends. Yet their rigid expectations were quietly subverting the racial hierarchy of the island. By relying on highly specific religious and behavioral cues to define true Christianity, they condemned both white and black Christians as "slaves of the devil" while assuring black converts that they could ascend to Christ if they reformed their ways and experienced a true heart conversion. By placing so much emphasis on inner freedom, the missionaries created an alternative hierarchy that placed true Christians, black or white, over all others, black or white. Within this rubric, the missionaries could assure the enslaved that they were, in fact, better than their masters.

Dober and Nitschmann's high standards of behavior made "conversion" difficult to sustain. This was particularly true for Anna, Anton Ulrich's sister and the missionaries' prized first convert. Immediately after their arrival in 1732, the missionaries were pleased to see Anna's interest in Christian prayer and they learned that she used her reading lessons to memorize passages of

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[42] Dober and Nitschmann, "Diarium," in Ibid., 51–2.

[43] Dober and Nitschmann, "Diarium," in Ibid., 53.

[44] Dober and Nitschmann, "Diarium," in Ibid., 48–9.

[45] It was not uncommon for the Moravians to be called Catholics or papists. On March 23, 1733, Nitschmann wrote that a black man "said we were just like the Catholics who forbid everything." Ibid., 58.

Scripture. She told the missionaries that "she was always praying in her heart, and that's why she couldn't sleep at night and she had a great desire to get to know the Savior." The missionaries also noted that Anna was greatly influenced by their reading of 1 Corinthians 6, which warned that sexual immorality would prevent anyone from inheriting the kingdom of God. Upon hearing this, Anna replied that "she didn't do that anymore," and the Brethren reiterated that such behavior was a sin. Two months later, she returned to the Brethren with her husband and complained "that [her husband] had allowed the negroes to dance in their house and this was a great burden for her."[46]

Anna was initially convinced that she needed to change her ways and she even went so far as to bring her husband to the Brethren so that he, too, could be reformed. Yet such shifts—if they happened at all—were rarely final. Within a few months, the Brethren noted that Anna, along with her brother and husband, occasionally "returned to their old accustomed ways." When the missionaries "spoke harshly with them and punished them earnestly," they "recognized [the problem] and promised to improve."[47] But by October, "things with the three awakened blacks on the company plantation were bad. Their unity was disrupted by various suspicions and misunderstandings."[48] In 1734, Anna returned to the Brethren, proclaiming that "she sought only to become truer to the Savior." Dober offered his forgiveness, thus initiating what would become a long process of disobedience and forgiveness in Anna's relationship with the Moravians. But Anna drifted again after she complained to the missionaries that her slavery was "hard." She was most likely displeased with their response that "the love of Christ makes such difficulties easy, and one

[46] Ibid., 51–2, 59. Oldendorp combines these two events. See Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:53..

[47] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:64–5. This is Oldendorp's summary. Dober's diary mentions a few different moments of "backsliding" among the converts. See "Diarium Leonhard Dobers von seinem Aufenthalt in St. Thomas. 16 April 1733 bis 6. Februar 1734." Reprinted in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 66.

[48] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:68. Oldendorp is summarizing Dober's diary. See Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 69.

just has to stay near his heart in all situations and make sure not to do anything to the Savior's dislike."[49]

While their rigid theology and fixed standards of morality often undermined their appeal to slaves, the missionaries had much to offer their first converts. First of all, Anna and her brother Abraham were eager to gain access to the written word. In a place where literacy and books were carefully guarded by the master class, the missionaries introduced their pupils to scriptural texts and taught them how to read. In later years, the Moravians' willingness to teach slaves how to read would earn them the wrath of white masters, but in the first few years it went largely unnoticed. Apart from the promise of literacy, Dober and Nitschmann could be seen as potential advocates. While they consistently refused to defend the slaves against the wrath of their masters, they provided some support to slaves in their relationships with other slaves. When Anna complained that her husband Gerd was holding "heathen dances" in their home, for example, she sought to use the missionaries' influence to bolster her own power within her domestic relationship. While Dober and Oldendorp interpreted her actions as a sign of her conversion, her intentions were most likely more complex than they realized. By persuading the missionaries to lobby on her behalf, she gained influence over her husband and convinced the missionaries of her religious sincerity. Finally, the missionaries were unique in their treatment of slaves as spiritual equals and they provided an alternative religious community unlike any other available on the island.

*Mission Work*

Dober and Nitschmann did not attract a wide following among either blacks or whites on St. Thomas. While a number of blacks approached them and requested lessons in reading and writing, others mocked them. In a journal entry from February 26, 1733, Nitschmann recorded that they

[49] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:108.

"spoke a lot to the negroes that we work with and told them that they would be miserable beings as long as they lived without God, but they made fun of us."[50] Similarly, most whites on the island mocked the missionaries. During a visit to a white man who had offered to give the missionaries work, Dober and Nitschmann wrote that "his offer was fake, and he just ridiculed us."[51]

As Count Laurwig and von Plessen had predicted, the missionaries had trouble supporting themselves on the island despite the aid of a small number of sympathetic whites. Upon their arrival, they were approached by Gerhard Lorenzen, a planter on the island who had heard of the missionaries' plan from a friend in Copenhagen. Lorenzen offered the missionaries room and board until they were able to get their own footing. After some weeks working for Lorenzen, the missionaries met Johann Lorenz Carstens, the white creole planter who would later write the *General Description of all the Danish, American or West Indian Islands*. Carstens hired Nitschmann, a trained carpenter, to build a house for him. Dober had more difficulty as a potter. After his attempts to make roof tiles failed, he hoped to become an overseer and live in a slave hut. Neither this plan nor his aspiration to become a fisherman was successful.

In April of 1733, Nitschmann returned to Europe as planned, leaving Dober to fend for himself. The lone missionary received permission from Lorenzen to live on his plantation among the slaves, but he soon found himself desperate for more funds. In May, after months of underemployment, the recently appointed Governor of St. Thomas offered Dober work as his head house servant [*Hofmeister*]. Dober accepted the position immediately, and Governor Gardelin provided him with new clothes and told him he would just need "to fear God and be true."[52]

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[50] Dober and Nitschmann, "Diarium" in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 55.

[51] Dober and Nitschmann, "Diarium" in Ibid., 47.

[52] Dober, "Diarium," in Ibid., 65–6.

The job at the Governor's plantation appeared to be ideal for the young missionary. The Governor urged Dober to maintain his religious discipline and he allowed him to leave his home at times in order to visit the slaves. But regardless of these benefits, Dober remained unhappy. "I was so ashamed," he wrote in 1740, "that I was not following my first plan, which was to be a slave on St. Thomas." He also felt that "the entire way of life was unfamiliar and excessive."[53] Dober's discomfort with the "way of life" at the Governor's home, which was likely one of the more luxurious houses on the island, suggests that he did not want to indulge in opulence or engage with the wealthy. Indeed, his persistent unhappiness about not becoming a slave suggests that Dober felt invigorated by the idea of religious sacrifice and perhaps even martyrdom.

Dober's discomfort, however, was not due solely to the opulence of the environment or the fact that he was not a slave. Dober's tenure at the Governor's home coincided with one of the most brutal years in Danish West Indian history. After a terrible drought during the spring, the island was hit by a hurricane in July 1733. Dober recorded "earthquakes and thunder and lightning," and noted that "several houses were destroyed."[54] In September, with tensions rising between masters and slaves, Governor Gardelin issued a mandate intended to regulate slave behavior more tightly. The "terrible severity" of Gardelin's Code of 1733 reflected "the prevailing tension between master and slave" in the Danish West Indies during the early 1730s.[55] That tension exploded two months later, when a group of recently arrived West African slaves rebelled against their masters and took control of St. John, the neighboring island in the Danish West Indies. Dober recorded the news of the rebellion in his diary: "a great alarm was sounded on the 23rd [of November]," he wrote, "and

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[53] Dober, "Mittelung an eine Gräfin zu Stölberg-Wernigerode" in Ibid., 85–90. Oldendorp recounts Dober's feelings in Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:64.

[54] Dober, "Diarium," in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 68.

[55] Westergaard, *The Danish West Indies Under Company Rule*, 166–7.

everyone was completely frightened to hear that the slaves had taken the fortress on St. John and…murdered all the whites [*Blancken*] on ¾ of the land."[56] While Dober did not go into detail about the effects of the rebellion, it had major effects – both materially and psychologically – on the inhabitants of St. Thomas.

By the end of December 1734, the slave rebels still controlled St. John but Dober was faced with a more personal crisis: he was sick and "close to death."[57] On January 1, 1734, Dober reported that he was finally able to get out of bed. Ten days later, he wrote to the Governor and pleaded to be dismissed. The Governor did not respond well. He refused to speak to Dober for eight days before concluding that "if [Dober] didn't want to stay with him, then he didn't want to keep him."[58] A week after leaving his position at the Governor's home, Dober ran into Lorenzen, the man who had first taken pity on the missionaries. "He was surprised that I had left my master, and he asked whether I would go back home [to Europe]," Dober wrote. Lorenzen urged him to return to Germany and told him that he would be able to travel for very little money. Yet Dober was determined to continue spreading the gospel to the slaves, so he started working as a night watchman to support himself.[59] He lived in a small rented room in Tappus until April of 1734, when he was offered another job, this time as an overseer for Adrian Beverhout's plantation, "Brock."[60] He remained there until the following summer, when he was called back to Herrnhut to replace the deceased Martin Linner as an Elder in the Moravian Church.

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[56] Dober, "Diarium," in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 69.

[57] Dober, "Diarium," in Ibid.

[58] Dober, "Diarium," in Ibid., 69–70.

[59] Dober, "Diarium," in Ibid., 70.

[60] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:91. Beverhout had eighteen slaves who planted cotton and raised cattle.

When Dober and Nitschmann returned to Germany, they brought with them new convictions that helped to shape the aims and policies of future Moravian missions. When Nitschmann arrived in Europe after sixteen weeks in St. Thomas, he revealed a surprising – and important – commitment to the institution of slavery that was very much the product of his experience on St. Thomas. In Copenhagen, Nitschmann met with Princess Hedwig and the Senior Chamberlain von Plessen, who told him that they would grant freedom to any slaves who converted, a gesture they considered to be both moral and efficacious. To their surprise, Nitschmann replied:

> [S]uch an idea would just make them hypocrites! The Apostle said: whoever was called to be a servant should not seek to be rid of his place, but rather remain a menial labourer and serve his master according to his desires. That way, the Masters will also be convinced and they will rejoice when lots of their negroes convert.

Nitschmann's insistence that slaves should decisively *not* be manumitted upon baptism was an important theological adaptation to West Indian slave society. Noting that "the Negroes [had] the ability to take on the appearance of being Christian quite easily without any true transformation of the heart," Nitschmann revealed both his commitment to pietist reform and his recognition that blacks could take advantage of religious opportunity to improve their own standing. Thus, after just four months in St. Thomas, Nitschmann had come to the conclusion that Christianity needed to be divorced from emancipation in order to prevent both opportunistic conversions and planter wrath.

Most scholars have assumed that this pro-slavery argument came from planters, or that it came later in the history of Christian missions. But Nitschmann's *Report* demonstrates that it was an almost immediate adjustment to slave life, developed by the earliest missionaries. It is also interesting to note that Europeans who had never lived in a slave society (Princess Hedwig and the Senior Chamberlain) associated Christianity most strongly with freedom. Planters in the Caribbean also tended to associate Christianity with freedom, which is one of the reasons why they often refused to allow their slaves to convert. It was the missionaries, with their strong desire to promote

genuine slave conversion, who were actually behind the argument that slaves would remain slaves even after they were freed from their "spiritual" slavery. In other words, missionaries like Dober and Nitschmann had the strongest incentive to argue that slavery was compatible with true Christian conversion. Doing so pleased most of the planters, who feared that they would lose their human property if their slaves were able to convert. It also prevented disingenuous slave conversion as slaves who wanted to earn their freedom were told that Christianity did not ensure manumission, and that true freedom could be found only in conversion.

