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2018

On Earth as it is in Heaven: Spiritual Racialization and the Atlantic World Economy of Salvation in the Colonial Americas

Moss, Kelsey Christina

Princeton, NJ : Princeton University

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ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN: SPIRITUAL RACIALIZATION AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD ECONOMY OF SALVATION IN THE COLONIAL AMERICAS

Kelsey Christina Moss

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY

OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE

BY THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

Advisers: Jessica Delgado & Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.

June 2018

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Abstract

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This dissertation takes a hemispheric approach to analyze the processes by which enslaved Africans were christianized in the earliest phases of encounter and colonization. It argues that through missionary projects, early modern Europeans made evaluations of the salvific potential of enslaved Africans and engaged in processes of spiritual racialization that relegated black potential converts to an inferior spiritual status based on what they perceived to be Africans' limited spiritual capacities. In contrast to academic accounts that have understood racialization as a secular process that arose in late modernity, this project reveals the inextricable connections between racialization, theological ideas, and religious practices in the early modern period.

The first chapter examines the ubiquitous discourses of limited black spiritual capacity that abounded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries throughout the colonial Americas. It argues that notions of black spiritual inferiority resulted in ideologies and practices of spiritual racialization, based on the soul rather than the body, that were central to the broader formation of processes of racial difference. The following chapters of the dissertation then explore the missionary ideologies and practices of Alonso de Sandoval and Pedro Claver, Antonio Vieira, and Hugh Bryan as a means to examine the processes of spiritual racialization at work in Spanish, Portuguese, and British colonial contexts. Each of these evangelizers was at the forefront of efforts to christianize enslaved Africans, however they simultaneously espoused theologies of limited black spiritual capacity that structured much of their missionary strategies. As a result, they developed christianization methods that established an inferior spiritual status for black souls within the colonial religio-social environment to correspond to the perceived

deficiencies of their catechumens. They were prime architects of constructs such as Christian paternalism, slavery and corporal punishment as redemptive processes, and notions of a divinely ordained economy. Using these representative figures, the dissertation reveals the theologies and practices that produced a pervasive Atlantic World economy of salvation that reinforced and systematized beliefs that black souls could only be redeemed through a spiritually dependent colonial relationship with white Christians.

To Dad and *meus ancestrais, como prometido.*

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Acknowledgments

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From the moment I first stepped into 1879 Hall, I was keenly aware of the generosity and collegiality of Princeton's Department of Religion. I have immense gratitude for the community that has been cultivated there, and consider it a great privilege that I had the opportunity to develop as a scholar in that environment. This project simply could not have "become" anywhere else. The mentorship, guidance, and support that I received from the faculty of the Religion in the Americas subfield have been tremendous. They have all provided an incomparable model of how to do academic work with fortitude, dedication, and care. Through their insights, infinite expertise, and generous feedback, Judith Weisenfeld, Seth Perry, and Al Raboteau have left their mark on my own thinking in ways that I cannot even begin to fully comprehend. Over the course of my time at Princeton, my advisers, Wallace Best, Eddie Glaude, and Jessica Delgado have helped to nurture this project from its inception. Their support and commitment never faltered, and their intellectual engagement with these ideas sustained and motivated me at each phase. I am particularly indebted to Jessica Delgado for being a ceaseless advocate for my vision, offering me unparalleled opportunities, and continually reminding and modeling for me how to bring my whole self to this work.

Leslie Ribovich, Vaughn Booker, Kijan Bloomfield, Andrew Walker-Cornetta, Kevin Wolfe, and Clifton Granby have been intrepid colleagues and extraordinary friends, and it was an honor to have gone through various stages of this process alongside them. The brilliance and generosity of my colleagues in the Religion Department and in the Religion in the Americas workshop never ceases to amaze me—namely Beth Stroud, Alda Balthrop-Lewis, Alyssa Maldonado-Estrada, Ahmad Greene-Hayes, Eden Consenstein, Gustavo Maya, Daniel May,

Nyle Fort, Madeline Gambino, Kristine Wright, Michael Baysa, Caroline Matas, Rachel Gross, Ryan Harper, April Armstrong, Kurt Adams, Caleb Maskell, Jenny Wiley Legath, and Brendan Pietsch. The department staff—Patty Bogdziewicz, Mary Kay Bodnar, and Kerry Smith—not only make any administrative task seem seamless and effortless, they also exude encouragement, warmth, and compassion in every encounter, making the stresses of graduate school infinitely more manageable.

The research, writing, and scholarly travel connected to this dissertation were made possible through generous funding support provided by: Mellon Mays Predoctoral Research Grants—specifically the Predoctoral Research Development and Graduate Studies Enhancement Grants; Summer Research Grants from the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies and the Program in Latin American Studies; The Woodrow Wilson Foundation MMUF Travel and Research Grant; Princeton University Dean's Completion Fellowship; Princeton's Department of Religion; Princeton's Department of African American Studies; Princeton's Dean's Fund for Scholarly Travel; La Patrona Collective for Latin American Scholarship; and the Ford Foundation Dissertation Fellowship.

The experience of researching and writing this dissertation has been as much an endeavor of personal growth and transformation as it has been an academic pursuit. It would not have been possible without the support of my family and dear friends. My parents, Jim and Anne, did everything in their power to foster my lifelong obsession with the written word and taught me the importance of knowing my history. My dad's passing halfway through graduate school fundamentally changed me, but I feel his presence now more than ever, and his spirit has guided me ever since. Brad, Greg, Nicole, and Dallas provided welcomed distractions and companionship. My lively extended family—the Palmers, Hardwicks, Martins, and Mosses—

make every holiday and family gathering unforgettable. Lisa and Veronica opened their home, kitchen, and closets to me and offered me an escape whenever and however I needed it. Rio, my dear Yorkshire Terrier, was by my side for every step of this process and is certainly the best travel companion, seminar participant, and study partner I could have hoped for. And my friendships with Emanuela Kucik, Wangui Muigai, Doug Jones, Joshua Bennett, and Saarah Jaapie have made my time at Princeton infinitely more meaningful.

As I made my own journeys through the Atlantic World preparing and conducting the research for this project, I had the incredible fortune of discovering community and kinship beyond my wildest expectations everywhere that I went. My debts of gratitude are tremendous, but I specifically must acknowledge the staff, teachers, students, and friends of Escola Idioma, and Eco da Mata in Bahia—Alex, Waldo, Marisa, Mônica, Bete, Heidi, Graça, Oshuaya, Bento, Lívia, Francisco, Priscila, the Mata, Paruanã and the Kariri-Xocó. And, of course, my kindred spirit, Ed Santiago Andrade, has been a guiding light of much of this journey since we met. The warmth I have found in and with them has made Bahia feel like my second home and transformed my life in unspeakable ways. Pedro, Luiza, Denise, Julia e "as crianças"—*minha família carioca*—welcomed me with open arms in Rio and in Cartagena. In Oakland and Costa Rica, my Freedom & Fairness and Spirituality & Social Change communities—especially Gabe, Marsha, Matthew, Toni, Sharon, Lauren, Meta, Jason, and Robert—have helped me to discover hidden connections and a sense of purpose in this work to greater depths and heights than I could have initially conceived. And last, but certainly not least, Carol Tracy and Victoria Tilford provided unparalleled care that kept me grounded and healthy in body, mind, and spirit throughout this process. Somehow, by their incredible wisdom, grace, and expertise, I am managing to leave this chapter of my life and career more whole and healed than when I began.

"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.'" – Mark 16:15

"The Atlantic World introduces us to the globalization of the meaning of humanity. It creates and intensifies the relationships among and between all the peoples of the planet." – Charles Long

"God calls us to be soldiers in the Company of Jesus to wander through these barbarous and remote black nations, to save the people, and to bring them into his service. Our destiny is to teach the doctrine to humble, low, crude people and care for them as if they were children." – Alonso de Sandoval

Introduction

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In the prologue to his *Historia general de las indias* in a dedication to King Charles V, the Spanish historian and chronicler Francisco López de Gómara reflected on the discovery and conquest of the Americas. In it he wrote, "The greatest thing after the creation of the world, omitting the incarnation and death of him who created it, is the discovery of the Indies; and so they call them the New World."[1] Like many of his time, Gómara was awed by the influx of new information that emerged from American territories and encounters with new populations. These unforseen developments shocked and delighted European Christians, and perhaps most significantly, sparked the theopolitical imagination of emergent Western European empires that intended to extend their religious and political reach throughout the globe.

As the colonial projects took shape, so too did utopic conceptualizations of a universal Christendom. As the Portuguese Jesuit Antônio Vieira envisioned: "The Church and the Kingdom of Christ shall come to a perfect, complete, and consummated state… The difference and perfection consist in the fact that the whole world will convert and will be universally

[1] As cited in Luis N. Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 20.

Christian[…] during this happy time, grace being abundant, the number of the saved will abound among all the gentiles. And this will at last be what with all propriety will be called the Kingdom and Empire of Christ."[2] He, like many missionaries, set out to enact this vision to bring God's Kingdom to Earth, the first step of which would require large scale conversions of the world's people.

What such a vision did not immediately account for, however, was the diversity of the peoples of the world—particularly Africans and Native Americans—with whom European Christians would come to live in intimate contact in the colonial societies of the Americas. What would it take for the said "gentiles" to convert and be saved? Sites of evangelization of Africans and Native Americans were the frontiers of Christendom and Christian missionaries were the pioneers leading that spiritual crusade. It was there that these questions about the spiritual natures of different peoples of the world and ideas about how they should be integrated into increasingly globalized Christian empires were debated and worked out in real time. From its inception, Christianity had been plagued by the longstanding challenge of reconciling a universal theology of salvation with the diversity and particularity of the nations and religious traditions of the world.[3] This paradox took on new proportions in the American colonial context.

This dissertation takes a hemispheric approach to examine the methods that European Christian missionaries and evangelizers in the early modern Atlantic World utilized to metabolize, theologize, and categorize spiritual difference in the midst of the encounters with

[2] Antônio Vieira, *Representação segunda*, 1:222. As cited in Thomas M. Cohen, *The Fire of Tongues: Antônio Vieira and the Missionary Church in Brazil and Portugal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 174-5.

[3] For an accounting of this tension in early Christianity see Cavan Concannon, *"When You Were Gentiles": Specters of Ethnicity in Roman Corinth and Paul's Corinthian Correspondence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

and colonization of new lands and people groups. It particularly considers the theologies, ideologies, processes, and practices of Spanish, Portuguese, and British evangelizers that devoted themselves to the christianization of enslaved Africans in the early colonial Americas. In doing so, it reveals what I have termed a process of *spiritual racializtion*.

As part of this process, European Christian evangelizers entered colonial territories and mission sites with narrow and rigid conceptualizations of what constituted true religion and what would constitute an ideal conversion to and expression of proper Christian belief and practice. In confronting and navigating the relatively large chasm between their ideal conceptions and their experienced reality with potential converts, they were forced to account for what they perceived to be the spiritual differences of different populations of the world. In order to maintain some semblance of theological and epistemological unity, they constructed lived theologies that simultaneously reinforced longstanding religious traditions and theological conceptions and also formulated new ways of knowing and methods of meaning making as it related to how they understood themselves, their relationship to religious and ethnic others, and ways of being in the world.

Most significantly, in their efforts to account for the reasons that Africans seemed to them to be inherently less fit for Christian belief and practice, missionaries made evaluations of Africans' spiritual natures, identifying and delineating perceived spiritual deficiencies and limited spiritual capacities. These notions formed the basis of an emergent theological anthropology that created a hierarchy of spiritual potential and capacity. In this process, European Christians described the spiritual constitutions of enslaved Africans and assigned *theological identities* and *stations* based on these observations and assessments. The most devout and devoted missionaries and the most influential theological voices in this process did not

identify these perceived deficiencies to be an insurmountable obstacle to salvation. Instead, these evangelizers articulated and constructed missionary strategies that would usher black Christians into a broader colonial system designed to compensate for their "limited capacities." Examining conversion efforts as a racializing process reveals that the mission site was a key location in which missionaries, settlers, and others on the front lines of colonial encounters asked and answered questions about the content and character of ethnic religious others. European participants in the christianization and colonization of the Americas did so through the articulation of ideologies of essential spiritual difference and hierarchies of spiritual capacity. Through this essentially religious process, the racial other was theologically constructed.

The effects of this process were theologically *and* temporally significant, leading to the construction of an elaborate *Atlantic World economy of salvation.* Within this economy, missionary-theologians imagined and designed colonial Christian systems that placed white Christian colonists in the position of stewards and trustees of black souls in order for effective christianization to occur. This elaboration of a divine economy required each member of colonial societies to remain in his or her divinely ordained station and fulfill his or her spiritual obligations. In their ideal expression, these Christian systems would result in a seamless confluence between the Christian God's Empire and Western European empires. God's Kingdom would be brought to earth, and all nations of the world would be saved or at least would have the opportunity for christianization.

This process of spiritual racialization can be seen as a particular response to a larger socioreligious crisis that pervaded early modern European Christian societies as they attempted to make sense of how to incorporate new Christians into the faith and the body politic. Perceptions of the racial inferiority of newly converted Christians that had developed through the

conversion proces itself were inextricable from understandings of spiritual deficiency. Said another way, the designation of enslaved Africans to an inferior social position were deeply bound up with conceptions of their spiritual capacities and moral proclivities.

In sum, this dissertation explores European christianization of enslaved Africans as a theological practice and social process that was foundational for the production of early modern racial thinking and technologies. Similarly, it seeks to rediscover racialization as a lived theology. It explores mission sites and the spiritual encounters taking place there as productive of epistemelogical, ontological, and existential questions for European Christians, and it argues that missionaries' and others' attempts to answer these questions constituted an emergent theology of race that undergirded and gave rise to elaborate colonial systems of racialization. As a whole, this project calls for more sustained historical attention to the ways that historical racialization processes have classified souls as well as bodies and how conceptions of essential difference evaluated the spiritual and moral capacities of racialized populations as readily as their physical characteristics.