Aside from their theological commitment to slavery, Dober and Nitschmann returned to Europe with slaves of their own. Nitschmann arrived in Copenhagen with a slave named Jupiter while Dober brought back Oly-Carmel, both of them young boys. While Jupiter lived longer in Europe, it was the young Carmel who made the greater impression on the Moravian records. After arriving in Herrnhut in February 1735, Dober reported with pride that "the young Moor" had travelled "1400 miles from Guinea to St. Thomas and 1500 from there [to Herrnhut]."[61] Carmel, who was identified as Loango, had been born in Africa but had lost both his parents during a war before being captured, sold into slavery, and taken to the Danish West Indies. In St. Thomas, Carmel was purchased by the Moravian brethren and the small boy was brought back to Europe with Dober, landing in Copenhagen on November 27, 1734.

In Herrnhut, Carmel quickly became beloved and was seen as "a sign of grace."[62] Zinzendorf wrote that the young boy "had a burning love for the Savior, even though he knows very little German."[63] Despite the objections of some, who considered Carmel to be too young and

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[61] "Nachrichten über den Aufenthalt des Sklavenjungen Oly-Carmel in Herrnhut. Herrnhut, 1735," in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 99–102.

[62] "Nachrichten über den Aufenthalt des Sklavenjungen Oly-Carmel in Herrnhut" in Ibid., 99.

[63] "Gemälde der Erstlinge" in Ibid., 106–110.

uneducated, the brethren concluded that he should be baptized as soon as possible.[64] On August 22, 1735, just over four years after David Nitschmann's chance meeting with Anton Ulrich in Copenhagen, the seven-year-old Carmel was baptized in Ebersdorf. Among those present were Dober, the Count Reuss-Ebersdorf, Philipp Friedrich Rentz, the court chaplain [*Hofprediger*] Steinhofer and Friedrich Martin, who was en route to St. Thomas to bring new life to the slave mission there. Rentz later wrote that the baptism was a "fresh testimonial" and that the "young moor's spirit had been planted in the tree of Life."[65]

Carmel, who was baptized "Josua," returned to Herrnhut, where he died the following March at the age of eight. Yet despite—or perhaps in part because of—the shortness of his life, Carmel became a poignant symbol of Moravian missionary pride. Unlike Anton Ulrich, who had drifted from the brethren and proved to be a thorn in their side, Carmel could be forever remembered as the "first fruit," the embodiment of the Moravians' global reach. Oldendorp viewed Carmel's baptism as a "prelude" to the work the Moravians would do to carry the Gospel to all the heathen, and Carmel himself was immortalized in Johann Valentin Haidt's painting of "The First Fruits" [*Erstlingsbild*], completed in 1747, and in the first Moravian plantation in Jamaica, which was named after the young boy, the first black person baptized in the Moravian church.[66]

Carmel's revered place in Moravian history is an indicator of the changes that the Moravians would make to their global missions in the future. While Anton remained the "doorway to the heathen," he was not memorialized in Moravian paintings of the "first fruits" because he not only

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[63] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:111.

[64] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:111.

[65] "Brief Philipp Friedrich Rentz an die Gemeine Herrnhut. Ebersdorf, 23. August 1735," in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 103–4.

[66] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:140–1. See also UA R.15.C.b.1 (1). Entry for 30 June 1758.

drifted but also actively criticized the Brethren and their approach to slave conversion. Carmel, whose short life did not provide an opportunity to question the missionary enterprise, was an easier figure to idealize. As the Moravian missions developed over time, death became an increasingly important feature of their strategy: they told their converts that death would end their miserable slavery, and they recounted stories of former converts who had already died and met their Savior. It was in death, rather in life, that spiritual freedom would reign.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## 'They Call Me Obea':
## Literacy, Marriage and Death in the Moravian Missions of St. Thomas & Jamaica, 1735-1760

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In 1788, August Gottlieb Spangenberg, the former head of the Moravian church in the Americas, published *An Account of the Manner in Which the Protestant Church of the Unitas Fratrum, or United Brethren, Preach The Gospel, and carry on their Missions among the Heathen.*[1] The 127-page pamphlet, translated from the German by Benjamin LaTrobe, described the conversion strategies the Moravians had developed since the establishment of their first mission in 1732. As one of the first Protestant groups to actively evangelize to slaves in the Atlantic world, Moravian practice had a significant influence on the development of later Protestant missions.[2] Still, the Moravians' approach was never fixed: in the first thirty years of their Caribbean missions, they struggled to find an appropriate balance between appealing to enslaved Africans, appeasing their masters, and articulating an authentic yet easily translatable vision of Christian belief.

Spangenberg had overseen much of the process: after joining the Moravian church in the early 1730s, he led the failed Moravian settlement in Georgia in 1735, visited the first Caribbean mission of St. Thomas in 1736, and helped to establish the successful settlement of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in the 1740s. During his work as Bishop of the Unitas Fratrum in the Americas,

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[1] August Gottlieb Spangenberg, *An Account of the Manner in Which the Protestant Church of the Unitas Fratrum, or United Brethren, Preach the Gospel, and Carry on Their Missions Among the Heathen. Translated from the German of the Rev. August Gottlieb Spangenberg* (London: Printed and sold by H. Trapp, 1788).

[2] Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*; Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening*; Frey and Wood, *Come Shouting to Zion*; Jeffrey Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise Since 1700* (New York and London: Routledge, 2008); Andrew Porter, *Religion Versus Empire?: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700-1914* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2004); J. C. S. Mason, *The Moravian Church and the Missionary Awakening in England, 1760-1800* (Woodbridge, UK and Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2001).

Spangenberg pioneered the missionary use of Creole languages and oversaw the missions in Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio and the Caribbean. He communicated regularly with his brethren in Europe and the West Indies, advising missionaries on how best to develop and maintain their mission stations. Spangenberg's *Account* thus came at the culmination of a long and successful career as missionary strategist and developer. Spangenberg had first-hand experience of the initial frustrations of mission work, as well as its halting successes.

Spangenberg's fifty-year tenure as a leader of the church had led him to firm conclusions about the 'do's' and 'don'ts' of missionary work. Primary on the list of 'don'ts' was reading lessons: according to Spangenberg, the teaching of literacy was an invention that "gradually arose in the church" and it led the "heathen" astray with its focus on knowledge as opposed to true heart religion. This was particularly true in the West Indies, where "the circumstances of the negroes, and their hard slavery" made it impossible to teach both literacy and true religion. Spangenberg advised missionaries to be wary of those who "merely wanted to know a good deal." For "to fill [their] head only with knowledge, and at the same time [to] have an empty and unfeeling heart" was a dangerous thing. Spangenberg warned that baptizing a learned "heathen" who had not yet received "a work of grace in his heart" would do "much hurt."[3]

As evidence for his anti-literacy campaign, Spangenberg cited the case of "a very aged negro woman" on St. Thomas whom he met during his visit to the island in 1736. This woman "attended meetings assiduously, and heard the gospel of Christ with eagerness, exhorting her people also to thank God." Yet when Spangenberg inquired as to whether she desired baptism, she exclaimed, "O Lord! I can never be baptized! How should I now learn to read, and get so much by rote?" Realizing that this faithful old woman was being held back from the holy sacrament by a misunderstanding,

[3] Spangenberg, *An Account of the Manner in Which the Protestant Church of the Unitas Fratrum, or United Brethren, Preach the Gospel, and Carry on Their Missions Among the Heathen. Translated from the German of the Rev. August Gottlieb Spangenberg*, 74–6.

Spangenberg convinced her "that all that was not necessary." Instead, he "told her of the love of Jesus to her." The story had a happy ending: "She was afterwards baptized, and obtained so much understanding in the gospel, as to become useful among the other negro women."[4]

What Spangenberg did not mention in his 1788 *Account* is that he actively supported the teaching of literacy when he visited St. Thomas in 1736. On September 14, 1736, he noted, "the brethren make a huge effort to teach the negros how to read." He found this to be "very useful" for a number of reasons. First, it allowed enslaved and free Afro-Caribbeans to distinguish "true" Christianity from the "so-called" Christianity of their "terrible" masters. Second, reading allowed Afro-Caribbeans to learn about Christianity even outside of missionary supervision and "teach others about the Lord." Spangenberg bemoaned the lack of textual material: "If only we had more books so that we could teach them how to write – but they're so expensive!"[5] Also missing from Spangenberg's 1788 *Account* is the identification of the "aged negro" as Marotta, a free African woman who identified herself as a member of the Papaa nation.[6] Three years after Spangenberg's visit to St. Thomas, Marrotta – who was by then known by her Christian name Magdalena - either wrote or, more likely, dictated a petition to the Queen of Denmark on behalf of "the negro women of St. Thomas" whose masters would not allow them to "serve the Lord Jesus." Written in her native West African language and translated into Dutch Creole, Marrotta's petition was a stunning

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[4] Ibid., 75.

[5] August Gottlieb Spangenberg, "Nachricht von einigen in St. Thomas erweckten Neger und von dem Segen des Herrn unter ihnen," 14 September 1736. UA R.15.Ba.17.9. All German sources have been translated by the author unless otherwise stated.

[6] Spangenberg, "Nachricht," 15 September and 11 October 1736. UA R.15.Ba.17.9. Spangenberg does not identify the "aged negro woman" by name in the entry from September 15, but he is most likely referring to Marotta. He mentions Marotta by name for the first time on October 11 and she, like the woman in the September 15 entry, is referred to as an "aged negro woman" who discusses her religious experiences in Africa, and the influence of her parents in teaching her how to pray and sacrifice.

example of the use of the written word to appeal to powerful Europeans who could potentially influence the St. Thomas master class. Composed in 1739, the appeal was accompanied by another letter written in Dutch Creole and also signed by Magdalena and several other leading converts on St. Thomas. This letter went into more detail about the problems facing Christian slaves in the Caribbean: the white planters "beat and injure us when the *Baas* teaches us about the Savior," they wrote. "[They] burn our books, call our baptism the baptism of dogs, and call the Brethren beasts."[7] These two petitions, written by or for enslaved Christians, offer a glimpse into a very different type of mission strategy than the one described by Spangenberg in 1788. While the older Spangenberg insisted that teaching literacy placed too much emphasis on education and none on true, heart-felt emotion, the early missionaries on St. Thomas—including the younger Spangenberg—taught their converts to read, write and use the written word.

As the converts' appeal shows, however, this tactic met with a virulent response from the planter class. The majority of planters resented the presence of Moravian missionaries on the island and made the destruction of books central to their anti-Moravian campaign. As the eighteenth-century Moravian historian C.G.A. Oldendorp reported in his history of the mission,

> [Some planters] attempted to frighten [the slaves] away from [the mission] by forceful means, through the use of whips and rods. In addition, they took away all of the books that the missionaries had given to their poor Negroes and burned them.[8]

Like whips and rods, books were integrated into a terrain of terror.

The planters' scare tactics were troubling to the Brethren. But planter fear did not represent their only problem. The growing number of "backsliders" – converts who abandoned Christian practice – frustrated the missionaries as well. They noticed that several of their candidates seemed to

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[7] "Letters to the Danish King." MAB St. Thomas Letters, 1734-1766. Jon Sensbach reproduced a copy of Marrotta's appeal in Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*, 147.

[8] Oldendorp, *A Caribbean Mission*, 321.

be interested *only* in learning how to read. Others sought baptism, but lost interest in Christianity after they obtained the sacrament and gained basic reading skills. As Oldendorp wrote, "many Negroes merely took advantage of that opportunity as an end in itself, considering themselves sufficiently good and wise when they were able to read a little."[9] These twin challenges – of planter resistance and slave indifference – forced the Moravians to rethink their approach to mission work.

Soon after Magdalena and her brethren wrote their appeals, the missionaries on St. Thomas met to discuss how best to cope with the problems they faced. After a number of conferences, the brethren decided to change their focus from literacy to the "essential" Christian teaching of Christ's crucifixion. Suspending reading instruction would rid the missionaries of "many unpromising students" and allow them to "dedicate themselves to those eager for salvation." A stripped-down gospel teaching, meanwhile, would "relate to the heathen that there was no other way to attain eternal life than for each individual lost sinner to come to Jesus." The Moravians also decided to lessen the severity of church discipline in order to reach out to some of the backsliders. "Only wicked seducers who brought harm to others were henceforth to be publicly excommunicated without delay," wrote Oldendorp. "Others, however, who had merely fallen into sin because of their insufficient knowledge of themselves in their Savior, but who had maintained a willing heart, were to be treated as those afflicted with a physical ailment."[10] The policy shifts produced mixed results. The missionaries had, in effect, offered concessions to both planters and slaves. Planters were pleased with the move away from literacy, while slaves were offered more leniency to continue some "non-Christian" practices such as polygyny.[11]

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[9] Ibid., 386.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Daniel B. Thorp, "New Wine in Old Bottles: Cultural Persistence Among Non-White Converts to the Moravian Church," *Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society* 30 (January 1998): 5.

Some scholars have viewed the shift from teaching literacy as a move away from the radical theology that defined Moravian mission work in the 1730s. As Jon Sensbach wrote in *Rebecca's Revival*, the new "theological stripping-down…likely meant the end of the radical criticism of the slaveholders that had infused their preaching five years earlier."[12] While it is clear that Moravians did gradually—and intentionally—make themselves more acceptable and less antagonistic toward slaveholders, I argue that the shift away from reading was not just a concession to planters. As they moved their emphasis from reading, the Moravians found new and creative ways to appeal to enslaved men and women. They touted their spiritual powers by bestowing baptism, helped to mediate conflicts between enslaved men and women, preached a gospel of spiritual equality in death, capitalized on kinship networks among the enslaved, and provided their most dedicated converts with leadership positions within the church. These strategies were imported to the second Moravian mission in the Caribbean, founded on Jamaica in 1754. Even without the appeal of reading lessons, Zacharias George Caries, the first missionary on the island, was able to attract a large congregation of enslaved men and women primarily because he presented himself as a skilled and powerful spiritual practitioner. In the first year of his mission, Caries reported that the enslaved men and women called him "obea," an Afro-Caribbean term used to refer to individuals with spiritual power.[13]

Yet even as they shifted their approach, Moravian missionaries were never able to find a failsafe method to keep enslaved men and women within the church. In both St. Thomas and Jamaica, they were plagued by "backsliding" and frustrated by their inability to maintain the interest

[12] Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*, 157. See also Thorp, "New Wine in Old Bottles," 1–10. Thorp focuses on conversion, culture and the persistence of backsliding.

[13] Jerome S. Handler and Kenneth M. Bilby, "On the Early Use and Origin of the Term 'Obeah' in Barbados and the Anglophone Caribbean," *Slavery & Abolition* 22, no. 2 (August 2001): 87–100. See also Jerome S. Handler and Kenneth M. Bilby, *Enacting Power: The Criminalization of Obeah in the Anglophone Caribbean, 1760-2011* (Mona, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2013).

of all "converted" slaves. Examining these fluctuations of interest, success and failure, this chapter argues that historians cannot understand "backsliding"—or conversion—without considering the perspectives of enslaved men and women. What practical, political, and religious benefits did the missionaries offer, and how did their appeal change over time? What roles did enslaved men and women expect the missionaries to fill, and how well did missionaries respond to these expectations? In the first thirty years of their Caribbean mission, Moravians were sought out as teachers, mediators, spiritual leaders, and scapegoats, and they were asked to provide not only a willing ear, but also food, hope, a community, and absolution for those who desired it. In response to these demands, missionaries adapted not only their missionary approach but also their definition of true Christian practice to better fit the pressures of West Indian slave life. Over time, they accepted not only polygyny, but also a variety of other West Indian cultural and spiritual practices into their religious repertoire. These shifts show how Christianity was constantly being adjusted and redefined to accommodate Caribbean slave culture. They are indicative of wider changes taking place not only within the Moravian Church, but also in the emergent culture of Atlantic Protestantism.

*The Spectacle of the Word*

The mystique of the written word and the promise of literacy were central to the Moravian appeal to slaves during the first decade of their Caribbean mission. When Friedrich Martin, the newly appointed leader of the St. Thomas mission, arrived in 1736 to revive the dormant mission station, he found that "some Negroes could read, and others had a great desire to learn how to read." Within a month of his arrival, he was approached by one enslaved African who begged him to teach him how to write and spell. When Martin promised to give him lessons, the man "fell on his

knees, thanked him and wanted to kiss his hands."[14] Such a display was not uncommon. As the Moravian historian Oldendorp wrote,

> Among the blacks, there was an earnestness and eagerness to learn, to hear the Word of Life and to experience its immense power. They came often after work, late in the night, so as not to miss a lesson. Some of them travelled barefoot two or three miles through the stony mountains and returned home to begin work at sunrise.[15]

During their lessons, Martin divided his pupils into groups. Some learned reading, while the more advanced students were taught spelling and writing. Within months, nearly two hundred slaves and free blacks were trekking through tough terrain to attend the Moravian meetings.

When August Gottlieb Spangenberg visited St. Thomas in September of 1736, just six months after Martin's arrival, he too was struck by the intense demand for lessons in reading and writing. On his fourth day on the island, Spangenberg spoke with an Afro-Caribbean man who "wanted nothing more than to learn how to read himself, and to be a Christian."[16] Three days later, "a few negro women came to us and implored us to give them a lesson. We had already turned them away many times to test them: but they desperately wanted to learn and refused to give up."[17]

Both Spangenberg and Martin were pleased and gratified by the popularity of their reading lessons. Like other European Protestants, they believed that literacy was central to Christian piety and that an intimate engagement with Scripture could create the "change of heart" that was necessary for true conversion. Yet what did the practice of reading – and the accessibility of books – mean to enslaved and free Africans and creoles on St. Thomas? And how much did the practice of reading overlap with the practice of Christianity? Spangenberg's 1736 journal provides insight into

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[14] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:158.

[15] Ibid., 2:185.

[16] Spangenberg, "Nachricht," 13 September 1736. UA R.15.Ba.17.9.

[17] Spangenberg, "Nachricht," 17 September 1736. UA R.15.Ba.17.9.

these questions. His observations suggest that books were not just a source of religious inspiration. They were also seen as physical objects that had spiritual, economic, and talismanic power.

In a practical sense, it was through text-inscribed paper that Africans could prove their freedom, or their status as Christians. Spangenberg strengthened the connection between text, freedom and Christianity by providing newly baptized Afro-Caribbeans with baptismal certificates and telling the converts that the paper would protect them against reenslavement by the Spanish. "If [you] don't have this proof," he explained, "[you] will be made into slaves again. But if [you] have a certificate of baptism, [you] will be set free."[18] Instructional books held an alternate type of power and significance for enslaved and free Afro-Caribbeans. During the first years of the mission, Friedrich Martin gave many of his students spelling books, which quickly became highly prized possessions: "Everyone wanted to have a textbook," wrote Oldendorp. "Whoever was lucky enough to obtain one carried it with him everywhere and devoted every free moment to studying it." By May of 1737, Martin had given away over 133 spelling books in just two months, and he still had dozens of pupils eagerly waiting.[19] Those who were lucky enough to own a book carried their prized possession around with them everywhere. One Afro-Caribbean man, who had fought against the rebel slaves on St. John in 1732, recounted a story of how he was shot during the expedition. He said he owed his life to the Lord and that his book, which he carried around everywhere, had been with him when he was shot.[20] Another young man "had his book in his bag, and it was stolen from him in the night." He told Spangenberg that he hoped the person who stole his book would "learn so much from it that he becomes a true Christian."[21]

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[18] Spangenberg, "Nachricht," 1 October 1736. UA R.15.Ba.17.9.

[19] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:210.

[20] Spangenberg, "Nachricht," 10 October 1736. UA R.15.Ba.17.9.

[21] Spangenberg, "Nachricht," 14 October 1736. UA R.15.Ba.17.9.

It is likely that many Afro-Caribbeans viewed both the act of reading and the possession of material texts as sources of European power that could be adopted and utilized. This interpretation is supported by the comments of Robert Robertson, an Anglican clergyman on the island of Nevis. Writing in 1730, just a few years before Spangenberg's visit to St. Thomas, Robertson wrote, "When the *newer* Negroes observe that we can read and write (or as they word it, *make Paper Speak)* and do many other things above their Comprehension, they seem to take us for a sort of Superior Beings."[22] Robertson's observation that Afro-Caribbeans viewed the practice of reading as spiritually powerful is important, particularly when viewed in the context of Moravian lessons. A typical Moravian meeting included the recitation of a chosen part of scripture. By organizing their meetings around scriptural readings, the missionaries reinforced their status as readers who had power to "make paper speak." As the audience, Afro-Caribbeans participated in this performance by both listening and interpreting. Spangenberg recorded a number of instances in which Afro-Caribbeans challenged or questioned the missionaries' interpretation of scripture. On one afternoon, the missionaries "read Christ's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6 and 7," in which Jesus advocates turning the other cheek. This reading led into a discussion of "how one could accept being hit." At least one Afro-Caribbean man objected to this line of interpretation. Emanuel, an enslaved Creole, answered that he could never turn the other cheek because "it would cost him his honor if he didn't defend himself." The missionaries "explained to him that the Lord wanted it that way, and that he shouldn't believe in his own honor, but in the honor of the Lord." Emanuel responded with a compromise: "[H]e decided that he would ask God to spare him from the possibility of getting in a fight…Instead, he would prefer to stay home and learn."[23]

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[22] Robertson 1730, p. 32.

[23] Spangenberg, "Nachricht," 16 September 1736. UA R.15.Ba.17.9.

Emanuel's interactions with the missionaries provide insight into the negotiation over Christian practice and the construction of enslaved Christian masculinity. Emanuel was not willing to accept the idea that "turning the other cheek" meant submitting to abuse without complaint. Instead, he reinterpreted the passage to accommodate both his sense of honor and his desire to bolster his education. He affirmed the missionaries' desire for him to place God's honor over his own by asking God to "spare him from the possibility of getting in a fight." At the same time, his preference to "stay home and learn" suggested the existence of an alternate source of male honor: by becoming a learned man who had could read and "make paper speak," Emanuel could redefine Christian practice and create a literacy-based Christian identity that would imbue him with a different type of power.

Emanuel's approach gained him both respect and status within the Moravian congregation. Just fourteen days after the discussion of the Sermon on the Mount, he was one of the first three individuals baptized by Spangenberg. Emanuel, who was baptized Andreas, went on to become a leading male elder on the island. Later, he traveled to Pennsylvania and Europe, where he died in 1744. In 1747, he was commemorated as "the first believing Negro" in Johann Valentin Haidt's painting, *The First Fruits*.[24]

*Books and Terror*

Like most Protestant slave owners in the Caribbean, planters on St. Thomas reacted harshly to their slaves' interest in Christianity. Some persisted in assuming that Christianity was synonymous with freedom and that converted slaves would be eligible for manumission. Others worried that Christian slaves would be more rebellious than others. Spangenberg observed that there were

[24] "Gemälde der Erstlinge," reprinted in Kröger, *Johann Leonhard Dober und der Beginn der Herrnhuter Mission*, 106–110.

economic and political elements to planter resistance as well. If becoming a Christian meant that one had to observe the Sabbath, he noted, conversion threatened to diminish planter profits by allowing the enslaved a "day of rest." Also, whites were threatened by the idea that Christian slaves would be able to give testimony in court.[25] Underlying all of these fears was the fact that Christianity provided a salient axis of difference between masters and slaves on eighteenth-century St. Thomas. While "whiteness" had become central to the island hierarchy, Protestantism was still closely aligned with freedom. As a result, slave conversion threatened the very foundation of the Protestant slave society. As "a certain gentleman" explained to Spangenberg, "If the negros were told that all men were the same before God, it would weaken their respect for the whites. And our lives would not be safe…"[26]

These fears were not unique to St. Thomas: as I showed in Chapters 1 and 2, Protestant slave owners throughout the Atlantic world resisted the work of missionaries well into the eighteenth century. But on St. Thomas, planters developed a distinctive form of anti-missionary resistance. In Barbados, slave owners fined and persecuted the Quaker missionaries. In St. Thomas, they burned books.[27] Both male and female masters played an important role in the attack on books, with white women often leading the charge. As Oldendorp wrote, "At the end of March there was another emergency because white women kept taking textbooks away from children and negro women. They ripped them up and burned them, making things even more difficult for Martin who already had a shortage."[28] White men also played a part, sometimes assaulting enslaved and free

[25] Spangenberg, "Nachricht," 18 September 1736. UA R.15.Ba.17.9.