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Literature Review

This work joins a body of scholarship that examines some of the complex ways that race and religion were co-constituted in colonial environments in the early modern Atlantic World. Historical and theoretical scholarly accounts have often looked almost exclusively to explicit racial categorizations or somatic references as the primary or even sole location of race. In contrast to conventional academic accounts that have rendered ideologies and practices of race and racialization the secular products of late modernity, this project reveals the deep imbrication between racialization, theological ideas, and religious practices in the early modern period.

Traditional accounts of the emergence of modern racism, such as Cornel West's "A Genealogy of Modern Racism," have associated racialization with a late modern emergent framework in which phenotypic, somatic, and biological differences operated as the key referents for racial meanings.[4] Following this approach and the related timeline, similar accounts have identified the English imperial world as the site where racializing discourse and practice found their most mature expression. By contrast, the arguments of this dissertation follow an increasing number of scholars who have challenged this narrative, identifying the formations of modern racism prior to Enlightenment era ideology and discourse. Texts such as Sylvia Wynter's "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being / Power / Truth / Freedom," Barnor Hesse's "Racialized Modernity," Stuart Hall's "The West and The Rest," and Charles Long's *Significations* argue that the formations of modern racism have their roots in the periods of the early contact, conquest, and colonization of the Americas.[5] This shift in periodization to an earlier historical moment leads each of these scholars to reexamine the role that religion and theology played in the operation of race as both a discursive formation and a social and historical construct. They demonstrate that, because Western Christianity operated as the preeminent theological, social, and even political system of meaning making at the time, religious discourse and symbolism

[4] Cornel West, "A Genealogy of Modern Racism," in *Prophesy Deliverance!: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982).

[5] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257-337. Barnor Hesse, "Racialized Modernity: An Analytics of White Mythologies," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, no. 4, (2007): 643-663. Charles Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion* (Aurora: Davies Group, 1999). Stuart Hall, "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power," in *Formations of Modernity* (Oxford: Polity in association with Open University, 1992).

were the ideal hosts for the emergent ideologies of racialization that European Christians used to make sense of the newly discovered human diversity on the planet.[6]

A number of other local, regional, and broader Atlantic World studies have attended to different aspects of this historical connection between race and religion since the age of European expansion.[7] However, these studies often characterize the relationship between race and religion in one of the following ways: 1) Religion served as one category of difference—alongside culture, climate, language, civilization, and skin color—that Western Europeans utilized to make sense of the differences between people groups in racialization's initial fluid stages, but these other categorizations eventually were subsumed by or gave way to the solidified expression of modern racial difference in which race referred to skin color and bodily differences after the eighteenth century; 2) Religion, in the form of doctrines, discourses, and biblical interpretations operated as a conduit for race—a tool and rationalizing agent for largely independent ideologies and systems of racialization; 3) European Christian religious discourse and practice in the early stages of expansion provided a blueprint that subsequent manifestations of modern racism would follow in doing the similar work of observing, evaluating, and making judgments of ultimate meaning based on perceived characteristics of groups of ethnic others.

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[6] Yet, even as these texts give the theological foundations of race their due, this scholarship reduces to a secularization narrative. These scholars each posit a point of transformation or rupture, typically in the late eighteenth century where the religious ideologies of difference that oriented the modern system seem to be replaced or overtaken by more purely secular racial ones.

[7] See: Edward L. Bond, *Damned Souls in a Tobacco Colony: Religion in Seventeenth-century Virginia* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2000); Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550– 1812* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1968); Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

This project undoubtedly draws from the valuable contributions of this scholarship, but the ultimate aim is different. One mischaracterization of the nature of the relationship between race and religion that can emerge from these studies is that they identify religion and race as separate phenomena that happen to overlap in meaningful ways in certain contexts. This rendering can obscure what Jared Hickman has identified as the co-constituting nature of race and religion.[8] This project takes Hickman's claim a step further and demonstrates that, in their earliest manifestations, a form of racialization emerged from the theological imaginary of European Christians, and identifiable components of religious discourse and practice had tangible racial effects. In taking the theological imaginaries of early modern historical subjects seriously, we find that, for them, religion and race were not discrete categories that merely overlapped or were at times interchangeable. Religion was the dominant idiom and mode of meaning making in the early modern period. Therefore, as racializing impulses developed, they emerged from and were often expressed through a decidedly theological worldview. Race and religion as categories of social meaning were co-constituting and thus inextricable. In the case of the early modern Atlantic World, racialization and christianization went hand in hand.

This dissertation will also contribute to the scholarship that has revealed the historical co-operation of race and religion in particular moments and contexts throughout the Americas. This theme has gained traction in the historiography recently, but the broader implications of the contributions of these studies remains limited by previous trends in the scholarship. María Elena Martínez's *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza De Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* examines the historical relationship between *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) statues

[8] Jared Hickman, "Globalization and the Gods, or the Political Theology of 'Race'," *Early American Literature* 45, no. 1 (2010): 145-82.

and the *sistema de castas* (caste system) that emerged in the Iberian colonial Americas. Through this analysis, she identifies the ways that Iberian Catholics understood theological meanings to be inscribed in the body and passed on genealogically. In doing so, she identifies the inextricability of theological concepts and racial constructs in the early modern Iberian Atlantic. Recent scholarship on the British Atlantic World identified similar dynamics in that context. The work of Rebecca Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race*, argues that British colonists in colonial Virginia developed notions about the natural spiritual inclinations of different ethnic groups that produced an ideology of "hereditary heathenism" in which spiritual differences were passed generationally and therefore could not be entirely erased with christianization. Heather Miyano Kopelson's work, *Faithful Bodies: Performing Religion and Race in the Puritan Atlantic,* reveals similar patterns in the context of the colonial British Atlantic. Using methods of lived religion and analysis of embodied ritual practice, Kopelson's scholarship highlights how native and African bodies were racialized based on perceptions of limited Christian potential. Collectively, this research has shown that white Christian colonists and missionaries throughout the Atlantic World articulated beliefs that black and native potential converts possessed inherent spiritual defects that were carried and could be identified in their physical bodies and that could be transmitted along genealogical lines, thereby affecting their capacity for full membership in Christian communities.[9]

In building on the critical findings of that scholarship, this project nevertheless seeks to move away from the scholarly somaticization of race. It reveals that even without specific and

[9] María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza De Sangre, Religion, and Gender In Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008). Rebecca Goetz, *The Baptism of Early Virginia: How Christianity Created Race* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012). Heather Miyano Kopelson, *Faithful Bodies: Performing Religion and Race In the Puritan Atlantic* (New York: New York University Press, 2014).

identifiable relation to black bodies, theologically rooted conceptualizations of spiritual difference, such as notions of black limited spiritual potential, had tangible racializing effects in early colonial societies in the Americas. The tendency in the historiography to exclusively conflate the somatic and the racial has caused the scholarship to neglect the less straightforward processes that simultaneously constructed hierarchies of essential difference along racial lines. In this way it has hindered scholarship on the historical operation of race and caused myopia to the profound role of religion and theology in processes of racialization that were based on perceived differentials at the level of the soul and inner spiritual character rather than on physical or phenotypic distinctions.

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Sources, Methods, Scope

To make this argument, the dissertation will analyze missionary efforts to enslaved Africans in the Spanish, Portuguese, and British colonial Americas. The hemispheric scope of the dissertation reveals shared dynamics and processes across colonial systems. Undoubtedly differences in geography, theology, structures of slavery, and time period mattered greatly and dictated the expression of racializing elements in religious discourse and practice. To examine these trends in connective scope, the dissertation begins with a wide lens that explores the broader intellectual and theological trends that influenced the ways that European Christians conceived of Africans' and Native Americans' spiritual natures and capacities as well as the methods they devised for their christianization. Then, to better attend to the nuances of period, place, and theology, the dissertation examines missionary efforts targeting enslaved Africans in local colonial environments in each of these empires to explore the nuances of emergent missionary ideologies and practices. With this approach, the project reveals broader Atlantic

World processes at work and identifies the persistent pattern in which understandings of black spiritual difference greatly determined the organization of colonial Christian communities and social hierarchies.[10]

The project analyzes the missionary ideologies and practices of evangelizers that committed themselves with particular devotion to the christianization of non-Christian populations in the Americas. Compared to the more intentional evangelization projects targeting Native American communities in the early phases of colonization, missionary efforts to the enslaved black populations were far more limited in scope. Missionaries of the Society of Jesus in the Iberian Catholic Americas and the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in the Anglo-Protestant Americas were nearly exclusively responsible for the more sustained efforts at black christianization through the mid-eighteenth century in the Atlantic World in their respective colonial contexts. In the British Atlantic, a few notable and vocal missionaries and religious authorities from a variety of denominations and theological positions joined in the debates about black spiritual capacity and the proper methods for incorporating Africans into the Christian fold. Puritan Cotton Mather and early evangelicals such as George Whitefield and Hugh Bryan made notable interventions regarding black christianization, and their contributions reflect the broader religious and theological tensions of the era regarding the nature of true religion, the proper means of Christian conversion, and the limits and bounds of who could be included in God's chosen.

[10] In identifying these patterns, it is not my intention to identify or argue for a monolithic early modern racism or process of racialization. A whole host of factors, including differences in Catholic and Protestant religiosity, influenced the concomitant ideologies, processes, and practices of race that emerged in these varying contexts. Further scholarship and greater attention to this co-constitution of religion and race throughout the early modern Atlantic will allow scholars to analyze their convergences and divergences with increasing detail, and to expand our understandings of the historical operation of race accordingly.

My analysis will draw from a variety of sources from these missionary organizations and figures—namely sermons, catechisms, missionary handbooks, documents of religious administration, traveler's accounts, letters, and journals. These sources offer rich written accounts of the theological worldviews, ideologies, and missionary practices of historical figures on the front lines of christianization efforts to enslaved African populations. They convey complex portraits of the ways that European Christians made sense of the spiritual differences they perceived and the ways they understood their roles in constructing what they deemed to be ideal systems of colonial Christianity. Ultimately, they reveal that even the figures most passionate about incorporating African populations into the bounds of the Christian community were also the most influential in establishing theologies of spiritual racialization and articulating the contours of an Atlantic World economy of salvation that was firmly rooted in notions of black spiritual inferiority and that authorized colonial systems of dependency and inequality for black Christians.

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Chapter Outline

Chapter 1, "Encountering Bodies, Evaluating Souls," examines the emergent understanding among European Christians throughout the early modern Atlantic that Africans and Native Americans were difficult to christianize and the ways that this understanding generated differing evaluations of their spiritual natures and capacities. It demonstrates that these notions of spiritual difference produced hierarchies of spiritual potential that directly impacted the forms and content of evangelization that European Christian missionaries employed in their efforts to christianize those populations. It argues that there was an intimate relationship between theologies of black and native spiritual deficiency and the construction of colonial worldviews

and systems in which forced labor, obedience, and a relationship of dependency with white Christians were understood to be a part of God's redemptive plan for blacks and natives.

Over the course of the next three chapters, the dissertation reveals that understandings of black spiritual inferiority begat numerous ideological and practical constructs that came to define the position and spiritual status of black souls within the colonial religio-social environment. These prevailing ideologies and practices such as Christian paternalism, notions of slavery and corporal punishment as redemptive processes, and conceptions of a providentially ordered economy all converged to form the basis of social hierarchies during evangelization and beyond. These chapters examine the forms and mechanisms by which missionaries and slave masters alike constructed, communicated, and reinforced clear religio-racial boundaries. They emphasize that the colonial categorizations of difference were far from arbitrary. They stemmed directly from the theological worldviews of the colonizers and permeated the religious and social environment of the colonial Americas. The lives and writings of Spanish Jesuits Alonso de Sandoval and Pedro Claver, Portuguese Jesuit Antonio Vieira, and Anglican-turned-evangelical Hugh Bryan serve as the foundations for these chapters as their evangelization efforts offer rich lenses to examine the processes of spiritual racialization at work through the experiences of evangelizers singularly devoted to the work of the conversion of enslaved Africans. Each of these chapters also considers the influence of theological ideas on developing racial hierarchies and philosophies of slavery and proper slave management.

Chapter two, "Middle Passages and Missionary Christianity," considers the extensive missionary project to enslaved Africans arriving to the Spanish Americas that Jesuits Alonso de Sandoval and Pedro Claver designed and executed in seventeenth century Cartagena de Indias. Through an analysis of their missionary ideology and practice, it underscores the means by

which the discourse and structure of their evangelization project introduced enslaved Africans into the colonial Christian environment on subordinate terms. In using the metaphors and material realities of African enslavement as pedagogical tools, Sandoval and Claver constructed a particular subjectivity within the Christian system for their black catechumens that was intricately connected to their experiences and identities as enslaved persons.

Chapter three, "Slavery and the Atlantic World Economy of Salvation," explores the system of black christianization as practiced in colonial Brazil through the lens of the influential Jesuit missionary and statesmen, Antônio Vieira, and his contemporaries. Examining his series of sermons to members of black Christian confraternities and their slave masters in light of the broader religious, colonial, and economic systems in the colony reveals the ways that colonial religious authorities conceived of a fundamental and necessary relationship between black salvation, the slave system, and the colonial economy at large. This worldview sacralized and authorized an Atlantic World economy of salvation in which black slavery was a religious vocation that would allow for the ultimate redemption of Africans. In this process, alignment between the divine economy and the temporal economy solidified a system in which white Christians would serve a role as the paternalistic stewards of the souls and labor of their slaves with each member fulfilling the obligations of their divinely ordained station.

Chapter four, "Into the Household of God," analyzes the influence of particular strands of Christian theology on the way that white Christians conceived of the potential for black inclusion into colonial Christian communities. Through an analysis of the Anglican-turned-evangelical, Hugh Bryan, and his relationship with his religious rivals in eighteenth century South Carolina, this chapter explores the ways that racializing relationships emerged from the theological imaginaries and commitments of white Christians. The spiritual evolution and the attendant

changes in religious subjectivity and epistemology of white Christian evangelizers and slave masters at times had direct, tangible effects on the structures and systems of colonial environments and the status of enslaved Africans within them.

"Who knew such effective methods existed to help these destitute people, when helping them was previously thought impossible?" – Vicente Imperial

"The state of your Negroes in this world, must be low, and mean, and abject; a state of servitude. No great things in this world can be done for them. Something then, let there be done, towards their welfare in the world to come." – Cotton Mather

<< Chapter 1 >>
Encountering Bodies, Evaluating Souls: Spiritual Racialization in Early Colonial Evangelization Projects

Introduction

In 1706, a pamphlet circulated in colonial New England on the oft-neglected subject of the catechization of African slaves. The tract, penned by Cotton Mather, was entitled *The Negro Christianized: An Essay to Excite and Assist that Good Work, The Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity*. It urged Puritan colonists to engage more earnestly in the work of bringing Africans to the Christian faith. To assist in this endeavor, it also included two catechisms "first a shorter, then a larger: suited unto their poor capacities."[1] Mather's recommendation for an abbreviated catechism echoed prevailing understandings that circulated the Atlantic World during the colonial period that Africans were perceived to be less capable of fully and properly converting to Christianity. Nevertheless, Mather advocated continued resolve for the task stating, "[i]f we can't learn them so much as we would, let us learn them as much as we can," for "there will be the more of a triumph, if we prosper in the undertaking."[2] To facilitate the christianization process given the obstacles presented by the perceived limited abilities of the Africans, part of Mather's catechism proposed paraphrasing the Lord's Prayer that it "may be brought down unto some of their capacities." Where the prayer typically called for God's "will to

[1] Cotton Mather, *The Negro Christianized: An Essay to Excite and Assist the Good work, the Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity* (Boston: Printed by B. Green, 1706), 18.
[2] Ibid., 16.

be done on earth as it is in heaven," Mather recommended that the slaves recite instead, "Give me to do heartily all that thou commandest me to do; Give me to bear patiently all that thou orderest me to bear. And let me begin the work of heaven while I am on Earth."[3]

A year later in 1707, Archbishop Sebastião Monteiro da Vide of the archdiocese of Bahia in colonial Brazil issued the *Constituições Primeiras*, an extensive compilation of regulations and precepts to dictate the proper governance of the colonial Catholic religious community. In the text, the archbishop addressed the common complaint among Portuguese colonists that enslaved Africans were difficult to christianize. He likewise echoed concerns that many of them are "too coarse and rude and appear to understand less and less each time they are taught."[4] In these cases, he gave his permission for religious leaders to administer the sacraments anyway, provided that the slaves understood the most basic elements of the faith. Similarly, he advocated for the use of a "brief" catechism, known as the *Breve Instrução,* for those slaves exhibiting limited spiritual capacity for christianization.

This concept of the limited spiritual abilities of non-Europeans in the Atlantic World pervades early modern missionary documents relating to both African and Native American conversion. However, it has received little sustained attention in the scholarship on the processes of christianization in the period. Scholars that have analyzed conversion efforts to non-European populations in the Atlantic World have acknowledged that many European Christians questioned the humanity of Africans and Indians or recognized the challenges in effectively converting those populations and speculated that conversion efforts might be futile. This chapter argues for

[3] Ibid., 23
[4] Sebastião Monteiro da Vide, *Constituições Primeiras do Arcebispado de Bahia: feitas, e ordenas pelo ilustríssimo e reverendíssimo* (Brasília: Senado Federal, Conselho Editorial, 2007), 148. Translation by author.

the exploration of the ideology and discourse regarding spiritual capacity in a more sustained way given the ubiquity of the concept in early modern missionary documents.

These writings reveal that concerns about the spiritual capacities of Africans and Indians plagued European missionary efforts, and emergent ideologies and practices of spiritual difference had tangible racializing effects throughout the evangelization process. Through an engagement with missionary letters, sermons, handbooks, and catechisms used throughout the Spanish, Portuguese, and British Atlantic World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this chapter illustrates how discourses and practices of spiritual difference took shape and were deployed through the process of christianization in the early colonial Americas.

As European Christian missionaries undertook evangelization projects, a complex set of discourses circulated that questioned whether the substance and characteristics of the souls of Africans and Indians were essentially different than European souls, and whether that fundamentally different constitution affected their ability to reach the same or proper heights of the Christian faith. Notions of the limited spiritual capacities of non-Europeans resulted in what I have identified as a process of spiritual racialization. Through this process, missionaries, European settlers, and colonial administrators posited an ideology of essential difference that suggested that these non-European populations possessed spiritual deficiencies or had limited spiritual capacities that impeded their ability to convert fully to the Christian faith, required that they inhabit a particular inferior spiritual station in colonial Christendom, and required methods of christianization targeted specifically to their purportedly diminished capacities. In this way, European Christians primarily evaluated souls, rather than bodies, as the basis for racializing ideologies and practices. From those evaluations, they began to create hierarchies of spiritual potential that mapped onto and helped create those of body, "nation," and socioeconomic station.

Throughout these sources, it is clear that the spiritual nature of colonized African slaves and American Indians operated as the foremost determinant of difference.

To make this argument, the chapter will focus on the writings and missionary practices of select missionaries from the Spanish, Portuguese, and British early modern Atlantic World that were particularly vocal on the subject of black and native christianization and devoted themselves to the task. Though these evangelizers were staunch defenders of the rights of Africans and Indians to receive the Christian faith, through their writings, they assessed the spiritual nature and capacities of those populations and expressed doubts about their ability to convert fully and operate seamlessly within the Christian religious and social community. As this chapter will underscore, their evaluations of the spiritual potential of the potential converts led them to design evangelization strategies that would compensate for the perceived spiritual deficiencies and would ultimately incorporate black and native catechumens into a spiritually inferior status within the Christian fold.

Compared to the evangelization projects targeting Native Americans, European Christians in the early phases of colonization did not approach missionary projects to African populations with the same urgency and dedication. Throughout the Atlantic World, there were very few missionaries dedicated exclusively to the task of bringing Africans and their creole descendants into the faith. This historical lacuna has likewise resulted in a historiographical one, as scholars have found it difficult to attend meaningfully to the question of the neglect of African conversion given the lack of a substantive historical record. Despite the relative silence regarding questions of African conversion, putting the discourses and debates regarding Native American and African christianization in conversation with one another illuminates a broader concern among early modern Europeans in the Americas and Atlantic World about the possibilities and

limits of a universal Christendom. Though the missionary efforts directed toward indigenous and African communities tended to occur separately, the ideologies and theologies concerning the evangelization of these populations influenced and unfolded in relation to one another. Therefore, the crystallization of notions of spiritual and racial difference of each group cannot be analyzed in isolation.

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"Are the races of the world men?"

An intense missionary zeal undergirded the projects of exploration and colonization of the Spanish, Portuguese, and British Americas. Many early modern European Christians articulated ambitions for spiritually rooted empires that would span the globe and incorporate peoples of various nations into a unified and universal Christendom. A critical component of these efforts to realize the fulfillment of God's divine plan involved the propagation of the faith to the non-Christian peoples of newly discovered lands. The saving of souls became the foundational metric for spiritual success in the American context. In the Catholic realm, Pope Alexander VI issued a series of papal bulls in 1493 that created a line of demarcation that divided the responsibilities for the redemption of lands and salvation of souls in the territories outside of Europe between Spain and Portugal.[5] The Treaty of Tordesillas, signed in 1494, further solidified these proprietary claims. After the Reformation, Protestant Christians were keenly aware that Iberian Catholics had a strong spiritual foothold in American territories, particularly among the native populations, and sought to make up lost ground.[6] Religious and

[5] The other European powers that were not included in the treaty largely ignored its stipulations, particularly those who distanced themselves from the authority of the pope and became Protestant during the Reformation.

[6] The British Crown sent instructions directly to colonial governors of Virginia in 1682 and New York in 1686 to ensure that they instituted policies to "facilitate and encourage the Conversion

political authorities of each of these European powers consistently advocated and implored that the evangelization efforts remain cornerstones of any imperial and colonial efforts.

In their own way, each of these imperial projects imagined America as a sacred landscape that would enable them to construct a religious utopia. Driven by millennial expectations, missionaries and colonists often understood themselves to be involved in the redemption of humanity with America as "the theater in which the great drama of salvation was played out."[7] These providential designs pervade the texts that emerged from the Americas throughout the colonial period. In *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Cotton Mather declared, "the overruling Providence of the great God is to be acknowledged, as well in the concealing of America for so long a time, as in the discovering of it, when the fullness of time was come for the discovery."[8] Europeans colonizing the Americas saw themselves as agents involved in God's plan for the redemption of humanity and the world.

From the first excursions onto American soil, missionaries accompanied Spanish conquistadors to begin the task of evangelizing the Native Americans. Twelve Franciscan missionaries arrived in New Spain in 1524 and were later joined by missionaries of the other religious orders to enact this spiritual conquest. Through an elaborate system of mission sites and mission villages known as *reducciones*, the Spanish were at the forefront of the evangelizing project in the New World. Yet, an element of competition pervaded the various missionary and imperial projects. In 1548, King Dom João III of Portugal wrote to Tomé de Souza, the first

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of Negroes and Indians" to Christianity." See Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 97.

[7] J.H. Eliot, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 185.

[8] Cotton Mather, Kenneth Ballard Murdock, and Elizabeth W. Miller. *Magnalia Christi Americana, Book I* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1977).

governor-general of the colony of Brazil charged with the task of establishing a more secure foothold for the Portuguese colony, which had theretofore been largely neglected.[9] He wrote, "The principal thing that compelled me to command that said lands of Brazil be peopled was so that its folk be converted to our holy Catholic faith."[10] In time, the evangelizing project in Brazil gained traction as well, leading the Portuguese Jesuit Antonio Vieira, then engaged in missionary activities in Brazil, to boast of the particular propensity of his countrymen when it came to matters of spreading the gospel. He declared: "Other men, by divine institution, are only obliged to be Catholic, the Portuguese man is obliged to be Catholic and to be apostolic. Other Christians are obliged to believe in their faith: the Portuguese man is obliged to believe and moreover to propagate it."[11]

Given the later start date of their full-blown colonizing efforts, and without the elaborate system of missions and the readily deployable missionary force supplied by the various Catholic religious orders, the British were slower than their Spanish and Portuguese counterparts to develop a comparable Protestant missionary project. It would not be until 1701 with the founding of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts that they established a parallel missionary body devoted solely to the task of spreading Anglican Christianity. Nonetheless, the conversion of the souls of the pagan inhabitants of their colonies had long been an important consideration. King Charles II wrote in 1660 to the Council of Foreign Plantations to encourage British colonists to engage more directly in missionary activity. He encouraged them to prioritize efforts to christianize the Africans and Native Americans they employed as servants or slaves, "it

[9] Tomé de Sousa served as governor-general of the colony of Brazil from 1549 – 1553.
[10] As cited in Laura de Mello e Souza, *The Devil and the Land of the Holy Cross: Witchcraft, Slavery and Popular Religion in Colonial Brazil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 10.
[11] Ibid.

being to the honor of our Crown and of the Protestant Religion that all persons in any of our dominions should be taught the knowledge of God, and be made acquainted with the mysteries of salvation."[12]

Despite its centrality to the colonial project, the evangelization and conversion of Indians and Africans posed a number of conceptual and practical problems for theologians and missionaries. Before and while they undertook this monumental task, they first had to wrestle with fundamental questions about the nature of these peoples who differed so radically from previously held European conceptions of humanity. Theological questions about the origins, ontology, and capacities of these populations abounded throughout the Atlantic World. European Christians earnestly asked and debated—Were all the races of the world humans descended from Adam and Eve or were there multiple creations and lineages of human origin? Did they have souls? Did they have the capacity to experience Christian salvation and practice the faith? In the early years after the discovery of the Americas, prominent scholars and theologians sought to resolve these questions that would determine if and how non-European peoples should be incorporated into a temporal and supernatural Christendom.

On a philosophical level, the stakes of this debate were initially highest as it related to the Native American population. For Western Christians, the Bible had long served as the authority for understanding the history of different peoples of the world, and they understood biblical history to offer a roadmap for salvation history. The "discovery" of new peoples and lands that could not be readily accounted for biblically produced additional conceptual anxiety. To provide theological and epistemological unity, missionaries and theologians in the early modern period

[12] As cited in Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 97.

attempted to link Native American populations to biblically based genealogies and events, speculating for example that they were perhaps one of the lost tribes of Israel.

The most skilled philosophers and theologians worked in the pursuit of new theoretical foundations that could accommodate the influx of new information. In the metropole, Spanish thinkers and authorities practiced a self-conscious imperialism that constantly questioned the justifications of their expansionist impulses and policies. The 1550 Valladolid debate between Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de Las Casas concerning the nature and treatment of Native Americans serves as the most well known example. Based on these debates, the Catholic Church and Iberian Crowns, working in close association, adopted the official position that all the peoples of the world were human and had the capacity to be saved.

Scholars have found it striking then, that on an official level, no debate to the same degree regarding the nature and treatment of Africans emerged. This disparity likely occurred for numerous reasons. Europeans had maintained contact with Africans for centuries through travel, trade, and war. A significant African presence in Renaissance Europe had exposed them to a broad spectrum of Africans from black Moors and others captured as slaves to elite African ambassadors and rulers.[13] Additionally, European Christians could articulate a concrete, biblically based understanding of Africans and their role in Christian redemptive history. It required much more analysis, debate, and speculation to reach a relative consensus on the spiritual nature and genealogy of indigenous Americans that would serve as a foundation for how they should be incorporated spiritually, socially, and economically into the colonial system. Despite the lack of official debate on the issue, the Iberian states and Catholic Church did

[13] For more on this see Joaneath Spicer, ed., *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe* (Baltimore: Walters Art Musem, 2012).

officially state their joint position on the nature and role of Africans in colonial Christian societies. Through royal and papal decrees, they clarified that all Africans were capable of salvation and must be baptized and incorporated into Iberian Christian society.[14]

On an official level, the religious and political authorities in the Spanish and Portuguese Atlantic World had determined that all mankind was one and all people had the capacity to be saved. Nevertheless, the debate was far from decided in the day-to-day experiences playing out on American soil. Policies of religious inclusion did not always easily reconcile with the challenges of catechization and evangelization that missionaries and colonists experienced on the ground in real time. European colonists and even missionaries themselves expressed serious doubts about the salvific potential of natives and Africans, or at least of their capacity to reach the heights of Christian faith.