[26] Spangenberg, "Nachricht," 17 October 1736. UA R.15.Ba.17.9.

[27] For more on Quaker persecution in Barbados see Dailey, "The Early Quaker Mission and the Settlement of Meetings in Barbados, 1655-1700"; Gragg, *The Quaker Community on Barbados*; Katharine Gerbner, "The Ultimate Sin: Christianising Slaves in Barbados in the Seventeenth Century," *Slavery & Abolition* 31, no. 1 (March 2010): 57–73.

[28] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:253, 210.

blacks on their way to meetings. During these encounters, Afro-Caribbeans were systematically stripped of their reading materials. Persecution reached a peak in 1739 during the visit of Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf, the charismatic leader of the Moravians. On the eve of the Count's departure from the island, hundreds of slaves and free blacks attended the leader's speech.[29] After the event, a number of blacks accompanied the Count to town where "they were attacked on the public road by several Whites carrying sticks and bared swords." The assailants advanced to the Brethren's plantation where they "attacked the Negroes who had remained there, beat them, and injured them, forcing them to take flight…[and w]hen there were no more Negroes to beat up, they vented their wrath on chairs, glasses, dishes, and any other household utensils."[30] Despite the terrorizing violence toward the Brethren, Oldendorp reported that the individuals who had been assaulted "didn't complain about the beatings they received, but only about the loss of their books."[31] Indeed, books were such powerful currency in the planter war of terror that the Moravians sometimes called their attackers simply "bookburners."[32]

Friedrich Martin fought against book burning by appealing to his brethren in Europe. Within months of his arrival, he had already sent word to Amsterdam that he desperately needed more reading materials. Yet by May of the following year, he was still waiting. When he heard that two loads of books had been sent on separate ships – both of which were captured by pirates – he purchased books that had arrived from New York and further increased his supply by buying texts from Dutch people on the island. Martin even went so far as to "give his last Shillings out to provide

[29] The significance of the Count's visit is described in detail in Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival.*

[30] Oldendorp, *A Caribbean Mission*, 363–4.

[31] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:370.

[32] See Oldendorp, *A Caribbean Mission*, 370.

books for those who desperately wanted to read, though it often happened that the book he bought for a negro woman one day would be taken away by her mistress the next."[33]

While Martin was sacrificing his depleted funds to provide texts for his students, literacy was becaming a central issue in the governmental response to the Moravian presence. As early as 1736, the government of St. Thomas stated that they "did not hinder the conversion of blacks. But the governor forbid Martin to teach them how to write and threatened that if he continued to do so, the government would also forbid the learning of reading." The governor explained that fully literate slaves could ignite a rebellion and "reported that a few slaves had plotted a rebellion through writing on an English island."[34] After the Count's visit in 1739, the governor reiterated and expanded his concerns about the mission. In addition to putting severe restrictions on when and where Moravians converts could meet, the governor proclaimed that Moravians:

> should not teach slaves how to write or educate them that they become free when they are Christian, or allow them to become as good as their masters or other gentlemen, nor should they think that they will not be required to do as much work or that they will be free from punishment, but rather the opposite, that as Christians they should be truer to their masters and turn in everything to the Word of God.[35]

The governor's comments should not be read as a direct response to Moravian intentions, but rather as a lens into white perceptions of black literacy and black Christianity in the eighteenth century Caribbean. The governor worried that learning how to read and converting to Christianity would make slaves believe that they were free, break down the social hierarchy, and destroy the work schedule.

Within a year of the governor's proclamation, the brethren met to confer about how to go forward. After a number of conferences, they made three changes in their approach to the mission:

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[33] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:210.

[34] Ibid., 2:200–1.

[35] Ibid., 2:339.

they "decided unanimously to preach among the Negroes on nothing other than the cross of Christ," to suspend reading instruction "altogether," and to lessen the severity of church discipline.[36] Together, these new policies worked to end the "book terror" that had plagued them during the first years of the mission.

*"Backsliders" and the Marriage Debate*

While the governor's pressure, paired with the violent attacks of planters, was influential in hastening the Moravians' turn away from literacy, the missionaries' perception of slave "backsliding" represented an equally—if not more important—reason to reject reading. Even at the beginning of the mission, the Moravian missionaries were probably aware that not all of their pupils came to lessons with the desire to convert to Christianity. Initially, missionaries believed that instruction in reading could attract otherwise disinterested pupils. As Oldendorp wrote, "[I]n addition to the fact that [the slaves'] newly-acquired reading skills enabled the Negroes to read the Bible, it also induced many of those who had come to the meetings with the sole purpose of learning to read to partake of the desire to get to know Christ and to share in his doctrine."[37] Sometimes this method worked. In 1737, Friedrich Martin made some progress with a couple on Hans Clas's plantation when "they showed a desire to learn." Martin sent the couple a spelling book, and "the negro woman began to go to school…until she was awakened, and she converted and longed for the holy Baptism." Yet despite the missionaries' hopes, many of their students remained unseduced by the gospel. The husband of the convert from Hans Clas's plantation, for example, initially "liked the letters" in the

[36] Gottlieb Israel, "Diarium von St. Thomas, 1740." UA R.15.Bb.2.2; Oldendorp, *A Caribbean Mission*, 386. While the missionaries suspended reading lessons, they did specify that literate black converts could potentially perform teaching duties on their own. They also made provisions for those truly interested in conversion to learn reading.

[37] Ibid., 318.

book from Martin, but eventually decided "he didn't have a reason to convert." Martin let him go, but concluded that "he knew why he stayed away, namely so that he could play his fiddle at festivals."[38]

Martin's belief that playing the "fiddle at festivals" was incompatible with conversion is indicative of a larger tension within the mission. Converts were not only expected to express their *belief* in Christian doctrine; they were also asked to engage in specific social practices that the missionaries defined as "Christian." Activities such as singing, for example, were acceptable only within approved cultural settings, such as a Moravian meeting. Content was also significant: singing was condoned when songs focused on Christian topics, but was otherwise condemned. As Spangenberg commented, "[i]t's well known that both truths and falsehoods can be spread through songs, so it's important to distinguish the songs from one another."[39]

One of the sites of greatest tension between missionaries and converts revolved around the construction of the family and the meaning of marriage. While the missionaries defined marriage as a life-long, monogamous union of one man and one woman, familial customs among most enslaved and free blacks did not conform to these ideas.[40] The majority of Afro-Caribbeans who attended Moravian meetings were either born in Africa or born to African parents, and many maintained African-based familial structures, such as polygynous households.[41] During his visit in 1736, Spangenberg recognized that these polygynous families posed a tricky problem for the mission.

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[38] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:231–2.

[39] Spangenberg, "Nachricht," 13 September 1736. UA R.15.Ba.17.9.

[40] Within a Protestant European context, the Moravians had radical ideas about marriage, though they maintained support for monogamous marriages. See Fogleman, *Jesus Is Female*, 91.

[41] Only 18 of the 69 individuals baptized between 1736 and 1740 were identified as "creoles." For more on Afro-Caribbean familial structures, see Jean Besson, "The Creolization of African-American Slave Kinship in Jamaican Free Village and Maroon Communities," in *Slave Cultures and the Cultures of Slavery*, ed. Stephan Palmié (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 189–90.

"What should we do about marriage among the negros?" he wondered. "Some have many wives, so which ones should they divorce?" Spangenberg assumed that divorce was the only way for an individual in a polygynous household to become a true Christian. But he also realized that divorce could pose other types of problems. He feared, for example, that if a man divorced a "true" wife who then went on to marry someone else, that woman would be committing adultery.[42]

Spangenberg was unable to come up with a workable solution to the "marriage problem" in 1736 and polygyny reemerged as a central topic of debate during the 1740 conferences. By this time, however, a number of enslaved and free converts had read the Scriptures for themselves and could challenge European ideas about true Christian practice. During one of the meetings, "some [black Christians] searched in the Old Testament, pointing out parts that seemed to justify their polygamous practices and other disorderly things."[43] The congregants may have been referring to any number of Old Testament passages that condone polygyny. Exodus 21:10 (KJV) states, "[i]f he take him another wife, her food, her raiment, and her duty of marriage shall he not diminish," and 2 Samuel 5:13 and 1 Chronicles 3:1-9 refer to King David's six wives and numerous concubines.[44] While the missionaries had accepted a degree of debate on other Scriptural passages, such as the Sermon on the Mount, they resented the challenge regarding polygyny. They concluded not to "waste their precious time with such people any more, so they largely stopped teaching reading."[45]

As this disagreement shows, the decision to halt reading lessons was about more than just planter pressure. When a number of enslaved and free blacks used their reading ability to challenge the relationship between Christianity and social practice, the missionaries decided that the school

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[42] Spangenberg, "Nachricht," 17 September 1736. UA R.15.Ba.17.9.

[43] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:432–3.

[44] See also 1 Kings 11:3, 2 Chronicles 11:21 and Deuteronomy 21:15.

[45] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:433.

"took too much time" and they didn't want to deal with "such people any longer." One practical consequence of the decision to discontinue reading lessons was that it increased the authority of literate blacks. The missionaries were aware that "there were some among the old and the new [congregants] who could read and they taught others."[46] Many of these black teachers held positions of power within the church as elders or "national helpers." Helpers were supposed to mentor new pupils and spread word of the Gospel within the slave population.[47] Missionaries had relied heavily on helpers for years, integrating them into the structure of the church and holding separate conferences with them to discuss the state of the congregation, disciplinary measures for "backsliders," and theological issues, such as the best way to translate the Gospel to the Afro-Caribbean population. Aside from ceding literacy lessons to black leaders, a second consequence of the 1740 conferences was the decision to have more patience with "backsliders" who continued to partake in "non-Christian" practices. The missionaries couched their new policy in terms of love: "With love, [the sinners] were to be shown the cause of their fall, as well as the means to their salvation."[48] What this meant was that "non-Christian" practice was to be unofficially tolerated and converts would not necessarily be thrown out of meeting if their transgressions were discovered.

The missionaries' tenuous compromise of 1740 did not mark the end of their struggle with polygyny. When the missionary Christian Rauch visited the island in 1745, the Brethren tried to reach a new consensus on how to respond to the practice.[49] "We had a conference at [the] Prayer Day," Rauch wrote, where many "weighty Matters were spoken of especially ab[ou]t Polligamy [sic]

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[46] Ibid., 2:432–3.

[47] For more on the role of national helpers within the Moravian congregation, see Sensbach, *Rebecca's Revival*, 92–100.

[48] Oldendorp, *A Caribbean Mission*, 386.

[49] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:631.631

some of ye Negroe men having 2 wifes." Again, black Moravians played a central role in the conversation. After the meeting, the white missionaries "spoke w[i]th Abraham & Peter [about] how they should deal with those men who have 2 wi[v]es." As Elders in the Moravian congregation, Abraham and Peter played a vital role in mediating the message of the church to the black congregants and communicating doctrine. After a discussion with these two black leaders, the missionaries came to the conclusion that they should basically ignore the existence of polygyny in their congregation: "they should not unseasonably speak ab[ou]t it in publick or private Meetings," wrote Rauch, "but let our Sav[ior]…convince them in their hearts [that] it's not right..."[50]

In 1749, during another set of conferences led by Bishop Johannes von Wattewille, the brethren tried again to "come to a decision about the practice that had previously caused uncertainty and disorder among the blacks."[51] They finally concluded that men with more than one wife would be allowed to join the congregation, but forbid converts from taking any additional spouses after their baptism.[52] Based on a reading of 1 Timothy 3:2, they also forbid men with multiple wives from holding office within the church.[53] Finally, the missionaries accounted for the possibility that a couple could be broken up against their will: "[W]hen a master separates a married couple and sells one to another land," Wattewille wrote, "the other partner should wait at least a year and a day to see if anything can be done about it. But if they remain apart, and there is no hope left that they will be brought together, it's better to consider each partner to be divorced and allow them to take

[50] Christian Heinrich Rauch, "Journal to St. Thomas," 3 August 1745. MAB Journals Box JD V 1.

[51] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2002, 2:758.

[52] Ibid., 2:769.