As missionaries arrived on American soil, they confronted the magnitude of the evangelization project. Early setbacks led to the idea that conversion efforts to newly encountered populations might be futile endeavors. Increasingly, European colonists articulated pervasive ideologies and discourses suggesting that conversion of so-called heathen populations was an impossible undertaking. A number of prominent missionaries remained resolute in the apostolic vision of the colonial project, however. In an effort to respond to the vehement opposition of their contemporaries, their writings catalogued the wide range of opinions on the subject of the evangelization of blacks and natives and the incorporation of non-Europeans into the Christian body. As Spanish Jesuit José de Acosta cited in his sweeping treatise on the issue of Indian salvation, *De Procuranda Indorum Salute,* many colonists and his fellow missionaries

[14] For a further accounting of this process in the Iberian Atlantic World see Ann Pescatello, "The 'Leyenda Negra' and the African in Seventeenth Century Iberian Thought," *The Catholic Historical Review* 66, no. 2 (1980): 169-83.

tended to believe that:

> [Indians] are slow, stupid, and thick as two short planks, and beyond their maize and their chuño are not able to understand anything, and when it comes to spiritual things and celestial matters they are nothing more than brutes and animals. It is a waste of time teaching them anything about these things, for after forty years of evangelical presence, it would be a miracle if there was one amongst such a multitude that understood, say, two articles of the Creed, nor have they the faintest idea who Christ is, nor what eternal life is or what the Eucharist is all about, in fact they are more like four legged beasts than human beings.[15]

Beliefs about the impossibility of Indian and African conversion took root on multiple different registers, and the same questions that theologians and scholars debated in the metropole were active for European colonists in the Americas. A multiplicity of discourses and meanings competed and overlapped in the colonial environment on the subject. Some Europeans expressed concerns about whether or not people of other races were human, whether they had souls, and whether they had sufficient capacity to become Christians. These questions and doubts fueled colonists' and slave masters' opposition to missionary efforts. Spanish Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval reported that: "[m]asters believe it is a waste of time to try to teach slaves the catechism, that baptism is pointless, having slaves make their confession is a joke, and giving slaves communion is blasphemous."[16] A 1681 Barbados Assembly lamented that despite local efforts, effective conversion of blacks seemed to be an impossible undertaking, noting, "We are ready to do anything for the encouragement of Christian servants… but as to making the Negroes Christians, their savage brutishness renders them wholly incapable. Many have endeavored it without success. If a good expedient could be found, the Assembly and people would be ready to

[15] Cf. *Libro de Acuerdo de la Audiencia Real del Nuevo Reino de Granada,* (Bogotá, 1948), Tomo II, 290. As cited in Acosta, *De Procuranda Indorum Salute* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1984), Book IV, Ch 3.

[16] Alonso de Sandoval, *Treatise On Slavery: Selections From De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2008), 72.

promote it."[17] Members of the Virginia House of Burgesses believed that American-born Africans possessed the capacity for christianization, but came to a similar conclusion in 1699 when they indicated that for foreign born Africans, "the gross barbarity and the rudeness of their manners, the variety and strangeness of their languages, and the weakness and shallowness of their minds renders it in a manner impossible to attain any progress in their conversion."[18]

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"Bring them from darkness to light"

Early missionaries had been confident in their abilities to successfully win souls for Christ, and their writings included glowing reports of the Indians' affinity for Christian belief and behavior. In their early conversion attempts, missionaries to native populations in the Americas had often witnessed what they interpreted as a great enthusiasm to embrace the new faith. Missionary records after that golden age of conversion however, recounted the challenges of securing lasting conversion among the neophytes. Evangelizers like José de Acosta, Alonso de Sandoval, Antônio Vieira, Francis Le Jau, Cotton Mather, and others that devoted their lives to mission projects among "heathen" communities remained steadfast in their belief that all nations of the world were human and had the capacity to be Christian. To suggest otherwise would have radically contradicted their notions of God's providential designs in which all of mankind would have the opportunity to be brought into the Christian fold through the encounter with European Christians—a belief they all shared despite other theological differences among them. As part of their evangelization projects, they set the stage theologically and ideologically for their missionary work, emphatically denouncing the notions that Indians and Africans were less than

[17] As cited in Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 184-5.
[18] H.R. McIlwaine, ed., *Jours. House of Burgesses Va., 1695-1702,* 174.

human, didn't have souls, or were incapable of Christian salvation. They insisted upon the salvific potential of these populations and remained committed to their apostolic mission.

As Thomas Bacon, an Anglican clergyman in Maryland, reported, "some people among us talk very idly, as if they did not believe the Blacks or Negroes to be of the same species with themselves, or that they have human souls. In spite of his conviction that, "such persons scarcely deserve[d] a serious answer," he delivered a set of four sermons to British colonists to make plain the theological case for black christianization. He insisted that blacks were similarly "of the human species, have souls as well as us, and are equally capable of salvation." He proceeded to offer a seven-point rebuttal of the most common objections to black Christianization that provided the theological case for the conversion efforts.[19]

Yet even the missionaries most emphatic about an apostolic calling to spread the gospel to the nations of the world could not ignore the difficulties they faced in securing widespread and lasting conversion among the neophytes. In time, European Christians became disheartened as they observed a host of obstacles to their ideal version of successful conversion. Native Americans and Africans displayed what they interpreted as disinterest, resistance, stubbornness, and a lack of spiritual resolve. Through the evangelization process, difficulties in communication and profound miscommunications resulted in insufficient and incomplete understandings. Confronted with these challenges, missionaries most directly involved in evangelization increasingly articulated their belief that Africans and Indians possessed inferior spiritual aptitude. Even those who staunchly defended the ability of Indians and Africans to be saved often

[19] Thomas Bacon, *Four Sermons, Upon the Great and Indispensible Duty of All Christian Masters and Mistresses to Bring up Their Negro Slaves in the Knowledge and Fear of God* (London: Printed by J. Oliver, in Bartholomew-Close, near West-Smithfield, 1750), xi - xvi.

simultaneously expressed concern that they did not display the same capacity for proper Christian belief and practice. Through observation and debate about the nature and character of non-Christian populations, missionaries fought to reconcile their theological training, biblical understanding, and culturally rooted perceptions with the complexities of the colonial experience. The reality of what and whom they encountered forced them to grapple with fundamental questions about the nature of "true religion" and "true conversion," and raised concerns about who could be redeemed, how, and to what extent. European Christians in the colonial environment tended to express notions of limited native and black capacity along three separate, but often interrelated lines: *a lack of civility,* described in terms of being brutish, rude, or animalistic—an ideological stance that at times outright questioned the humanity of these populations altogether; *an intellectual deficiency*, or a limit to their understanding of the Christian faith; or *a moral or ethical incapacity*, in which they seemingly exhibited proclivities toward behavior or beliefs deemed sinful according to Christian tradition. These discourses overlapped and reinforced one another, contributing to the overall sense that Africans and Indians possessed spiritual deficiencies.

The apparent incivility of native and African populations was a pervasive point of contention for early modern evangelizers. They evaluated the customs, modes of living, styles of dress, and religious practices of potential converts. Those characteristics formed the basis of a developing concept of "civility." Traits that diverged more from the ideal norms of Western European societies were deemed uncivilized, "barbarous" or "savage." Those signifiers connoted a sense of bestiality, which fed into perceptions of a scale of advanced civilization that ranked the civilizations of the world in a hierarchy from what were conceived of as animalistic forms of living to conceptions of more advanced cultures in which human potential had reached its

pinnacle—an ideal they believed to be epitomized by European Christian societies. Jesuit missionaries in Brazil such as Manuel da Nóbrega, one of the staunchest advocates of evangelization projects to the Indian populations, reflected on how evangelizers struggled with the perceived incivility of the native populations. He reported that his fellow missionaries arrived with the assumption that they would convert "all of Brazil in an hour," and instead found that it could take a year to convert a single soul given "their brutishness and bestiality." At times he expressed his own frustration at "what little could be done," given that Indians were a "kind of people more like wild beasts than rational people."[20] To compensate for this lack of civility, Nóbrega was one of the prime architects of the Jesuit *aldeia* system in which the indigenous populations of Brazil were "reduced" to a system of mission villages where they would simultaneously be indoctrinated, engage in manual labor, and be taught European languages and customs. Throughout the Atlantic World, similar mission towns and praying villages were seen as the only viable option to make indigenous peoples live as "rational creatures."[21]

This question of blacks' and Indians' capacity for "rationality" was one of the primary metrics for assessing their salvific potential. Evaluations of their capacity for reason were bound up not only in assessments of their civility, but also in assessments of intellectual capacity. Missionary texts commonly referenced the "ignorance" and "stupidity" of Africans and Indians. As Mather himself conceded to the critics of black christianization efforts, "indeed their stupidity is a discouragement. It may seem as little purpose to teach, as to wash an Ethiopian."[22] Nevertheless, he did not believe that diminished aptitude indicated that christianization was a

[20] Manuel da Nóbrega, *Diálogo sobre a conversão do gentio*, introduction and notes by Pe. Serafim Leite. As quoted in Souza, *Devil in the Land of the Holy Cross*, 30.
[21] For more on the life and missionary efforts of Manuel da Nóbrega see Serafim Leite, *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil* (Lisboa: Livraria Portugalia, 1938).
[22] Mather, *The Negro Christianized*, 25.

hopeless endeavor or that Africans entirely lacked reason. Instead, he encouraged additional resolve to discover "whether by [their] means, the most brutish of creatures upon Earth may not come to be disposed, in some degree, like the Angels of Heaven; and the Vassals of Satan, become the Children of God." He encouraged his fellow Puritans to "make a trial" to determine "whether the Christ[…] [had] not some of His chosen among them." Noting "the vast improvement that education ha[d] made upon some of them," he insisted "that there is a reasonable soul in all of them."[23] Because of their limitations however, Mather offered a word of caution to white Christians to use proper methods to ensure comprehension of their catechumens. Africans should not, he argued, "learn to say their catechism only by rote, like parrots." Their instructors should examine and assess their answers, even of yes and no, to perceive "that they know what they say."[24]

Questions about the ability for blacks and natives to *understand* the essentials of the Christian faith became an essential tension point in the efforts to ensure "true" conversions were taking place. Jesuit Jorge Benci chastised parish priests that administered the sacraments after a cursory catechization and examination of the extent to which enslaved Africans understood the Christian teachings:

> Let parish priests not think that they fulfill their obligation by merely asking the slaves about Lent[…] whether they now the Prayers and Commandments of the Law of God; and seeing that they know them, or, better stated that they recite them (for many recite them but know not what they are reciting), without any further doctrine, they give them the Sacraments. This certainly is not the manner in which these ignorant people should be indoctrinated[…] it is necessary that they *understand* what they say, *perceive* the mysteries in which they shall believe, and *comprehend* well the precepts they shall keep.[25]

[23] Ibid., 23.
[24] Ibid, 30.
[25] Jorge Benci, *Economia cristã dos senhores no governo dos escravos* (São Paulo: Grijalbo, 1977), 93-4, 95-6. As cited in Mello e Souza, *The Devil in the Land of the Holy Cross*, 48-9.

Benci continued, adamantly indicating that it was the duty of the "parish priest to explain these things to them and make them comprehensible in such a manner that the slaves understand them."[26] As the words of Mather and Benci suggest, the most ardent advocates of native and black christianization did fundamentally believe in the ability for Africans and Indians to reason and comprehend enough for christianization to occur. They suggested that reason may be contrary to the natural tendencies of those populations, but they ultimately possessed a capacity for reason that, though limited, would not entirely impede their ultimate salvation. As Thomas Wilson surmised, "Heathens can reason as well as Christians, in matters of so natural a consequence."[27]

Some missionaries even referenced elaborate philosophical and theological theories about causes of the limitations in comprehension and rationality to account for the perceived differential in intellectual capacity. Alonso de Sandoval speculated that it was part of "divine will" for Africans to have diminished perception and comprehension to avoid a full awareness of their suffering and low station on earth:

> Enduring pain is part of being human, but life is far worse for the blacks because they are slaves. Homer said that God takes away half of a slaves' comprehension of the world. Homer did not say this because he believed that slaves were less intelligent than free people, but because being enslaved prevents their souls from understanding what goes on around them and increases their physical appetites. I hope that slaves actually lose more than half of their minds, because it is so awful to be a slave on a ship under the control of slave traders. In order for slaves to survive, it would be best for them to lose their minds entirely as their misery grows. It is sometimes said that it is very fortunate for slaves that divine will wants them to be oblivious to their suffering and lacking in delicate feelings and temperament.[28]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Thomas Wilson, *The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity Made Easy to the Meanest Capacities: Or, an Essay Towards an Instruction for the Indians* (London: printed; and sold by J. Osborn, 1742), viii.

[28] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery*, 67.

Regardless of the reason, the perceived deficiency in comprehension and understanding was a source of concern for missionaries. Early modern Christians recognized that a reasonable degree of comprehension of the Christian faith was critically important for salvation. Natives and Africans could not simply speak or behave like Christians, they had to simultaneously *understand* the fundamentals of the faith.

Proper behavior and moral comportment were similarly deemed critical for full and successful conversion and christianization, but in the assessment of European Christians, Indians and Africans demonstrated proclivities for immoral behavior. Through an evaluation of the spiritual potential of these populations, missionaries expressed their belief that Africans and natives were predisposed toward sin, heresy, evil, and viciousness. They saw a direct relationship between these traits and the traditional religious practices in which they characterized non-Christian populations as either irrational and false or diabolically influenced. As Thomas Wilson encouraged in his widely circulated missionary handbook, "every such serious Christian may, in his conversation with heathens, endeavor to convince them that the Gods they worship are indeed evil spirits, which will be their ruin forever, if they do not renounce and forsake them:--That these evil spirits which lead them, and all wicked men, to do such things as an holy and good God must be displeased with, and which he hath declared he will punish most severely in the life which is to come."[29] As his accounts suggests, European Christians understood these connections with false religion to influence blacks' and natives' behavior, causing them to act in such a way that would be contrary to the Christian faith and ultimately their potential for Christian salvation. They were also seen to be more susceptible to temptation by the devil even

[29] Wilson, *The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity Made Easy to the Meanest Capacities,* xxi.

after successful conversion. Nevertheless, as Bishop William Fleetwood attested in the annual sermon to the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel, successfully converting Africans and Indians to Christianity would "overthrow idolatry, root out the worship of many Gods, and reform the wicked world in all instances." With utmost resolve many missionaries remained committed to turning Africans and Native Americans "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."[30]

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"Here then lies the difference"

Early colonial missionary texts often resembled anthropological accounts in form and content. They surveyed Indian and African cultures, religious beliefs, environments, and countless other factors to identify and understand apparent similarities and differences in cosmologies, religious practices, and cultural patterns. Through the course of that process, they established elaborate discourses and ideologies to account for the observed characteristics of these new people groups that might account for differences in their nature or customs. Questions about the essence, characteristics, and capacities of their souls permeated these concerns, and missionaries deemed those questions of critical importance in terms of their capability to convert to Christianity. Missionary writings reveal attempts to make sense of these obstacles by categorizing the perceived differences along an evolutionary scale of human spiritual inclination. A telling sermon delivered in 1653 by Brazilian Jesuit Antonio Vieira expounds on this critical issue. He stated:

[30] 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. By William Lord Bishop of St. Asaph* (London: printed and sold by Joseph Downing, 1711), 4 and 1.

> Here, then, lies the difference between some nations and others in the doctrine of faith. Some nations are naturally hard, tenacious and constant, and with difficulty they receive the faith and leave behind the errors of their ancestors; they resist with arms, they doubt with understanding, they repeal their will, they close themselves, they fear, they argue, they object, they take up much effort before they give themselves over, but once they have given themselves over, once they have received the faith, they stay firm and constant in it, like the statues of marble: it is no longer necessary to work with them. There are other nations, however—and such are those of Brazil—that receive everything that is taught them with great docility and ease, without arguing, without objecting, without doubting, without resisting. But they are statues of myrtle that, if the gardener lifts his hand and his scissors, will soon lose their new form, and return to the old natural brutishness, becoming a thicket as they were before. It is necessary for the teacher of these statues to attend to them always[…] It is only in this way, working always against the nature of the trunk and the disposition of the roots, that one can maintain these rude plants in an unnatural shape and the branches composed.[31]

In this sermon, Vieira, like many of his contemporaries, sketched out the contours of an emergent theological anthropology that evaluated the nations of the world according to their proclivities and capacities for proper Christian practice. In doing so, he articulated the notion that different populations had fundamental spiritual differences at the level of the soul. Based on observations from their missionary encounters and failed catechization attempts, many evangelists began to speculate that natives and Africans may have possessed a different spiritual constitution than European Christians and that their souls had different characteristics that influenced their propensity for christianization. To better understand this phenomenon and to determine how to adjust their evangelization strategies accordingly, missionaries categorized the spiritual tendencies and qualities of the souls of the subjects of their missionary enterprises. In making sense of this phenomenon, many came to view Native American souls as fundamentally

[31] Antônio Vieira, "Sermão do Espíritu Santo." As quoted in Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *The Inconstancy of the Indian Soul,* 1-2. Earlier in the sermon, Vieira noted: "The marble statue is quite difficult to make, because of the hardness and the resistance of the material; but, once the statue has been fashioned, one no longer needs to put one's hand to it again: it always conserves and sustains its shape. The statue of myrtle is easier to form, because of the ease with which the branches are bent, but one must always keep reshaping it and working on it in order for it to stay the same…"

weak and inconstant. The same characteristics that European Christians had identified as positive traits—Le Jau for example had "perceive[d] their souls fit materials which may be easily polished" since they had been very agreeable to the points of Christian religion he taught them—were ultimately found to make them naturally inclined toward waywardness.[32] Missionaries concluded that indigenous populations required constant oversight and guidance to mold them properly and maintain their development in alignment with proper Christian belief and behavior. By contrast, evangelizers often described the character of African souls as hard and resistant. Due to the associations with Islam in Africa, the difficulties of catechizing through African languages, and the general sense of their "ignorance" in understanding, African stubbornness and resistance was believed to be a reflection of the inner nature of their souls. Vieira's contemporary, Jorge Benci, described Africans along the lines of the "hard" and "tenacious" nations of Vieira's sermon when he encouraged priests to use methods that would water and reap "even the hardest stones, namely the most ignorant of souls."[33] The common characterization of Indians and Africans as "heathens" and "infidels" respectively reflects these underlying theological characterizations.

For the Spanish and Portuguese, this process of evaluating nations based on their theological identities and potential for Christian belief and practice had clear antecedents. The contours of this discourse closely paralleled similar debates taking place concurrently about *conversos* and *moriscos* in the metropole. *Conversos* and *moriscos* were Jews and Muslims who had converted to Catholicism, often under great pressure or duress during the process of the

[32] Francis Le Jau, *The Carolina Chronicle of Dr. Francis Le Jau: 1706-1717* (Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint, 1980), 61.
[33] Benci, *Economia crista dos senhores no governo dos escravos,* 95-96. See Souza, *The Devil in the Land of the Holy Cross,* 49.

Spanish and Portuguese reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula. In 1492, the Catholic Monarchs had issued the Alhambra Decree, also known as the Edict of Expulsion, which ordered all Jews to either convert to Christianity or leave the Kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. Therefore, part of the anxiety surrounding the status of *conversos* and *moriscos* stemmed from the fear that these New Christian populations continued to practice their previous faith system under the guise of "full" conversion. Discourses about the practices of these crypto-Jews and crypto-Muslims abounded in the period. With the New World encounters, these ideological threads were repurposed and expanded upon to make meaning of other nations whose capacity for true Christian conversion seemed equally ambiguous.

The categories of "Indian" and "African" and the spiritual and racial characteristics that European colonists and missionaries ascribed to the souls of each group developed unevenly, but ideologically were constructed in relation to one another. While European Christians classified Indian souls as inconstant, docile, and malleable, African souls were categorized as obstinate and resistant to Christian faith and doctrine. Casting Africans in this light aligned with the simultaneous ideological conflation of blacks with Muslim "infidels," who had rejected the faith and should be enslaved because of the influence of Islam among certain African nations. Missionaries and colonial administrators commonly used the term "infidel" in documents to reference a simultaneous theological and political identification of Africans as enemies to the religio-political project of the nascent Iberian Christian empires who had had been involved in a generations-long struggle to defeat the influence of Islam in the Old World.

These categorizations of the spiritual nature and capacity of blacks and natives lie at the heart of the broad racial stereotypes of non-Europeans that were forming in the European Christians' religious, social, and political imagination. Amerindians, though believed to be

unrefined and immature in their spiritual evolutionary development, were widely conceived of as noble savages—innocent, perpetual children that were untainted by the vices of Old World religions and cultures. Africans on the other hand had concrete ties to the Old World, particularly the Muslim enemies of the advance of God's Christian kingdom. In the minds of European colonists, Africans were predisposed to barbarous and resistant behavior and were naturally inclined in disposition and constitution to serve as slaves. The developing ideologies about the *spiritual* capacities of Amerindians and Africans established the foundation for and were inextricably connected to articulations of *racial* ideologies.

While these missionary writings often took into account a variety of attributes of the "heathen" populations from their culture, physical appearance, and intelligence, early modern Christians filtered these understandings through a theological lens in which the fundamental concern was the character of their souls and their spiritual aptitude that influenced their capacity to become full, autonomous Christian subjects. In these texts, this evaluation of non-Europeans' theological identities transcended other concerns, as the content and quality of their souls was the primary marker of essential difference. In an attempt to incorporate encountered "others" into their theological social system, Europeans in the Americas first observed, compared, and evaluated not bodies, but souls.

These abundant references to the spiritual incapacity of blacks and natives contained embedded within them an implicit question—were the perceived differences a result of some ontological and essential spiritual difference or was it merely a product of circumstance, and thus a contingent and surmountable obstacle to successful conversion? The use of words such as "nature" connoted innate, permanent characteristics—and indeed, many Europeans conceived of the differences of non-European souls in those terms, but many others imagined that through

nurture Indians and Africans could outgrow the seeming deficiencies in their capabilities for proper Christian belief and practice. As Winthrop Jordan delineates, early modern Europeans used a "bewildering variety of words to denote what we call intelligence," which was "symptomatic of an underlying vagueness about the abilities in men." The very terms in question here, "capacity," "faculty," and "understanding" tended to indicate "mental (and sometimes emotional and manual) abilities which were 'natural,' that is, what we would call 'innate.' Yet these terms were applied indiscriminately to abilities which could not be changed and those that could."[34]

The common trend emerges across sources of the period that those Europeans most directly involved in evangelization deemed Africans and Indians to possess inferior spiritual aptitude. Even those who staunchly defended Indian and Africans' ability to be converted often simultaneously expressed concern that they did not display the same capacity for proper Christian belief and practice. They largely concluded that blacks and natives were *capable* of christianization and salvation, but were *limited* in their capacities to do so. This perception made their missionary efforts a "discouraging undertaking, considering the many difficulties" they faced.[35] Yet unlike some of their contemporaries, they did not see notions of the limited spiritual capacities of blacks and natives as a complete deterrent. They remained committed to the idea that all nations were capable of christianization and that it was their apostolic duty to spread the Christian faith throughout the world. If some populations displayed limited capacities, it must be a sign of a divine plan. As Elihu Colman concluded, although "the Negroes might not have the

[34] Jordan, *White Over Black,* 189.
[35] Wilson, *The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity Made Easy to the Meanest Capacities,* x.

understanding that some other nations have, then I do believe there is less required [of them]."[36] Thomas Wilson likewise surmised, "God, who would have all men to be saved, and to come to the Truth as it is in Jesus, hath, pursuant to his gracious design, made all men capable of receiving such a measure of Christian knowledge, as will be sufficient for their salvation."[37] As a result, they set out to elaborate the methods and conditions that would allow for the successful conversion and incorporation for Africans and Indians to occur. They sketched the outlines of differential theological identities that accounted for the perceived differences, and believed that the evangelization process *and* the colonial world that these populations would transition or "convert" into should be designed to reflect these theological identities and spiritual capacities. As part of this effort, they designed specific missionary methods and strategies that would correspond to the character and capacities of the souls of those they sought to convert.

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"Suited unto their poor capacities"

These notions of native and African limited spiritual capacity did not stay in the realm of theoretical reflection. They were, in fact, readily deployed in missionary situations and often over-determined the structure and content of evangelization practice. Missionary texts reveal that this discourse elaborating the hierarchies of perceived differentials in Christian capacity directly influenced strategies of evangelization and catechization. European Christians employed strategies, tactics, and rhetoric that reflected their sense of the diminished potential of Africans and Indians.

[36] Elihu Colman, *A Testimony against that Antichristian practice of Making Slaves of Men,* ([Boston], 1733), 10. As quoted in Jordan, *White Over Black,* 187.
[37] Wilson, *The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity Made Easy to the Meanest Capacities,* v.

As the Brazilian archbishop's recommendation for the use of the *Breve Instrução* attests, throughout the Atlantic World it was common practice among Catholic and Protestant missionaries alike to devise and employ abbreviated catechisms that were particularly tailored to what they believed to be the limited aptitude of blacks and natives and that could be used repeatedly to reinforce basic lessons.[38] Missionary handbooks such as Thomas Wilson's, *The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity Made Easy to the Meanest Capacities: or An Essay Towards the Instruction for the Indians,* advised European Christians to modify Christian doctrine and keep it "short" and "plain" when catechizing Africans and Native Americans such that they could not "fail of understanding."[39]

Archbishop Monteiro da Vide also indicated that the slave population should be instructed repeatedly to overcome the obstacles to their acquisition of the teachings. Through the statutes in the *Constitutions*, he reminded his parishioners that, "it is the responsibility of the masters that slaves are indoctrinated *many times* by wise and virtuous people." Even with this repetitive indoctrination strategy, religious authorities still considered some too "coarse" to learn. The statutes outlined simplified prayers specifically designed for "slaves and rude people." [40] This attenuated form of Catholicism did not even necessarily require full understanding on the part of the slaves before some religious authorities authorized their baptism.

Similarly, Mather's tract, *The Negro Christianized*, urged the Puritan colonists in New England to devote increased efforts to sharing Christianity with their slaves. To assist in this

[38] In the *Constituições* the brief instruction takes the form of 52 short questions and answers divided into five sections related to the central mysteries of the faith, instruction for confession, instruction for communion, "the act of contrition for slaves and simple people," and how to speak to the dying.
[39] Wilson, *The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity Made Easy*, ii.
[40] Fernando Torres-Londono, "As Constituições do Arcebispado da Bahia de 1707 e a presença da escravidão", 277. Translation by author.

endeavor the text contained two catechisms, "first a shorter, then a larger: suited unto their poor capacities."[41] Nevertheless, Mather advocated continued resolve for the task, "If we can't learn them so much as we *would*, let us learn them as much as we *can*," for "there will be the more of a triumph, if we prosper in the undertaking."[42] The shorter catechism he designed consisted of a set of three questions and answers that distilled the complexities of Christian doctrine into the plainest language.[43]

While religious authorities cited Africans' obstinate nature as the reason for repeated instruction, they saw in Native Americans a childlike nature that rendered them perpetual novices in the faith and required a similar approach. Acosta reflected this prevailing ideology writing: "To instruct uneducated people is frustrating, for one has to teach the same thing over and over again, and these are just the trivial and basic things of the Word of God, for there is no point in going on to greater things, because as they are just babes in Christ we can only give them milk."[44] Based on the difficulties that they perceived in accommodating Christianity to the capacities of non-European converts, missionaries crafted simplified materials for religious instruction that communicated the key elements of Christian doctrine in rudimentary terms.