[53] 1 Timothy 3:2 (KJV) states: "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach." See Ibid., 2:758.

another man or women rather than to see them resort to promiscuity [*Hurerey*]..."[54] As Wattewille's comments reveal, the Moravian missionaries became increasingly flexible in their dealings with polygyny, as well as other "non-Christian" practices, in the decade after they halted their reading lessons. This policy shift represented an important adaptation to West Indian slave life: influenced by their conversations with black congregants and their recognition that slave masters could separate families at will, the missionaries redefined marriage to accommodate the circumstances of slave life.

By the time Wattewille approved polygyny in 1749, only a few remnants remained of the Moravians' previous focus on literacy. Most poignantly, the word "school" had been adapted into the local Dutch creole to signify "Meeting house." The linguistic development intrigued Wattewille, who noted in his journal that "the word 'school' is an expression unique to St. Thomas and St. Croix. In other congregations, we would use the word 'Meeting' or '[bible] hour.'" Wattewille was well aware of the significance of this linguistic relic: "[W]hen our brethren first began their work among the negros," he explained, "they had a school where they taught reading, so now all of the Meetings are referred to as school." The word was used frequently. "One says, for example: 'where is school being held?'... or 'Today there is school on the north side,' etc."[55] Thus while the word "school" survived in the Danish West Indies, reading and writing lessons did not. Instead, "school" was redefined to fit a West Indian context, just as Moravian Christianity was reenvisioned to include, at least marginally, cultural practices such as polygyny.

[54] Johannes von Watteville, "Reise Diarium von Bethlehem nach St. Thomas und wieder zurück," 6 June 1749. MAB Journals Box JF IV 2.

[55] Wattewille, "Reise Diarium," 7 May 1749. MAB Journals Box JF IV 2.

*"They Call Me Obea"*

Five years after making polygyny an accepted, if disputed, part of Christian practice, the Moravian Church founded a second mission in the Caribbean, this time on the British island of Jamaica. Without the promise of literacy, Zacharias George Caries, the first Moravian missionary on Jamaica, developed alternative strategies to attract enslaved men and women into the Moravian fold. Three months after arriving on the Bogue plantation in St. Elizabeth parish, Caries wrote a letter to Joseph Spangenberg in Pennsylvania. His letter provides a clue as to how the male and female slaves on the Bogue plantation perceived the new missionary when he first arrived. On March 17, 1755, Caries wrote:

> More and more of them come to the Meeting, so that we will soon have to enlarge our hall. They call me Obea, which supposedly means Seer, or one who is able to see things in the future. They like me a lot and I like them.[56]

By calling Caries "Obea," the slaves revealed that they recognized the new foreigner, initially at least, as a revered person within their community who could help heal and protect them. As Kenneth Bilby and Jerome Handler have written, obeah should be understood as a "catch-all term that encompasses a wide variety and range of beliefs and practices related to the control or channeling of supernatural spiritual forces by particular individuals or groups for their own needs, or on behalf of clients who come for help."[57] In other words, as an obeah man, Caries would be expected to improve the lives of his congregants and to indicate what would happen in the future.

Since baptism was the ceremonial blessing that Caries offered, it is no surprise that such a large proportion of slaves at the Bogue sought out this sacrament. Indeed, many African-born slaves

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[56] *Gemein Nachrichten*, Vol. 5 (1755). UA GN 1755 5 A.44 (I-XL), pp. 743-747.

[57] Kenneth M. Bilby and Jerome S. Handler, "Obeah: Healing and Protection in West Indian Slave Life," *Journal of Caribbean History* 38, no. 2 (December 2004): 154. See also Handler and Bilby, "On the Early Use and Origin of the Term 'Obeah' in Barbados and the Anglophone Caribbean"; Handler and Bilby, *Enacting Power*.

probably saw similarities between Caries' baptism and their own religious traditions. In the Danish West Indies, the Moravian missionary C.G.A. Oldendorp interviewed a number of slaves who compared Christian and African baptism. Based on his interviews with slaves from what he identified as the Watje nation, Oldendorp concluded:

> They have some form of baptism everywhere. It happens usually with children who are already rather big, but sometimes with little kids. They make a circle under the open sky. The black priest stirs water and salt together in a jug, and the mother brings the child to him. He puts the water in a calabash and pours it over the head of the boy three times and also prays that God will help him and protect him from his enemies.[58]

Enslaved men and women at the Bogue plantation also saw similarities between Caries' God and the God of their homeland. In June 1756, Caries reported a conversation with a number of African-born slaves about their various Gods:

> [W]e had a [meeting] with those who were last baptisd [sic], at which the guinea Negroes related a good deal abt that country & that they always believed there was a God, whom in Coromantee they calld Jamconpon, in Ibo, Gicoquowi & in Congo, Simiapumgo. In Ibo they plant every Mo[nth] a tree which they worship; but that God became a Man, sufferd & dyd for us, this no one in that Country knew any thing of.[59]

This discussion between African-born slaves and Caries reveals the extent to which Christian and non-Christian ideas about God were being compared and related. Caries and the newly baptized slaves all seemed to agree that they believed in the same God, although God had different names depending on where one was raised. Even the Ibo tradition of planting a tree did not seem to conflict with Christian ideas about God. The central difference between Caries and the newly baptized was identified as a piece of information: "that God became a Man, sufferd & dyd for us." It is important that this critical element of Christian belief was portrayed as compatible with the Ibo, Coromantee and Congo Gods. Within this framework, the enslaved candidates just needed to add this piece of knowledge to their repertoire in order to correctly understand the "true" Christian God.

[58] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2000, 1:448–9.

[59] Zacharias George Caries, "Jamaica Diary," 2 June 1756. MCHL [uncatalogued].

Caries' job was to introduce this information, and to acquaint the slaves, with their partial understanding of God, of the truth about Christ and His wounds, a hallmark of Moravian piety.

In addition to calling him "obea," slaves at the Bogue sought Caries out as a mediator. Sometimes Caries acted as the slaves' advocate in the face of the overseers and attorneys on the plantation. Even unbaptized slaves would ask Caries to intercede on their behalf. In May of 1755, Caries recorded one example of a runaway who had returned to the plantation and begged him to speak on his behalf:

> One Negro who was run away & stay'd several Days came to Night home, and begg'd me to intercede for him wch I did, and he was forgiven upon his promising never to do so again.[60]

After helping the slave avoid punishment, Caries reported that he "took an opportunity to tell him something of our Savr & the tears came into his Eyes." Still, while Caries occasionally acted as an advocate during disputes with an overseer or attorney, it was far more common for him to act as an ad hoc arbiter of disputes between slaves. For example, in January 1757, Caries was called to mediate a fight between the baptized slave Manaseth and his wife. The pair were quarreling because, as Caries understood it, Manaseth's wife had been caught together with another baptized slave, Zacharias.[61] The missionaries were also sought out when the slaves ran out of food or when they felt they were being mistreated by another slave.

While Caries may initially have been recognized as an obeah man, he was different in an important way from most African obeah men: he didn't charge a fee. It had probably never occurred to Caries that he could – or should – be charging slaves for his services (he never mentioned it as a possibility) but a later missionary to Jamaica described of a woman who found this fact surprising. On 9 December 1765, the missionary wrote:

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[60] Zacharias George Caries, "Diary of Brother Caries' Voyage to Jamaica and Jamaica Diary," 22 May 1755. MCHL [uncatalogued].

[61] Zacharias George Caries and Christian Heinrich Rauch, "Jamaica Diary." MAB Miss Jmc 4.

> A negro woman who we didn't know asked one of our negro women whether it was true that her pastor would really baptize people, because she had heard that he did it for free. The woman answered that the pastor first had to get to know her.[62]

This offhand story betrays an important point: many slaves would have expected to pay for work done by qualified spiritual practitioners and it was strange that the Moravians provided baptisms "for free." It is also interesting that the slave woman belonging to the Moravians did not mention that conversion was a prerequisite for baptism. According to her, the payment for baptism was purely interpersonal. That said, even letting a Moravian missionary "get to know" you came with a price. Caries, like other missionaries, expected his converts to change their behavior and adopt a number of new cultural practices. African singing and dancing were frowned upon, as was having more than one spouse—though men with multiple wives could now be baptized.[63]

*The Souls of Slave Drivers*

Another important reason for Caries' success has to do with the prominence of his first converts.[64] At the Bogue, the first slave baptized was one of the plantation drivers, Ludwig (formerly Coffee), as was the tenth baptized slave, Sampson. Understanding more about the lives of drivers like Ludwig and Sampson helps explain why leading slaves would have been drawn to the missionaries. Initially, one might assume that since drivers were accustomed to mediating between whites and field slaves, they would be the most inclined to communicate with the newly arrived

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[62] *Gemein Nachrichten*, Vol. 7 (1765). UA GN 1765 7 A.115, 380-1.

[63] For more on this subject, see Thorp, "New Wine in Old Bottles."

[64] In his study of the Moravian mission at Mesopotamia, the third Jamaican plantation served by the missionaries in Jamaica, Richard Dunn found that a large proportion of slave converts were older and more prominent slaves on the plantation. My research on the first Moravian mission at the Bogue, Jamaica, confirms Dunn's findings, particularly when it comes to slave drivers. I would like to thank Richard Dunn for generously sharing his unpublished research with me. See also Dunn, *Moravian Missionaries at Work in a Jamaican Slave Community*.

missionaries. This was certainly an important factor, but it cannot fully explain why drivers tended to seek out baptism before other slaves. In fact, as Caries' diaries show, many drivers felt discomfort with their own work and sought both comfort and support from missionaries. Ludwig/Coffee even went so far as to ask Caries if he could resign as driver:

> One of the Drivers who is now baptized desire'd before Baptism that he might be excus'd from his Office (for they must be People who can be depended upon). He wou'd rather Work hard in the Field than to have this place wch endager'd his Soul. But I explain'd to him this Matter, shewing him also the Consequence of his Office (wch is an important one). He is now happy in his Place and a Blessing.[65]

This passage begins to suggest why Ludwig, as well as other prominent slaves, was drawn to Caries. Many drivers felt guilty about the work they had to do and Caries provided absolution. He even went so far as to compare the work of slave driver to Jesus' work as carpenter. In the same passage, Caries wrote:

> Then I spoke of our Saviours Sweat & Diligence in his Labour - how he had been a Carpenter, how he had labour'd with his own Hands, and thereby bless'd and sanctified the Labour of his Children, therefore it was a great Mercy of our God that he found us some Employment the want of wch was the occasion of all Crimes.

In Caries' mind, carpentry and slave driving were equivalent because they were both "employment," and lack of employment led to crime. Furthermore, slave driving was somehow regarded as laboring with one's "own Hands," making it presumably superior to employment in non-manual realms. With this rationale, Caries found it easy to tell the troubled Ludwig that the "Consequence of his Office" was an important one, and to leave him "happy in his Place."

Caries' conversations with Ludwig/Coffee reveal an important aspect of Moravian mission work. Moravians are often categorized as apologists for slavery, but focusing on their attempts to appeal to slave owners has obscured the reasons that enslaved men and women were drawn to them. As Caries' diaries show, Moravian missionaries were not just reassuring slave owners: they also

[65] Zacharias George Caries, "Diary of Brother Caries' Voyage to Jamaica and Jamaica Diary," 29 April 1755. MCHL [uncatalogued].

soothed the consciences of slave drivers who disliked the brutality required on a daily basis. Nor did the work in appeasement end with the drivers. Slaves in a number of different professions confessed their discontent to Caries' willing ear. Even Caries found their confessions excessive at time. He noted in his diary that a number of candidates for baptism "laid their Hearts open & some confess'd (of their own Accord) every thing they had been wanting in & had been wrong in, & even mentiond every Trifle."[66] Caries offered an opportunity for confession and redemption.

*A Family Affair*

After Caries succeeded in attracting a number of the most prominent slaves at the Bogue, interest in the Moravian meetings tended to expand through familial groups. Following Ludwig's family shows this trend. On May 13, 1755, just two weeks after Ludwig's baptism, Caries noted that "Louis's Father, Mother & 2 brothers are pretty people. One of his Brr is a Candidate for Baptism."[67] In August, Ludwig's brother Simon/John was baptized. The following November, Caries reported, "I returned home & spoke wth our Louis, Johannes, & Thomas, the former told me a great deal of his old father's & his wife's desire to be baptized."[68] As the wording of this passage makes clear, Ludwig was doing the majority of work to bring his family into the Moravian fold. It was Ludwig who spoke to his father and his wife and Ludwig who primed Caries to prepare for their baptism. Indeed, Caries seems almost a puppet behind Ludwig's desires for himself and his family. When Ludwig's father Cyrus was baptized, Caries credited his sons:

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[66] Zacharias George Caries, "Diary of Brother Caries' Voyage to Jamaica and Jamaica Diary," 27 April 1755. MCHL [uncatalogued].