In accommodating the catechisms to the perceived limited capacities of Indians and Africans, the theoretical spiritual hierarchy became crystallized in the religious and social world of the colonial Americas. For example, prior to baptism, Archbishop Monteiro da Vide instructed

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[41] Mather, *The Negro Christianized,* 18.
[42] Ibid., 16.
[43] See Mather, *The Negro Christianized,* 36. "Q: Who made you and all the world? / A: The Great God made me, to serve Him. / Q: Who saves the children of men from all their miseries? / A: Jesus Christ, who is both God and Man, saves them that Look unto Him. / Q: What will become of you when you die? / A: If I obey Jesus Christ, my soul will go to the Heavenly Paradise. If I continue wicked, my soul will be cast among the Devils."
[44] Acosta, *De Procuranda Indorum Salute,* vol. II., 53.

that the African slaves of limited capacity be asked only the following questions: "Do you want to wash your soul with the holy water? / Do you want to eat the salt of God? / Will you cast all of your sins out of your soul? / Will you cast the devil out of your soul?"[45] Though the Archbishop and other clergy deemed this simplistic catechism sufficient for a most basic acceptance of the Catholic faith if fully understood, this minimal catechization more likely led to unorthodox understandings.[46]

There are reported instances of slaves throughout the Atlantic World mistaking the significance of baptism, particularly as it related to the salt Catholic missionaries often used in the practice. Some enslaved Africans believed the salt to be the central aspect of the baptism ritual rather than the washing in holy water. The question of what slaves took away from this minimalistic approach is a subject worthy of a more complete study. The present concern remains whether or not such an abbreviated catechism, often reduced to a basic format of questions and answers and the memorization of doctrine, would have met the very standards that Monteiro da Vide or other Europeans would have established for proper Christian faith and practice according to their own theological traditions.

Contemporary documents written in colonial Brazil by Jesuits André João Antonil and Jorge Benci provide evidence that, more often than not, this basic format of questions and answers did not adequately serve to catechize slaves. Even though the brief instruction guide found in the *Constitutions* had been inspired by Benci's sermons, the method of implementation

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[45] Vide, *Constituições Primeiras do Arcebispado de Bahia,* 146.

[46] 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, 2007), 52, footnote 37. Also see James Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 195.

outlined by the Archbishop fell far short of successful evangelization by the original author's standards. Antonil similarly critiqued the results of such a simple method as he observed that "even baptized blacks 'do not know who their creator is, what laws they should keep, how they shall supplicate to God, for what purpose Christians go to church, why they reverence the consecrated host, what they shall say to the priest when they kneel and speak into his ears, whether they have a soul, whether it dies, and where it goes when it leaves the body.'" [47] These were the elements of belief and ritual that Tridentine Catholicism valued as essential. Benci and Antonil suggested that without them the slaves "conversion" would be artificial or at least incomplete.

The consequences of this attenuated Christian instruction directly impacted the spiritual status of the newly converted in an Iberian colonial world in which participation in the Catholic religious community was a defining element of one's social status. Seventeenth and eighteenth century baroque Catholicism had a heavy emphasis on proper belief and practice, particularly relating to the administration of the sacraments. Religious authorities emphasized this orthodoxy all the more through the Inquisition and other modes of religious control as a result of the Counter Reformation in response to the growing influence of Protestantism and threat of "false" conversions of Jews and Muslims. Nevertheless, in the course of their evangelization, enslaved Africans received only a limited introduction to proper Christian doctrine that, in practice, rarely met even the most basic standards for an individual's incorporation into Christendom. Differentiation on this official level was likewise reflected in popular religious practice, where

[47] André João Antonil, *Cultura e opulência do Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, n.d.), 161. As quoted in Souza, *The Devil and the Land of the Holy Cross*, 49.

Catholicism practiced by those of African descent was often relegated to the margins, if recognized as authentic practice at all.

Receiving a watered-down introduction to the faith directly affected Indians' and Africans' incorporation into the broader spiritual and social body. Beyond the truncated nature of the conversion process, the rhetoric of catechization also reflected a permanent reality of the spiritual marginalization of black and native souls. For example, as Sandoval instructed slaves arriving to the port of Cartagena de Indias in the Spanish New Kingdom of Granada, he similarly employed a format of extended exchanges of pre-determined questions and answers. Yet the very same rhetoric that was intended to transition slaves to a new religious world also inherently required them to acquiesce to a socio-political position of inferiority in order to accept the religious doctrine being presented.

> If they receive the water, will be children of the devil or of God? / Just children of God. / Which gods should they have from now on, the true God of the whites, Jesus Christ, his Son, or the false and lying gods of their land and of witchcraft and superstition? / Only the God of the whites. / Do they want to be Christians, obeying the law of Jesus Christ like the whites, living like them, serving and obeying the great God of the Christians, or to be Moors [Muslims], gentiles and barbarians, like they were in their land? / Be like Christians.[48]

Rhetorically Sandoval's missionary discourse set up a dichotomy between the "true" God of the whites and the "lying" gods of Africa. He defined God and Jesus as the possession of whites, implicitly indicating that even as Africans transitioned to accept Christianity, God would not become theirs. He drew upon associations of blacks both as idolaters under the influence of the devil and as Muslim infidels to reinforce notions of their proclivities for resistance and sinfulness. In order to consent to the doctrine, the enslaved neophytes were to remain in a continuous state of inferiority, strive to emulate whites, but nonetheless always remain separate.

[48] Sandoval, *Treatise On Slavery*, 134.

In these instances, the process of incorporation into Christianity for enslaved Africans communicated in both word and deed that, though they were being admitted to the Body of Christ, they would do so by accepting a theological identity that reflected their subordinate position in the spiritual and social hierarchy.

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"As long as it does not harm it would help them greatly"

Given this paradigm that situated natives and Africans as either infantile or resistant in their practice of the faith, European Christians embraced a self-appointed role as Christian stewards. From this perspective, white Christians had a divinely ordained responsibility to create the circumstances for successful christianization, no matter how difficult. As Sandoval concluded, "the slaves' diminished understanding increases the owners' obligations to help them physically and spiritually. Slave owners usually do not comprehend that they need to take more care as masters over slaves who understand so little. People who rule over others must make up for their subjects' faults."[49]

Missionaries encouraged white Christians to mold proper moral and spiritual behavior by whatever means necessary. This often translated to constant surveillance, and when necessary, harsh correction. Acosta compared the process of christianization for natives to the careful cultivation of plants writing, "Just as in small plants, if when one does not watch them all the time and care for them, they can easily grow up twisted and then it is much more difficult to straighten them out. So it is with the tender souls of the neophytes, for as they have not yet

[49] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery*, 67.

become fully rooted in the Faith, they are easily blinded by error." He suggested that they remained highly susceptible and easily corruptible "to all the winds that blow that Satan and his band would loose upon them."[50] For that reason, Acosta encouraged fellow white Christians to remain diligent in their catechizing efforts and the oversight of the new converts.

As a result, corporal punishment was sanctioned and even sacralized as part of this missionizing relationship. Acosta made this connection explicit explaining that "in the same way we chastise animals with the whip which gives them pain but does not endanger them[…] So too then for the novices in the Faith, there is no sense in blasting them with censures of the Church, for they would pass through that without correction. Thus simple corporal punishment is better, as long as it does no harm and it would help them greatly."[51] This position was reinforced repeatedly throughout early colonial missionary texts. Fellow Spanish Jesuit José de Anchieta came to a similar conclusion. Confronted with resistant American Indians in Portuguese American territories in the mid-sixteenth century, he determined that more extreme christianization methods were necessary. "It seems to us that now the gates of this captaincy are opened for the conversion of the heathen, if God our Lord will give us some means of subjugating them and bringing them under our yoke; because for this kind of people there is no better way of preaching than with the sword and the rod of iron, and for them more than for any others it is necessary to "compel them to come in."[52]

Peter Claver, a Jesuit missionary laboring for the conversion of enslaved Africans in Cartagena de Indias, similarly adopted corporal punishment and surveillance as essential

[50] Acosta, *De Procuranda Indorum Salute,* 93.
[51] Ibid., 49.
[52] Thomas M. Cohen, *The Fire of Tongues: António Vieira and the Missionary Church In Brazil and Portugal* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 19.

components of his evangelization efforts. As Claver instructed Africans on the basic tenets of the Catholic faith, he was known to use a key from his belt or the stick of the cross to hit slow learners on the head.[53] He was also known to be constantly on the lookout for the immoral behavior of his African catechumens long after their initial catechization. If he found them in the streets engaging in any behaviors that he deemed sinful he would strike them with a *disciplina* (a rod designed for punishments), "threaten them with a whip," or confiscate their belongings.[54] Many evangelizers determined moderate corporal punishment to be a necessary and constructive element of the process of bringing heathen populations closer to reaching proper Christian practice and standards of moral behavior.

Evangelists expressed their conviction that slavery and other forms of forced labor were essential components of the conversion process for Indians and Africans given their particular spiritual constitutions. The Italian Jesuit Alessandro Valignano engaged in a variety of missionary activities in new territories, made this connection explicit writing,

> They [Africans] are a very untalented race[…] incapable of grasping our holy religion or practicing it; because of their naturally low intelligence they cannot rise above the level of the senses[…] they lack any culture and are given to savage ways and vices, and as a consequence they live like brute beasts[…]. In fine, they are a race born to serve, with no natural aptitude for governing.[55]

The very same characteristics that limited Africans' inclinations for Christianity in the minds of the missionaries were those that indicated that Africans were ordained to inhabit a servile

[53] Catholic Church, Anna María Splendiani, and Tulio Aristizábal Giraldo, *Proceso de beatificación y canonización de San Pedro Claver* (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2002). See also Katie Walker Grimes, *Fugitive Saints: Catholicism and the Politics of Slavery* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 66-67.
[54] Ibid. See also Ángel Valtierra, *Peter Claver, Saint of the Slaves* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1960), 206-207.
[55] As cited in Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 34.

temporal condition. Increasingly, missionaries elaborated a theological worldview in which forced labor, obedience, and a relationship of dependency with white Christians was a part of God's redemptive plan for Indians and Africans. Within this theological system, labor would aid blacks and natives in their spiritual development, and missionaries employed it as a strategy for molding "heathen" behavior to ensure their salvation. Acosta also indicated that manual labor and physical punishment were necessary for proper Christianization:

> […] it is necessary to rule these barbarous nations, principally the Indians and the Negroes in the New World, in the same way as the carnal Hebrew nation, with some sort of healthy diligent work so that they might be kept away from laziness and licentiousness of their habits, and with the constraint of fear keep them doing what they ought to do. Thus examples from the past declare this to us, as well as the daily experience of the most practiced of our times who teach it over and over again. This is the rein and the yoke that the wise one recommends (Eccli. 33; 25-50). That is the whip and the load. In this way they will be forced to enter into salvation even against their wills.[56]

Here, the Jesuit described work as a theological imperative, ordained by Christian Scripture to increase Indians' and Africans' inclinations toward proper Christian practice. Strategies of forced labor such as *reducciones,* mission villages, *mita* requirements, and *encomiendas* for Native Americans and perpetual slavery and plantation enslavement for Africans fit seamlessly into a theological system in which coerced labor and christianization went hand in hand as part of broader Atlantic World christianizing and civilizing colonial projects.[57]

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[56] Acosta, *De Procuranda Indorum Salute,* 26.

[57] *Reducciones* refer to the missionary villages set up by religious orders throughout the Spanish Americas to "civilize" indigenous populations to support missionary efforts toward their christianization. *Mita* requirements were widespread systems of forced labor that were implemented throughout the Spanish Americas. While technically American Indians were to remain "free" vassals of the Spanish Crown, in some colonial regions they were nevertheless compelled to provide their labor to support the Spanish colonial enterprise through a system that operated as a required labor draft. *Encomiendas* were grants offered to Spanish colonizers as rewards for their efforts in the conquest of territories in the Americas for the Spanish crown. As part of these grants, the Spanish settlers or *encomenderos* would receive land and the rights to collect tribute or labor privileges from the local indigenous populations.

Missionaries utilized this presumed natural affinity for labor and a particular earthly condition as a parallel to assist in their efforts toward evangelization of Africans. According to the catechism Mather advocated in *The Negro Christianized*, several of the commandments were explained to slaves in New England with explicit and implicit reference to their slave condition:

Q: What is the Fifth Commandment?
A. Honour thy Father and Mother.
Q. What is the meaning of it?
A. I must show all due respect unto everyone; and if I have a Master or Mistress, I must be very dutiful unto them.

Q. What is the Tenth Commandment?
A. Thou shalt not covet.
Q. What is the meaning of it?
A. I must be patient and content with such a condition as God has ordered for me

Q. Whom do you now choose to serve?
A. My Savior shall be my master; He is a good master; He has bought me to serve him; and he will make me a Child of God.

Q. If you Serve JESUS CHRIST, what must you do?
A. I must love God, and pray to him, and keep the Lords-Day. I must love all men, and never quarrel, nor be drunk, nor be unchaste, nor steal, nor tell a lie, nor be discontent with my condition.

Q. If you desire to obey JESUS CHRIST in this world, what will be your portion in another world?
A. If I am a true Servant of JESUS CHRIST, my Soul will go into a blessed paradise when I die. My body will be raised from the dead, at the Day of Judgment. I shall then be happy, with angels, in the City of God forever.[58]

Embedded within Mather's presentation of the commandments were the essential elements of a theologically rooted worldview in which the slave status of enslaved Africans had been divinely ordained as part of a redemptive plan. Slavery and servitude were conceived of as divinely ordained stations that would match the theological identities, limited capacities, and immoral proclivities of certain populations. As part of this worldview, there was a strong confluence if not

[58] Mather, *The Negro Christianized*, 29.

complete overlap between the religious system and the slave system, with masters serving as God's representatives on Earth. Africans were implored to "abide in the calling wherein they had been called" and to embrace their spiritual condition of servitude to ensure their salvation in the world to come.[59] Through this theological lens, Europeans expressed their conviction that slavery was not antithetical to Christian precepts, and evangelizing the enslaved population would provide reciprocal benefits to masters and slaves.

These practices became accepted components of a broader missionary ideology that viewed slavery or servitude, castigation, oversight, surveillance, fear, and intimidation through a theological lens in which those practices were essential for the proper spiritual and social development of Africans and Indians. In order for them to achieve an ultimate spiritual salvation, European Christians believed that Africans and Indians had to submit to an earthly relationship in which white Christians would serve as the trustees of their souls. European Christians did not see Africans and Indians as capable of achieving a place in God's kingdom of their own accord without structured guidance from white Christian stewards. The chapters that follow will analyze the elaboration of these theologies and missionary practices targeting enslaved Africans throughout the early colonial Atlantic.

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Conclusions

Using select missionary texts and documents of religious administration in the Spanish, Portuguese, and British colonies, this chapter explored the broader theological trend in which European Christian evangelizers evaluated the salvific capacities of the African and indigenous

[59] The bible verse 1 Corinthians 7:20— "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called."—was a commonly cited scripture passage that authorized this theological understanding.

converts. In doing so, they observed what they deemed to be essential differences at the level of the soul in the constitution of different nations of the world. They used those experiences to construct a theological anthropology and hierarchy of Indians' and Africans' spiritual potential. Though the question of whether those spiritual differences were inherent and permanent or circumstantial and mutable was rarely fully resolved for the missionaries in question, these classifications nevertheless had tangible racializing effects. These evangelization strategies amounted to a spiritual racialization in both discourse and practice that had a profound impact on the structure of colonial religious, social, and economic relationships and systems. Africans' and Indians' perceived ineptitude for Christian religion and the social position they inhabited in the colonial environment were deeply intertwined. As a result of these ideologies of black and native spiritual incapacity, Africans and Native Americans tended to be relegated to an inferior spiritual status. Missionaries designed special strategies of evangelization that would correspond to their assessments of particular spiritual ontologies of African and Indian populations. They employed abbreviated catechisms, altered prayers, simplified formulations of Christian doctrine, racializing pedagogies, physical discipline, and surveillance as the strategies for evangelization. Through these methods, European missionaries constructed a colonial system of Christianity in which the new converts had a marginal, liminal, and subordinate position. Theological concepts and religious practices played a critical role in relegating these populations to a lesser spiritual and racialized status within colonial society. Furthermore, the elements of oppression, domination, and extreme forms of governance endemic to modern racialization had elaborate theological foundations.

Understandings about Indians' and Africans' limited spiritual potential continued to define their engagement with the Christian religion long after their first exposure and

indoctrination. The culture of inferiority and suspicion around the purity of their religious belief and practice was reinforced socially and spatially throughout colonial society. Because they were perceived as constantly in need of correction, colonial controls on their bodies and souls were heightened all the more. Indians and Africans experienced limited access to the sacraments and heavy regulation of their spiritual and social activities. While Africans endured the slave system, Indians were gathered in mission villages to better prepare them for Christian practice as a means of taming their perceived natural inclinations. Religious life tended to be segregated by racial or *casta* categories and ethnic origin, with whites still holding positions of power to monitor their religious practice. Over the course of the colonial period, complex systems continued to evolve that sanctioned white European Christians in their roles as trustees, tasked with responsibility on earth for the spiritual care of blacks and Native Americans. This worldview reinforced notions that these populations were not capable of spiritual or civic self-determination. In this way, theological conceptions provided the foundation for many of the colonial systems that solidified relations of power.

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The next three chapters explore the missionary projects of three evangelizers at the forefront of the efforts to christianize enslaved Africans and bring them into the fold of colonial Christianity—Alonso de Sandoval in Cartagena de Indias, Antônio Vieira in Salvador da Bahia, and Hugh Bryan in South Carolina. A detailed examination of these evangelizers—their theologies, ideologies, and practices—and the influence they had on the religious, social, and political landscape of the colonial environment they inhabited demonstrate that ideologies and practices of spiritual racialization were powerfully at work, even among those that worked most tirelessly for the inclusion and incorporation of blacks into the fold of colonial Christianity.

"In his secret plan for us, God created masters and slaves, but all of us are really the same even if some of us are important on earth and others are not." – Alonso de Sandoval

"And so as they, because of their weak capacity, could not understand how they could have arrived to the land of the whites by way of a sea so big that it did not have a road, nor a path[…] to walk[…] so it was with those things of our holy faith, that with their little capacity, they could not perceive and understand, they ought to believe them and observe how God commanded it." – Testimony of Padre Nicolás González, in the *Proceso* of the Beatification and Canonization of San Pedro Claver

<< Chapter 2 >>
Middle Passages and Missionary Christianity: Alonso de Sandoval and Pedro Claver in Seventeenth Century Cartagena de Indias

Introduction

On July 19, 1610, slave ship captains Alonso de Proenza, Pedro Fernández Daveyra, and Felipe Rodriguez testified under oath on the procedures utilized to baptize enslaved Africans in African ports. They gave their testimony in the presence of Andrés de Campo, a notary public, in Cartagena de Indias in the Spanish Kingdom of New Granada. Proenza, Daveyra, and Rodriguez testified as follows:

> We, the registered captains of ships that navigate the rivers of Guinea and the port of Cacheu, buying slaves to take to the Indies, testify that the fathers of the Company of Jesus of this city of Cartagena asked us to give a statement about how the blacks are baptized. We swear by God Our Lord and on the sign of the holy cross that this testimony is true. Two or three days before the boats leave, a priest or his representative comes to the ships and puts on his surplice and stole. He commands the blacks to stand. They come forward, still imprisoned in their chains and shackles, and they are baptized two at a time in couples of a boy and a girl. Then they call forward the *bozal*[1] men and women and pour water on them, saying the official words of the ceremony of baptism, while the slaves remain in chains. Neither before nor after the ceremony do they try to teach them anything or tell them what baptism is. They do not have enough time to do this, because no one speaks the same language. They do not ask the slaves' consent, nor do the slaves give their free consent, because they do not know what holy baptism is. People are

[1] The term *bozal* in Spanish or *boçal* in Portuguese was a term used throughout the Iberian Americas to reference recently arrived Africans as well as Africans that had limited knowledge of Spanish or Portuguese culture, religion, and language. By contrast, the term *ladino* was used to reference acculturated or Hispanicized Africans.

> scandalized by these baptisms because they believe the slaves should learn what they are receiving and be asked if they freely wish to receive it.[2]

The request for these testimonies had come from the Jesuit Alonso de Sandoval on behalf of the Fathers of the Company of Jesus of the city of Cartagena. Since the establishment of a local Jesuit order in Cartagena in 1604, the local Jesuits, led primarily by Sandoval, had embraced the task of tending to the spiritual care of enslaved Africans upon their arrival in the port. Through the course of his missionary activity, Sandoval had become increasingly concerned about the efficacy of the baptisms taking place in Africa prior to the trip across the Atlantic. Specifically, he doubted that the methods used there were effective for ensuring the salvation of the African souls according to Catholic belief and doctrine. As a result, he wrote extensively to informants throughout the Iberian Atlantic to gather information about the processes of African christianization taking place. He contacted other Jesuits in South America and Africa, and questioned the captains and workers on slave ships. He requested the testimony of captains to provide official eyewitness accounts to the common evangelization procedures on the African coast.

Investigations into the process and validity of slave baptisms continued on both sides of the Spanish Atlantic throughout the decade following the testimonies of Proenza, Daveyra, and Rodriguez. These were largely spurred on by the efforts of Sandoval and his apprentice Pedro Claver, who were working singularly for the purpose of African christianization in Cartagena de Indias. In 1613, the Archbishop of Seville, Don Pedro Vaca de Castro y Quiñones, who had received reports and correspondence from Sandoval, launched his own examination into the

[2] Alonso de Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery: Selections From De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2008), 114.

issue.[3] Examining ship captains in Seville, he found that they similarly reported that "when the slaves are baptized, they are not asked their consent, nor are they instructed in the faith, nor do they understand what holy baptism is, nor are interpreters there that know their languages." In short, they "receive baptisms blind and utterly ignorant to its meaning." [4] And in 1620 and 1621 the bishop of Cartagena, Don Diego de Torres y Altamirano, investigated the issue in through proceedings in the local ecclesiastical court.[5]

Through the investigations, Sandoval reached a number of startling conclusions regarding the carelessness with which the catechization and baptism of enslaved Africans was taking place in African ports. More often than not, slaves were baptized without first being instructed in the faith. Africans often had little to no understanding of the meaning of the ritual at the time it was performed. Priests tended to rush through the process, conducting it as quickly as possible, in some cases to escape the sweltering heat. Even when a brief speech was made prior to the mass baptisms, many of the Africans could not hear or understand. Because the enslaved were baptized in large groups, many were too far away from the priest to hear what was being said. Given the great diversity in languages spoken among the captives, even if an interpreter translated the words of the priest, many others would not have understood. The holy water often did not touch each individual. Children were rarely baptized along with the adults or the water

[3] It appears that Sandoval and Quiñones were in direct contact, sharing information as they conducted their investigations and examinations on opposite sides of the Atlantic. Sandoval indicated that he provided the declarations made by the ship captains in Cartagena de Indias to the archbishop and that he received documentation of the investigation made in Seville after the fact. Ángel Valtierra notes that as soon as the archbishop arrived in Seville from Granada he noticed the large population of enslaved Africans and found that many of them had little instruction in the Christian faith. He established a committee to investigate the issue and to ensure that all the African received valid baptisms and marriages. See Valtierra, *Peter Claver: Saint of the Slaves*, 46.

[4] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery,* 115.

[5] Ibid, 114.

was not individually applied to them. Captain Gaspar Carvallo confirmed that these were common practices in African ports. He indicated that he witnessed similar strategies used to baptize "six or seven hundred people[…] in three or four hours."[6] After the fact, little care was paid to ensure that groups of the baptized and unbaptized would not be mixed to keep track of the Africans that still needed to receive the sacrament, most likely resulting in some Africans remaining unbaptized while others were baptized twice.[7] And ships with a small number of slaves would often skip the journey to the ports altogether to save time, thereby preventing full ships of Africans from receiving the requisite baptism.[8]

Father Sebastián Gómez, rector of the Jesuit College in the Cape Verde Islands, acknowledged the concern that perhaps these baptisms did not in fact constitute legitimate baptisms at all. Because of the limitations and inconsistencies in the current evangelization processes, he "hoped that [the slaves] would be baptized later."[9] Father Geronimo Vogado, rector of the Jesuit college in the city of Angola, similarly denied the efficacy of many of the slave baptisms he had witnessed, despite his own commitment to the work of christianizing

[6] Ibid, 115.

[7] Alvaro Perea also testified that the merchants in the city of Luanda often delayed bringing their captives to the fleet so that they frequently arrive after the baptism was over. Thus, an unknown number were not baptized and are sold with those that were. See Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery,* 115.

[8] Capt. Carvallo was asked if the blacks often leave the ports without being baptized. He said that usually if a ship only contains thirty captives, the slaves are not baptized, because no priest wants to travel a league outside the city just to baptize twenty or thirty slaves. See Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery,* 115.

[9] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery,* 112.

Africans.[10] He recommended that African slaves should subsequently be rebaptized conditionally (*sub conditione*).[11]

Through the eyewitness accounts and collections of testimonies, Sandoval pieced together an increasingly bleak picture of the process and practice of African evangelization throughout the Iberian Atlantic in the early seventeenth century, causing him to lament, "The lack of a little care puts the salvation of so many souls in danger."[12] Sandoval, being a devout believer in and advocate of the project of Christian universalism and the attendant efforts to bring the nations of the world into the faith through the Spanish Catholic colonial project, was deeply concerned about the current state of the missionary system. He was convinced that the propagation of the faith to heathen peoples of the world was necessary for Iberian Catholics to fulfill their apostolic mission. He believed the Jesuits to be singularly ordained for the task of converting the "Aethiopians," and was unwavering in his own personal calling to that ministry.[13]

In response to this perceived crisis, throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, Alonso de Sandoval and his apprentice Pedro Claver worked extensively in the port and city of Cartagena de Indias to establish a missionary system that would result in what they determined

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[10] He also noted, "I have told the bishop many times about this negligence, and I hope that the new bishop will help us work to catechize them and oblige their masters to bring them somewhere where they can comfortably learn the catechism." Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery*, 115.

[11] Archbishop Quiñones recommended the following approach to conditional baptisms. While administering the holy water, the priest or missionary would state: *Si es baptizatus, non te baptizo; si autem non es baptizatus, ego te baptizo in nominee Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.* [If you are baptized, I do not baptize you; If you are not baptized, I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.] See Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery*, 166.

[12] Ibid., 115.

[13] Following Margaret Olsen, I will retain the classical spelling of "Aethiopians" where Sandoval, Vieira, and other missionaries employ the term *etíopes*. Early modern Iberians utilized "*etíopes*" to refer to generally to African peoples of a wide variety of nations. For my own usage, I will generally use the term "African" to refer to the peoples of various ethnicities and tribal affiliations that were brought to the Americas through the transatlantic slave trade.

to be valid baptisms for enslaved Africans. Despite their commitment to ensuring that the souls of all Africans arriving to the port of Cartagena would be won for the Christian faith, the reality of the local environment plagued their efforts. Along with the carelessness and inconsistency of the slave baptisms occurring in Africa, the colonial environment and the slave system in Cartagena presented a number of nearly insurmountable challenges. In addition to these external factors, both Sandoval and Claver expressed frustration with what they deemed to be the spiritual deficiencies and limited spiritual capacities of their African catechumens.