[67] Zacharias George Caries, "Diary of Brother Caries' Voyage to Jamaica and Jamaica Diary," 13 May 1755. MCHL [uncatalogued].

[68] Zacharias George Caries, "Diary of Brother Caries' Voyage to Jamaica and Jamaica Diary," 12 Nov 1755. MCHL [uncatalogued].

> …none were more Delighted than Ludwig & Simon to see their aged Father baptiz'd & so singularly bless'd; Oh said Ludwig, were my Mother & my other brother baptisd too this Brother is in indentur'd Person 12 or 14 miles from hence & has yet 2 years to serve, but is really a dear man who loves our Savr & comes as often as he can to the Meeting.[69]

Even after his father's baptism, Ludwig saw more opportunities for his family: his mother and his brother, who was rented out to another master, still needed to be baptized. Implicit in Ludwig's comment was the hope that Caries could possibly decrease the length of his brother's indenture or somehow arrange for him to be able to come home more often. From these brief comments in Caries' diary, it is clear that Ludwig was a prominent and authoritative slave who was unhappy with the requirements of slave driving and sought answers and support from the missionaries. Once Caries began to provide that support, Ludwig brought his entire family into the congregation.

Prominent slaves like Ludwig also extended their reach beyond their families by preaching and gaining a following among the slave population. Titus, the third person baptized at the Bogue, was probably already a preacher before he was baptized. As Caries noted in his diary, "after dinner I spoke with Titus, a Candidate, who always rejoyces my Heart, and will certainly be a Witness & does already labour among his People."[70] Titus, who was married to a maroon woman named Margery, was also a very well respected person on the estate. He, like Ludwig, was most likely a driver and he was often given time to visit his wife in the mountains, where she lived much of the time with the other maroons.

When Caries chose Ludwig and Titus as his "helpers" in spreading the gospel to the slave population, their new title was more an affirmation of what the men had already been doing than an introduction into a new profession. Yet Titus and Ludwig did have one new requirement as official

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[69] Zacharias George Caries, "Diary of Brother Caries' Voyage to Jamaica and Jamaica Diary," 14 Dec 1755. MCHL [uncatalogued].

[70] Zacharias George Caries, "Diary of Brother Caries' Voyage to Jamaica and Jamaica Diary," 23 March 1755. MCHL [uncatalogued].

"helpers." They were expected to keep an eye on the behavior of other slaves and report back to the missionaries. As Caries described, "[the Helpers] labour with Blessing among their own People & after bring us pretty Accounts; We gave them Commission to have a strict Eye over the other Negroes, And to beg Grace of our Savr, that they may speak at Times a Word to them with Blessing. And tho we did not tell them We look'd upon them as our assistance."[71]

*Blood, Wounds and the Power of Death*

Spiritual and ceremonial benefits were also central to Moravian appeal. Of utmost significance was the Moravian description of the afterlife, which resonated strongly in the Caribbean. With death rates for whites exceeding ten percent per year and blacks surviving at a slightly higher rate, funerals were a vital social activity for both masters and slaves.[72] Control of the instruments of death practices was thus central to the creation of power and influence in the eighteenth century Caribbean. As Vincent Brown argued in his study of mortuary practice in the Atlantic World, "death and slavery determined the development of Jamaican Christianity. The progress of Christianity on the island depended to a large degree on the course of theological struggles surrounding the representation of the afterlife and ceremonies of interment."[73] Using the image of the crucifixion, Moravian missionaries actively took part in the struggle to gain control of death.

In March 1755, Caries wrote in his diary that he "one Woman ask'd me, Master when we die do not our souls go to Heaven, and our Bodies not in the Grave and become alive again?" Caries replied,

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[71] Zacharias George Caries, "Diary of Brother Caries' Voyage to Jamaica and Jamaica Diary," 18 Jan 1756. Moravian Church House, London [uncatalogued].

[72] Rates are for Jamaica. Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 13.

[73] Ibid., 203.

> Yes if we have been happy & washd in our Saviours Blood, then, when we die our Souls go to the dr Savr in Heaven & our Bodies rot in the Earth & we will get new Bodies made better than they are now, such as our dear Savr body, you will be no more Blacks, no more slaves, & your souls & Bodies will meet together. The soul which has been with our Saviour in his Wounds & pierc'd side, will come and fetch the Bodies to our Savr & then will be happy for ever & ever with him.[74]

That spiritual equality would reign in the Christian heaven and that the slaves would be "no more slaves" was reiterated by a number of slaves in a series of letters the first converts wrote to their earthly master, the absentee planter William Foster. In July 1755, Caries transcribed the words of all nine baptized slaves as well as two of his candidates. He made sure to note that he recorded them "one after another & I had also one at a Time to dictate, that one might not use anothers Expressions." While all of the converts thanked their master for sending Caries to introduce them to the Savior, Sampson and his brother Benjamin also included a lightly veiled assertion of spiritual equality in the face of earthly inequality. As Benjamin wrote, "I thank…Master for sending Mr. Parson over to instruct we poor Negroes, for the Good of our Souls… *And if Master & Mrs. dont come over again to Jamaica I hope we shall meet with our Saviour*." Sampson, too, informed his master that he would be "very glad to see Master & Family before I die, if not I hope we shall see one another with our Saviour."[75]

The promise of the Christian heaven was paired with the reality of a Christian burial. Caries spent a significant portion of his 1756 diary discussing his participation in various funerals and deathbed conversations. The most striking of these occurred when Sampson died. Because he was a slave with authority over other slaves, his funeral was an important event and drew a large crowd. Normally, such prominent burials would have been under the control of other powerful blacks on

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[74] Zacharias George Caries, "Diary of Brother Caries' Voyage to Jamaica and Jamaica Diary," 14 March 1755. MCHL [uncatalogued].

[75] Zacharias George Caries, "Diary of Brother Caries' Voyage to Jamaica and Jamaica Diary," 8 July 1755. MCHL [uncatalogued]. Emphasis added.

the island.[76] But since Sampson was a Christian, Caries directed the ceremony. Using eight full pages of his diary, Caries recounted every step in the process of Sampson's death and burial. On the morning of October 4th, Sampson "sat on a stool, where he spoke to the Savior by himself" and then "slept until midday at 12 o'clock." At noon, Caries was called to Sampson's side just in time to see him "go home." He blessed him with the verse: "The soul of Christ restores you."[77]

The moment was of utmost importance. Caries took it as a sign from God that Sampson had died exactly two years after Count Zinzendorf and Joseph Spangenberg had sent him to Jamaica during a conference in the Moravian community of Herrnhut, Germany. Just to make sure that his readers knew that *exactly* two years has elapsed, Caries added that "midday at 12 o'clock here is half past six in the evening in Europe." Caries reinforced the significance of the timing of Sampson's death in a letter he sent to Spangenberg on January 23, 1757:

> On the 4th of October the first of the baptized souls was kissed away, and it was on the exact same day, and in the exact same hour that I was sent to Jamaica during the Conference…I never thought that I, two years later, would see such a dear heart as our dear blessed Sampson's…[78]

Sampson's prestige among slaves added further weight to the event. Caries noted that several blacks came to visit Sampson's body and that they "had seen him as their father." Yet Caries also worried that Sampson's prominence might mean that he would be stripped of the opportunity to lead the burial. "When such people die who are important to the negroes," he wrote, "thousands come and they make such a dreadful noise and carry on the entire night."[79] Caries wanted something different – and distinctly Christian – for Sampson. He was determined to lay him to rest in Gottes Aker, or

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[76] See Brown, *The Reaper's Garden*, 71.

[77] Zacharias George Caries, "Diarium der kleinen Gemeine in Jamaica, October 1756 bis Januar 1757," 4 October 1756. MAB Miss Jmc 3.

[78] Caries to Spangenberg, 23 Jan 1757. MAB Miss Jmc ?.2

[79] Zacharias George Caries, "Jamaica Diary: Oct 1756-Jan 1757." MAB Miss Jmc 3.

God's Acre, a burial plot the missionaries had set aside for the baptized. By taking the process of death out of slave hands, Caries was waging a war of symbols in a struggle to gain credibility and respect for his Savior and his mission. He planned the burial for the morning of October 5, when all of the baptized brethren would be able to attend. In preparation, he and his helpers "dressed the corpse in white and ornaments of red bands."

As Caries and the other brethren prepared for Sampson's funeral, they were shocked to hear that another slave – this time a baptismal candidate named Manatie – had died suddenly. Caries took it as another sign from God and took advantage of a unique opportunity to describe the blessings of a Christian death. He was delighted to see "many unknown negroes" in the audience as he told them "how blessed our dear Sampson was now with the Savior, and also about our Manatie and about the blessing that we all had to await, now that the dear Savior had taken two out of our midst in one day." Following his sermon, Caries was told by a number of slaves that "their hearts burned for the Savior, and they wished that it had been their time to go to Him."[80]

On the following day, Caries again assembled the congregants in the chapel to sing. The favorite converts were chosen to carry Sampson's body to the burial ground where the slaves, all dressed in white, "formed a double circle around Gottes Aker." Following the ceremony, the burial party returned to the chapel where Caries preached from Revelations: "Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord, from henceforth. Yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."[81] Caries chose the verse well: the promise of rest from work and the blessings of the Savior were surely appealing to the slaves who listened to Caries' words.

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[80] Zacharias George Caries, "Jamaica Diary: Oct 1756-Jan 1757." MAB Miss Jmc 3.

[81] Zacharias George Caries, "Jamaica Diary: Oct 1756-Jan 1757." MAB Miss Jmc 3. The line is from Revelations 14:13.

After Sampson was put to rest, Caries was delighted when "various negroes came to me and requested that I bury Manatie as well." The invitation to speak at a second funeral meant that Caries was gaining prestige among the slaves. His description of the funeral emphasized both the powerful imagery of Christ's crucifixion and Caries' desire to control the symbolism of the ceremony:

> Everything was in good order, and they had left the coffin open to show me the corpse, which was dressed in white. They hadn't put either salt or rum in the coffin like they normally do. We formed a circle around the grave and because there were a lot of unknown negroes there, I held a Discourse about the immortality of our souls, and where the souls of the believers go; also about the incarnation and the reasons for his death, and about his and our own tranquility in the grave.[82]

Caries' relief that the slaves "hadn't put either salt or rum in the coffin" betrays the fact that he lacked full control of the symbolic world of death.[83] His tone implies that if he *had* found Manatie's coffin with salt or rum that he would have had no way to alter the situation. The fact that the corpse was "dressed in white," meanwhile, struck Caries as "in good order." The juxtaposition between his acceptance of white dress and his rejection of salt is an interesting example of the contingency of cultural connection. As Daniel Thorp has shown, wearing white at important ceremonies was already an accepted practice among both Christians and a number of African nations.[84] As a result, white dress was easily assimilated into Christian practice, despite its "heathen origins," while salt and rum retained their non-Christian associations. Yet it seems doubtful that Caries would have objected to leading the funeral even if he *had* found salt and rum in the coffin. As he demonstrated in his "Discourse," he knew how to capitalize on the popularity of death ceremonies and his sermon was carefully crafted to make a Christian death seem more desirable than other types of death. Only

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[82] Zacharias George Caries, "Diarium, 5 October 1756." MAB Mss Jmc 3.

[83] Salt was used in baptismal practices in West Africa, though I have found no references to its use in burial practice. For references to concentric circles see Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (December 2009): 1231–1249.

[84] Thorp, "New Wine in Old Bottles," 5.

Christians would be "tranquil" in their graves, and only he could explain the "reasons for death" and the destination of dead souls.

Caries' use of death was, like Martin's reading lessons, powerful and popular. Both offered slaves something desirable, whether it was the promise of knowledge or the comfort of a tranquil afterlife. Yet the success of each strategy was also dependent on the missionaries' ability to accept or incorporate what they considered to be non-Christian practices into the realm of Christianity—or at least to develop various levels of inclusion.

Caries' burial of Sampson and Manatie marked the high point of his spiritual power in Jamaica. When his long-awaited reinforcements arrived in January 1757, he had already noticed some "sinful behavior" among his converts. And as the year progressed, the situation deteriorated rapidly. In August 1757, Caries wrote to Brother Böhler explaining that while he had rejoiced when the experienced missionary Christian Heinrich Rauch and his wife, Anna Rauch, arrived with Carl and Maria Schulz to reinforce his efforts, their timing could not have been worse. The new missionaries landed on the island "just before the beginning of the sugar harvest," so they could only have "2 meetings for the baptized and candidates before sugar making got in the way and the negros had to work day and night." Indeed, Rauch was not even able to speak to each of the baptized before the sugar season began. As Caries explained in a letter, "the sugar crop took unusually long this year, six and a half months." During this "hard time," Caries continued, "some of the baptized have fallen openly into sin." The missionaries "could hardly get to speak to them apart from Sunday evening and then they were tired because they had to work during the night right after the Meeting, and they also had to work half of the previous night." Once the sugar season was over, the missionaries planned to meet more regularly with their converts, but Rauch came down

with a violent fever and was close to death.[85] In October of the same year, Rauch had recovered from his illness but the slaves at the Bogue were still ignoring the missionaries. "I often despair," wrote Caries to Spangenberg in Pennsylvania, "it has caused me many sleepless nights, that so many of the baptized have fallen into sin and shame, and many things have come to light for which I thank the Savior, but Satan still has, or has gotten, so much control over them…"[86]

The sudden shift in the Jamaican mission can be seen not only in Caries' reports of "backsliding," but also in the number of baptisms taking place on the plantation. While Caries baptized 26 slaves in 1755 and 43 in 1756, only 7 men and women were baptized in 1757. This is especially surprising because 1757 was the first year that female slaves could be baptized. Previously, the lack of a female missionary meant that women had to remain as candidates and Caries had frequently complained that the women were clamoring for the sacrament. So why, when Anna Rauch and Maria Schultz arrived in 1757, did the women not seek them out as the men had sought out Caries just two years before? Indeed, of the seven slaves baptized that year, only two were female. Two others were drivers on a separate plantation, and all but one was African born (the only creole was married to the African-born Salome/Barbara, the first woman baptized). In 1758, there was only one baptism in Jamaica: that of Coco, renamed Elizabeth, an old African-born woman who was married to Nehemia (formerly Hampton), who was baptized in 1756. In 1759, there were no baptisms. Between 1760 and 1763, there were a total of four, only two of which occurred at the Bogue.

The slaves' rejection of the missionaries is just as hard to explain as their initial embrace, but there are some clues. In a letter to Spangenberg, Caries suggested two reasons. First, Caries felt he had been too gullible with the slaves. The "great love I feel toward the negroes," he wrote, "has

[85] Caries to Böhler, 17 August 1757. UA R.15.C.a.5.

[86] Caries to Spangenberg, 14 October 1757. MAB Miss Jmc 32 4.

made me blind to many things." Specifically, Caries noted that the enslaved could "imitate our language without feeling it in their heart."[87] Caries was also concerned that creole slaves had been too influenced by Jamaican whites and that they were, in turn, corrupting the "simple" African-born slaves. Caries' claim that his converts had been mimicking his language without true feeling was an issue that confronted all Moravian and non-Moravian missionaries working among people with a different mother tongue. In Jamaica, Caries could not always communicate with his converts. On a number of occasions, he reported that he needed a translator to conduct his baptismal ceremonies. Indeed, the majority of Caries' converts were African-born, meaning that while many spoke English, some did not.[88] But more importantly, even those who had learned English would imbue English words with interpretations that built on their native tongues. And some of the most significant Christian phrases and words – "sin," for example – had no equivalent in most African-based languages.[89] The "heart," a key word for revivalist preachers like Caries, also had different connotations. In 1759, when the Moravian missionary Nathanael Seidel arrived in Jamaica to conduct a series of conferences on the state of the mission, he alluded to this problem. In the notes from the fifth conference report Seidel noted, "[t]he expression 'my heart burns' does not mean the same thing among the negroes as it does among us; why? The negroes usually use this phrase only when they're in a fight with someone and are full of rage and strife, then they say: my heart burns

[87] Caries to Spangenberg, 14 October 1757. MAB Miss Jmc 32.4.

[88] By the time Caries departed in 1759, he had baptized 35 African-born slaves and 29 creole slaves. Many of the creole converts, however, were the offspring of African-born converts. Ludwig, the first baptized slave was the son of Cyrus/Zebedei, a native of the Papa nation, who also converted.

[89] Oldendorp, *Historie*, 2000.

against you…"[90] Missionaries were advised to pay closer attention to the meaning of certain expressions and to learn more about how their words were being interpreted.

Translation problems were, of course, not restricted to the realm of language. Social behavior also needed to be interpreted, and slaves and missionaries were often at odds in their understanding of particular actions, ceremonies and obligations. While Caries thought of himself as a saver of souls, for example, the slaves on the Bogue plantation attempted to fit Caries into a number of different roles: they initially called him "obea," suggesting that they saw certain qualities in him that were similar to obeah men, but they also sought him out as an advocate and looked to him for support and blessings.

What did these differences of interpretation have to do with the mission's temporary failure? I suggest that the missionaries' inability to fit into the various roles that the slaves imagined for them was an important factor in the temporary lapse of the mission. A tactical disagreement about the bestowal of baptism between Caries and Christian Heinrich Rauch, the second missionary, exacerbated the situation, as did mass starvation, unrest due to international warfare, and a series of slaves rebellions on the island. It took several years, the death of Christian Rauch, and the arrival of new missionaries before the Moravians could redefine themselves in the eyes of their converts and resurrect their congregation.

*The Varieties of Failure*

In July 1756, half a year before the arrival of Rauch and the other missionaries, Caries noted that there was massive starvation on the island. "Several of the Negroes in Cabbage Valley, (4 miles from hence) had drop'd down dead in the Fields for Hunger & want of Food," he wrote. "The

[90] "Conferences with Nathanael Seidel in Jamaica - Version 1, 1759." MAB West Indies Visits & Visitation 1740-1785: Box G.

distress among the poor Negroes at present is impossible." Making matters worse, "[m]any of their Masters and Overseers are so hard that they will not give their Negroes any thing, but rather let them dye for Hunger."[91] In times of distress, especially those of drought, flooding or starvation, obeah men, advocates and mediators would all have been expected to improve conditions for their clients, either by manipulating the weather or reasoning with masters in order to provide more food. And indeed, slaves continued to seek Caries out during this time – it was one of the most fruitful times for baptism. But the misery did not disappear – nor did Caries ever mention that he tried to provide food for his congregants – and it is likely that many baptized slaves were tired of waiting for Caries to improve their lives.

The missionaries' powerlessness in matters of weather and food shortage was exacerbated by their tenuous relationship with other whites on the island. During one of Caries' sermons in 1758, Christian Heinrich Rauch recorded that "there was again a great disruption from the white people, who were shameless. Amos [a baptized slave] tried to stop it. But they already had the young negro woman by the skirt and wanted to pull her out…"[92] While Rauch only gave a few clues as to what was happening, Caries was more detailed in his description. "The negroes were disrupted by the white people, who stood by the window and the door and one of them stuck his hand through the screen and winked to a girl who he had forced to be his whore, telling her that she should come out of the Meeting. When she refused, he stuck his hand in the door and pulled her out by the skirt." Despite the fact that Caries was in the midst of the sermon, he was unable to take control of the situation. In fact, Amos, a baptized slave, was the only person who actually tried to aid the woman. Even Rauch, who was sitting with the congregation and witnessed the entire event, did not stand up to the white intruder.

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[91] Zacharias George Caries, "Diarium," 9 July 1756. MCH [uncatalogued].

[92] Christian Heinrich Rauch, "Diarium von der Bogue," 30 July 1758. UA R.15.C.b.2 (1).

The missionaries' inability to protect their own congregants from other whites was likely a second reason for their decreased popularity. Compounding the situation, however, was a dispute between Caries and Rauch about when a slave could and should be baptized. Rauch, who had extensive experience in the Native American missions of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York, was shocked when he saw how "un-Christian" Moravian practice had become in Jamaica. In a series of letters to Spangenberg in Pennsylvania, he reprimanded Caries for being too lax in bestowing baptism to those who were obviously still engaged in "heathen" practice. Caries, for his part, seemed more willing to accept non-European traditions into his practice of Christianity.

With both Caries and Rauch arguing their perspectives to Spangenberg in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, it took years for their disagreement to be sorted out. But by 1759, Rauch had won and Caries was sent back to Europe in shame. Rauch's refusal to bestow baptism was a third important factor in the failure of the Jamaica mission. By withholding all sacramental offerings to the slaves, the missionaries made themselves less accessible and less valuable to their congregants. And as the missionaries became more stringent, the slaves eventually stopped visiting them. In 1760 and 1761, missionaries at the Bogue often reported that they had no congregants come to their meetings. Eventually, the missionaries abandoned the post for other estates.

The persistence of "backsliding" and Rauch's negative reaction to Afro-Jamaican Christianity are a reminder that the Moravians never truly solved the problems inherent in adapting Christianity to slave life in the Atlantic world. Still, their innovations were important both in and outside the West Indies. When Spangenberg published his *Account* in 1788, he wrote for both English- and German-speaking audiences who showed increasing interest in evangelization efforts to slaves. Thus Moravian policies—to minimize the significance of reading and maximize the image of Christ on the cross—were read and discussed throughout the Atlantic world as Methodists, Baptists and other Protestant groups upped their proselytizing efforts in the Americas.

As they publicized their missionary methods, the Moravians' rejection of reading represented an important adaptation to West Indian slavery. While European Protestants – including the Moravians – generally viewed the reading of Scripture as a central feature of Protestant piety, the pressures from both slaves and masters forced missionaries to redefine Christian practice. They replaced reading lessons with a stripped-down gospel teaching that focused on the tranquility and spiritual equality of the afterlife; paired their theology with a promise of community, advocacy and food; and provided a sympathetic ear to men and women whose daily lives were filled with brutality and pain. As Caries assured his congregants, "in Heaven…you will be no more Blacks, no more slaves, and your souls and your Bodies will meet together."[93]

[93] Zacharias George Caries, "Diary of Brother Caries' Voyage to Jamaica and Jamaica Diary," 14 March 1755. MCHL [uncatalogued].

# CONCLUSION

In May 1760, the Moravian missionary Christian Heinrich Rauch recorded a conversation with Mathew, an enslaved driver on the Mesopotamia estate in Westmoreland, Jamaica. Mathew was concerned about how his obligations as a slave driver were affecting his spiritual state. Mathew reported to Rauch that "his work as a driver was distressing him." He believed that if it weren't for his brutal occupation, "he would have been able to convert already." Rauch disagreed and told Mathew that it was "possible" to do both.[1] In fact, Mathew's status as a driver was important to the missionaries. They made him one of their "helpers" and noted that "he maintains a nice order among the people."[2] As their comments suggest, Mathew was not just a recipient of the Moravians' message and willing "vessel." The missionaries were beneficiaries of Mathew's generosity and gifts. At several points, the missionaries recorded that Mathew and his wife visited them. On May 18, they brought "yams and coco-seed to plant in [their] grounds." Mathew "showed [the missionaries] how [they] could make the best use out of it."[3] On another occasion, they gave the missionaries "a gift of a little corn for the hens."[4] When Tacky's Revolt broke out in May 1760, Mathew served as the point person on the estate, negotiating between the white attorney, the enslaved field hands, and the missionaries. The missionaries wrote that he had arranged for "four loads of mules with Provisions" to be sent to the soldiers and that he was entrusted with "guard[ing] the big house all night."[5] In this

[1] Rauch, "Diarium," 23 May 1760. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

[2] Rauch, "Diarium," 9 December 1759. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

[3] Rauch, "Diarium," 18 May 1760. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

[4] Rauch, "Diarium," 10 February 1760. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

[5] Rauch, "Diarium," 1 and 10 June 1760. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

uncertain state, Mathew protected the missionaries and also used his connection with them to advocate on behalf of other enslaved men and women. He told the missionaries about the "great Hunger-emergency among the negroes" and how "several had not even had a bite to eat." The missionaries "loaned them [their] things and trusted them so much as [their] conscience allowed."[6]

Mathew's relationship with the missionaries strained his relationship with other enslaved men and women. In August of 1760, the missionaries noted that "Mathew went to his grounds with his wife to avoid the devilishness" of other slaves, who had gathered for a celebration. He then "spent the afternoon" with the missionaries.[7] Since the missionaries encouraged their baptismal candidates to reject what they considered to be "heathen" behavior, their policies split the slave population into two and isolated "converts" from much of the social life on the plantation. In light of these complex factors, it is important to ask what Mathew wanted out of his relationship with the missionaries. There were certainly some material benefits, but it is clear that he became more isolated from sections of the slave community.

While kinship ties and socio-economic factors helped to bring enslaved Africans like Mathew into Protestant communities, theology cannot be overlooked. Evidence of Mathew's curiosity on this front is not difficult to find. He peppered the missionaries with questions about the details of their worship so much that their daily diaries are filled with the content of their conversations. Mathew told the missionary Christian Rauch that he "had believed in God since he was a child" and had "been distressed about his [spiritual state] for 5 years." He revealed that he had "often eavesdropped around white people," as he was curious about their beliefs and rituals, but that they had "rejected him harshly."[8] Perhaps this experience of rejection was one of the reasons that

[6] Rauch, "Diarium," 4 July 1760. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

[7] Rauch, "Diarium," 10 Aug 1760. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

[8] Rauch, "Diarium," 11 Dec 1759. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

Mathew was so eager to approach the missionaries and learn about Christian practice and belief. His questions ranged from the details of worship to the nature of God. On January 10, he asked "why [the missionaries] didn't say the Lord's prayer both before and after the sermon?"[9] On another occasion, he inquired about the missionaries' dress, asking why they "didn't bring any priests' clothing?" Regarding God, he wanted to know whether "the Father created himself as the Savior?" If so, "how could he be called a Savior and also have created himself?"[10] Mathew was particularly interested in "sin," a concept that was central to Christianity but absent from most African religious traditions. He asked "whether a person had to have sinned if he wanted to be saved?"[11] The question suggested that Mathew was both intrigued and perplexed by the meaning of "sin." Why would it be a prerequisite for salvation?[12]

Mathew's questions cut to the heart of debates within Protestant communities about the proper preparations for baptism and the meaning of true Christianity. On several occasions, Mathew questioned why the missionaries withheld certain rites from the slaves. At one point, he wondered whether the missionaries would ever "have the Lord's supper with the blacks who believed in God." When Rauch said yes, Mathew went "back home full of joy." Over time, however, Mathew grew impatient that the missionaries were so hesitant to baptize even eager candidates. Indeed, due to a variety of political reasons described in Chapter 5, the Moravians had decided to withhold baptism until they resolved an internal dispute. As a result, Mathew and other enslaved men and women grew increasingly irritated with the missionaries. He told them that he "really wanted to be

[9] Rauch, "Diarium," 10 Jan 1760. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

[10] Rauch, "Diarium," 15 Dec 1759. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

[11] Rauch, "Diarium," 28 Mar 1760. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

[12] Rauch, "Diarium," 28 Mar 1760. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

baptized," and several months later, broached the topic again, asking why they hadn't yet baptized any of the blacks.[13]

Why did Mathew want to be baptized? The answers are many, but they cannot be reduced to social striving or material advancement. Mathew was theologically engaged in Christianity and his conversations with the missionaries challenged both parties to reinterpret Scripture and Christian practice. On August 24, 1760 Mathew visited the missionary Brother Gandrup and they discussed the story of Philip and the Ethiopian. This story, from Acts 8:26-40, recounts Philip's journey into Ethiopia, where he met and baptized an Ethiopian eunuch. The missionaries were fond of the story of Philip and the Ethiopian, whom they called "the moor," because it showed that the gospel should be spread to Africans as well as Europeans. Mathew, however, had a different interpretation of the story. After hearing it, he approached the missionaries to make a case for his own baptism. Why did the missionaries withhold from him what Philip had granted to the Ethiopian? Why did he not deserve the same treatment? Reenacting the role of the Ethiopian, Mathew declared that he "believed that [his] creator is the Lord who redeemed [him] with his blood," and requested immediate baptism.[14]

Despite Mathew's convincing arguments, the missionaries refused, and it would be three more years before Mathew was officially initiated into the Christian community. Yet this passage shows that Mathew participated in theological discussions with the missionaries, including debates about the proper time and procedure for baptism. While Mathew did not win this discussion immediately, his argument cut to the heart of debates within Christian communities about what it meant to be a true Christian. Mathew was not a "convert" in the sense that he exchanged one set of

[13] Rauch, "Diarium," 18 May 1760. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

[14] Rauch, "Diarium," 24 Aug 1760. UA R.15.C.b.1 (3).

beliefs for another. Instead, his engagement with Christianity should be understood as a process in which Protestantism itself evolved as a lived practice.

It is only by examining these conversations "on the ground" in conjunction with the transatlantic debates about Christian slavery that it is possible to understand the changes taking place within Atlantic Protestantism. While Protestant practice was never static, the institution of African slavery and the conversion of enslaved Africans to Christianity challenged Europeans to reconsider what it meant to be "Christian" in new, important, and difficult ways. The first Protestant planters to settle in the Caribbean redefined Christianity as an exclusive ethnic category reserved for the master class. Juxtaposing "Christians" and "negros," they held up their religious identities as evidence for their superiority. Over the course of the seventeenth century, these planters founded religious and political institutions that were united in their support for the plantocracy and in their characterization of Afro-Caribbeans as "hereditary heathens."

When enslaved and free blacks sought out and won baptism for themselves and their children, they forced planters to reconsider the relationship between freedom and Protestantism. Could slaves become Christians? Should all Christians be free? And could free black Christians become citizens who had the same rights and liberties as European colonists? Protestant planters answered these questions by highlighting "whiteness," rather than Christian status, as the primary indicator of mastery in the Protestant Caribbean. In Barbados, planters introduced whiteness into their law books just as a population of free black Christians began to emerge. In 1697, they redefined citizenship to exclude all non-whites and in 1712, they further specified that no one "whose original Extract shall be proved to have been from a Negro" could be "admitted as a Freeholder."[15] These developments were part of a broader embrace of racial categories – rather than

[15] *Acts of Assembly, Passed in the Island of Barbadoes, From 1648, to 1718*, 237–8.

religious categories – to define the social and political hierarchies of the American colonies. Yet even as religious identifiers such as "Christian" were dropped from law books, "whiteness" still functioned in ways that evidenced its etymological history. Planters continued to bar all but their most favored slaves from Christian rituals and they resisted the work of missionaries throughout the eighteenth century. The persistence of religious undertones within the meaning and function of "whiteness" needs to be acknowledged in broader histories of race.

While enslaved and free black Christians forced planters to redefine the connection between religion and freedom, missionaries offered a new vision for Christian slavery that included both masters and slaves. In the missionary vision, Protestantism was a stabilizing force that would help to maintain, support, and reform slavery. Beginning with the Quakers, these evangelizing Protestants tried to convince planters to embrace a more inclusive and paternalistic form of Christianity. They also advocated for legislation that would affirm that baptism would never lead to freedom. While they did not succeed in passing a parliamentary bill, members of the SPG were instrumental in bringing the Yorke-Talbot Opinion into being as well as a number of colonial laws, such as a 1706 Act in New York. These laws were intended to perform a humanitarian function by encouraging conversion, but in reality they strengthened and solidified the institution of slavery.

Aside from legislative efforts, Protestant missionaries developed and circulated ideas that would form the foundation for the pro-slavery ideology of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They argued that Christian slaves would be more obedient and hard working than others and that a slave system built on Christian paternalism would be more productive and humane. Quakers like George Fox were the first to articulate this vision for Christian slavery and their activism incited Anglican missionary efforts. Moravians tapped into networks of the SPG and SPCK, as well as pietist circles in Copenhagen. Later missions continued to build on these and other contacts.

Publications were an important source of missionary influence. As I showed in Chapter 2, Morgan Godwyn began his *Negro's and Indian's Advocate* with an anecdote about reading George Fox's polemic *To the Ministers*, which excoriated the Anglican clergy in Barbados for their failure to convert slaves. Godwyn's publications were read and discussed by members of the SPG, who in turn created their own publications that they distributed throughout Protestant circles in Europe. The Moravians also prioritized printing, particularly in the late eighteenth century as they tried to improve their image among non-Moravians. Beginning in the 1760s, they published a series of mission histories in German, Dutch, French, and English, touting their mission strategies in the Caribbean and elsewhere. These publications emerged just as other denominations were developing their own global missions, enhancing their significance and effect. They helped to spread and circulate the ideology of Christian slavery by explaining how Protestantism and slavery could support and reinforce each other.

Failure is an important part of the story, though not in the way most historians have assumed. While scholars have focused on the inability of the early missionaries to garner large numbers of converts, the most significant failing was imperial. When Quakers, Anglicans, and Moravians founded missions to christianize the American colonies, they were responding to the failure of Protestant nations to fully "transplant" their churches in the Americas. Without strong state churches or robust religious orders like the Jesuits, Dominicans, or Franciscans, Protestant empires placed their colonial institutions in the hands of colonists. In the Caribbean, planters *did* replicate many of the institutions of their homeland, such as the Anglican and Dutch Reformed Churches, but in doing so, changed the meaning of those institutions. Rather than serving all inhabitants of a region, these colonial churches were restricted to the plantocracy and a small number of favored slaves. By the late seventeenth century, Protestant planters had succeeded in

creating churches in the Caribbean that promoted an ideology of mastery by associating Protestantism with freedom and superiority.

Missionaries did their best to combat the exclusive version of Protestantism that was cultivated in the Caribbean, but their presence often exacerbated conflicts between the pro-conversion sentiment of the "metropole" and the anti-conversion rhetoric of Protestant planters. When Quakers brought slaves into their meetings and agitated for Anglicans to do the same, their controversial tactics led to the condemnation of slave conversion as a threat to island security. This trope became an easy way to attack missionary efforts and it was integrated into the litany of arguments that planters used to combat intrusive missionaries and colonial authorities who supported slave conversion. In many ways, anti-conversion sentiment was just one of many ways that Protestant planters resisted the authority of the metropole. Claiming their "rights" as Protestant citizens, these planters argued that slave conversion, like increased oversight in governmental affairs, represented an infringement of their "liberties."

Over time, this anti-conversion sentiment made the Protestant Caribbean vulnerable to moral criticism. By the late eighteenth century, it was easy for abolitionists to claim that the sugar islands were islands of depravity and to evoke the deep well of criticism focusing on the planters' refusal to convert their slaves. Planters' failure to even pay lip service to the missionary movement enraged abolitionists in Europe who made strong and successful arguments against the slave trade on moral and religious grounds. Yet while planter hostility to slave conversion fueled abolitionist fire in Europe, the legacy of the early Protestant missions lay in the ideology of Christian slavery, not in antislavery thought. The irony is dark and yet unambiguous: the most self-sacrificing, faithful, and zealous Christians in the Caribbean formulated and theorized a powerful and lasting religious ideology for a brutal system of plantation labor. In the words of the Anglican missionary Morgan

Godwyn, it was Christianity that "presseth *absolute* and entire *Obedience* to *Rulers* and *Superiours*…[and] establisheth the *Authority of Masters*, over their Servants and Slaves."[16]

[16] Godwyn, *The Negro's [and] Indians Advocate, Suing for Their Admission into the Church*, 112.

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| CSP | Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series* |
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| HQC | Haverford College Quaker & Special Collections, Haverford, Pennsylvania |
| LPL | Lambeth Palace Library, London, England** |
| MAB | Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania |
| MCH | Moravian Church House, London, England |
| RHL | Rhodes House Library, Oxford, England** |
| UA | Unitätsarchiv der Evangelischen Brüder-Unität, Herrnhut, Germany |

* The Calendar of State Papers are available online at www.colonial.chadwyck.com.
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