However, undeterred and confident in their vocation, Sandoval and Claver were relentless as they sought to establish an effective missionary system that would adequately account for those factors and obstacles. In doing so, Sandoval and Claver became major local architects in the process of spiritual racialization that Africans experienced in colonial settings. Sandoval wrote about the missionary philosophy and system that he and Claver employed in his own treatise on black salvation, *De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute,* and Claver's colleagues and enslaved interpreters further documented the missionaries' work in the hearings and testimonies that became a part of his beatification process.[14] Through these and other materials, a detailed picture emerges of the process of evangelization that enslaved Africans confronted upon their arrival to Cartagena de Indias in the first half of the seventeenth century.

This chapter looks at this process and argues that it was one of spiritual racialization. In their missionary work, Sandoval and Claver systematized and reinforced ideologies of limited black spiritual capacity, introduced enslaved Africans into the colonial religious-social environment on subordinate terms, and used slavery and the most oppressive elements of the slave-colonial complex as pedagogical tools. The result of these practices was that the

[14] Pope Leo XII officially canonized Claver as a saint in the Catholic Church in 1888.

evangelization system in Cartagena constructed a specifically black Christian subjectivity that was intimately bound up with Africans' subjectivity and experiences as enslaved persons. The violence, fear, and dehumanization of the slave experience were given theological significance and integrated into the christianization process.

Alonso de Sandoval was born in Seville in 1577. Around the age of seven, he traveled to Lima in the viceroyalty of Peru with his father, Tristán Sánchez, who worked in the Spanish colonial bureaucracy. While in Lima, he attended San Pablo Jesuit College, and officially joined the Company of Jesus in 1593. In 1605, he responded to a call to help establish a new Jesuit sub-province in Cartagena de Indias. It was there that he began his missionary work among the Africans arriving to the port. In 1627, he published a text based on his evangelization project with African slaves in Cartagena under the title *Naturaleza, policia sagrada i profana, costumbres i rito, disciplina i catechismo evangélico de todos etíopes* or *De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute*.[15] He subsequently spent time revising and expanding this text, and before his death in 1652, he published a second version in 1647. His apprentice, Pedro Claver, was born in 1580 in the Catalan village of Verdú in Spain. In 1602, he received permission to enter the novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Tarragona.[16] Eight years later, he traveled to the Americas to begin missionary work in 1610. Claver spent several years in Santa Fe de Bogotá and Tunja preparing for ordination before returning to Cartagena to join Sandoval's ministry with Africans in 1616. Both missionaries devoted decades of their lives and careers primarily to working with the enslaved African populations residing in and passing through the port city. Sandoval died of

[15] Sandoval's text, *De Instauranda Aethiopum Salute* is the first and only missionary history dedicated primarily and exclusively to the evangelization of enslaved Africans in the Americas.
[16] For an account of the life of Pedro Claver, see Ángel Valtierra. *San Pedro Claver: El Santo Que Libertó Una Raza* (Cartagena: Santuario de San Pedro Claver, 1964).

an epidemic that hit Cartagena in 1652. Two years later, Claver succumbed to illness as well, and died in September of 1654.

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"Their Heart Said Nothing to Them": Rectifying Invalid Black Baptisms

Papal decrees and Spanish and Portuguese laws required that Africans brought to Catholic territories be baptized prior to leaving Africa or at least within a year of arrival. Nevertheless, as Sandoval sought to establish his own missionary practice, he became increasingly aware that the Africans disembarking in Cartagena had not received any substantive form of christianization, and in some cases, had not been baptized at all. Sandoval's preoccupation with the baptisms taking place in African ports stemmed directly from his personal experience evangelizing slaves on the American shores of the Atlantic.

From the gathered accounts and testimonies, Sandoval was able to establish a general pattern in the efficacy of slave evangelization depending on the provenance of the slave ship. In *De Instauranda*, he reported that Aethiopians "that come here via the port of Luanda [Angola], which includes Angolans, Congos, Angicos, and Malembas, and those that come via the island of São Tomé, people such as the Araraes, Lucumis and pure Caravalis, ordinarily arrive here with a legitimate baptism." By contrast, "the opposite is true for slaves from other nations of the Guinean rivers; however, sometimes the knowledge of baptism varies depending on when the slaves left and who was in charge of the ministries in Africa."[17] Nevertheless, his investigation uncovered the reality that even those general patterns could not be fully relied upon. Archbishop Quiñones' investigation revealed that even the christianization strategies in Angola, where Portuguese Catholicism had a strong foothold, could be executed in an inconsistent fashion. In

[17] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery*, 111.

his correspondence with other Jesuits, Sandoval received a report that baptisms in Luanda seemed strikingly similar to those reported in Cacheu and the ports of Guinea. The letter noted:

> I have testimony from the slave merchants themselves that in the Angolan port called Luanda, black slaves are simply lined up in the plaza one day before they set sail. This is done by ministers or priests. Up until this point they have been in prison. They do not learn the catechism and do not even know anything about God. The priests tell the slaves their names and give them pieces of paper with their names written on them so that they do not forget them. After this, the priests put salt in all of the slaves' mouths. Next, they throw water on them several times with an aspergillum to do it as quickly as possible. Then the baptism is done. Later they give this speech and have an interpreter translate it: 'You have become sons of God; go to the Spanish lands and learn about the holy faith. Forget everything you have learned in your own country. Go there willingly, and do not eat dogs, rats, or horses, etc.[18]

If there was any doubt about what enslaved Africans might have taken away from that experience, Africans in Spain reflecting on the experience reported that "when they were baptized "'their heart said nothing to them.' They add[ed] that they were *bozales* when it was done, so they did not understand it at all."[19]

As Sandoval amassed more information regarding the inconsistent baptismal practices in African ports, he came to the stark conclusion: "The baptisms that black slaves receive in Guinea and in other lands and ports[…] are usually null and invalid" or at least their "validity" was seriously "in doubt."[20] Sandoval based his doubt on the authenticity of the baptisms on the writings of prominent theologians and Christian scholars. He summed up the foundation of his claim saying, "all Christian laws, Church councils, and Christian scholars and authorities agree that when adults are baptized, they must willingly and knowingly agree to be baptized. Otherwise, their baptisms are invalid."[21]

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[18] Ibid., 112-113.
[19] Ibid., 113.
[20] Ibid., 117.
[21] Ibid., 117. Citing the writings of his fellow Jesuit José de Acosta, Sandoval went on to note: "If this barbarian (speaking of one of these Aethiopians) has no comprehension of the meaning

Sandoval based his understanding of an efficacious baptism and process of christianization on Catholic Church doctrine and theological tradition. The central concern surrounding the legitimacy of baptisms performed by missionaries and priests throughout the Iberian Atlantic centered on the question of whether or not Africans possessed full knowledge and understanding of the essential elements of Christianity and had given consent consciously and freely to accept the Christian faith prior to baptism. For Sandoval, thorough *teaching,* a reasonable level of *understanding,* and explicit *consent* must precede a baptism for it to be valid. Based on the results of his inquiries, he came to the conclusion that "the baptisms done in the ports of Africa are merely a fruitless, sinful, sacrilegious ceremony, with no effect or value."[22] He argued that "priests and masters commit serious sins in Guinea, on the ships and in other places where they carry out these baptisms. They commit sacrilege by administering a sacrament that is morally null and evidently doubtful, and very certainly without its principal effect, that is, grace, because adult slaves are not prepared for it by having the necessary faith and penitence." Given his personal commitments to and concern for the mission of bringing all of the nations of the world to the Christian faith, and the explicit goal of restoring Africans to Christian salvation, he impassionedly implored, "we must improve this situation from now on."[23] With singleness of purpose, he and his apprentice Claver undertook a systematic effort to construct a process of African christianization that would remedy the inadequacies of the work of his fellow

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of the baptism that he receives, or if he does not understand that there is any difference between regular water and holy water and is ignorant of the Christian faith and the Christian church, we cannot presume that this man agreed to being baptized. This kind of baptism is the same as a baptism done while he was sleeping or unconscious, because he knows nothing about it and has not willingly accepted it. I have no doubt that in such a case an individual has not received a valid baptism."

[22] Ibid., 121.

[23] Ibid.

missionaries and religious authorities, bring Africans entering Spanish territories into the Christian fold, and lead to the salvation of their souls according to Christian doctrine.

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"Bozal, but certainly not an animal": Sandoval on black spiritual potential

Sandoval constructed a method and practice of African evangelization that would address the challenges and inconsistencies in the current evangelization practice, thereby resulting in valid baptisms. In so doing, he articulated an ideology of African spiritual potential in which he sought to disprove or at least complicate and challenge the circulating discourses of black spiritual incapacity. Throughout *De Instauranda,* Sandoval made bold proclamations about the spiritual capacity of enslaved Africans that defied much of the common belief. He took a nuanced and layered approach to assessing, articulating, and offering examples to indicate that, based on his experience, black slaves were fully capable of christianization. He outlined the circumstantial factors that had thus far served as obstacles to their successful evangelization, arguing that it was these external factors that had led his contemporaries to doubt the spiritual capacities of Africans.

By the time Sandoval wrote *De Instauranda,* he had spent nearly twenty years in ministry to enslaved Africans in Cartagena. After much trial and error, he had developed strategies and systems to aid in his effort of instructing Africans in the Christian faith and to evaluate their comprehension. He was highly critical of European Christians who summarily dismissed Africans as being spiritually incapable and uneducable. He was adamant that it was wrong to say that "misunderstanding comes from [Africans'] ignorance, or that they cannot learn, because, in more than eighteen years of practicing this ministry, I know that some blacks can understand and

explain baptism."[24] He informed his fellow white Christians that Africans brought from Luanda and Angola, where Portuguese Catholics had engaged in more extensive missionary activity, often understood the faith and doctrine well. When Sandoval questioned Africans in Cartagena from that region, many of them could recount precisely the specifics of their experience with baptism, the meaning of the ritual, and the broader elements of a Christian life and worldview.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, who asserted the futility of extensive efforts to evangelize the enslaved Africans, Sandoval defended his conviction that "black people are worthy of all this effort. The time spent teaching them and administering the sacraments to them is not wasted." He implored his fellow European Christians to recall that though many say "these people are barbarous and rustic[…] the apostles also preached to those who they now call incapable of understanding the faith." And ultimately, he argued, the results of his own missionary work with Africans in Cartagena showed "that the African nations have the potential to be Christian."[25]

One of the most significant elements of Sandoval's defense of black spiritual capacity centered around his evaluation of the language barrier between missionaries and enslaved Africans of many different tribes and nations. He detailed several key experiences that suggested that African slaves had far greater spiritual potential than it might seem when the obstacle of language was properly accounted for. For example, he recounted the following account from his missionary activities:

> I know a black woman of the Nalu caste who is a *bozal* but surely not an animal. I separated her from the rest of the catechism group three times because she did not understand what the translator was saying. Finally, not wanting to make me angry, she spoke to her companion, another *bozal*, who understood her well. When I separated her again, she repeated back to me everything I had been trying to teach.

[24] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery,* 121.
[25] Ibid., 106.

> These actions helped me by giving me an idea for a new method for how to deal with similar cases in the future.[26]

From experiences such as that one, Sandoval argued vehemently, "these blacks are not the beasts that some people like to think they are." In a rare moment of self-awareness and relativistic thinking, Sandoval admitted, "I confess that when a black person speaks to me in his language, I do not understand a word and seem more *bozal* than he does when I speak to him in my language. I believe that all people confess the same. Why do we think that a black person should understand our language?"[27] He instead indicated with assurance that once they overcame these language barriers, acculturated Africans that spent ample time in Spanish Christian society could be expected to fully understand and adopt Christian beliefs and demonstrate Christian devotion and piety.

In his concerted efforts to defend black capacity for the Christian faith, Sandoval made a provocative distinction. He implored his fellow missionaries and European Christians to treat Africans as full *adults* that must consciously choose to accept the faith based on full understanding and consent. Drawing on longstanding theological debates that had delineated the distinctions between adult and infant baptism, Sandoval reminded his fellow missionaries, "Infants do not have to understand or consent to baptism, but adults do, because they are free men and they must consciously accept it." As for Africans, the "blacks should not be considered infants, either," he stated. "They are adult men, and as such they should be baptized after being instructed and giving their free consent." [28] Sandoval's assertion stood in notable contrast to commonly circulating contemporary discourses and practices relating to the conversion of

[26] Ibid., 109.
[27] Ibid, 109-110.
[28] Ibid.

indigenous populations in the Americas, whereby Catholic missionaries since the earliest evangelization projects regarded the natives as "perpetual children" and "infants in the faith." These beliefs regarding indigenous spiritual capacity resulted in a host of missionary strategies and structures related to the colonial church that were designed to accommodate this particular spiritual ontology of native peoples, including mass baptisms without comprehensible instruction.

Sandoval's vehement assertions of black capacity for Christianity did not ultimately indicate that he deemed Africans to be on a level of full spiritual equality with European Christians, however. He affirmed rather, that many Africans had limited spiritual potential, but assured his contemporaries that their diminished capacity did not render them entirely incapable. Instead he argued, "[h]aving a limited potential does not prevent an individual from receiving baptism, nor should any baptized person who has received preparation and instruction be excluded from confession or communion."[29] Over the course of his life and ministry, Sandoval thus understood his work to be elaborating strategies for providing effective spiritual education targeting the black spiritual condition. Sandoval asked his readers, "Is being ignorant and crude a reason not to receive baptism, confession, or communion. Or maybe we should spend most of our time and energy teaching ignorant and crude people?"[30] Over the course of his career, Sandoval proved that he did not mean that question rhetorically. As he developed his missionary system in Cartagena, he conscientiously designed it to correspond with what he perceived to be the spiritual limitations of his African catechumens *and* the harsh and complex realities of the colonial environment and their position within it. At every point in his missionary strategy,

[29] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery,* 72.
[30] Ibid.

Sandoval took the perceived spiritual deficiencies of the African subjects of his missionary enterprise into account. The philosophy and strategy that he developed to evangelize enslaved Africans as detailed in *De Instauranda* offered a pragmatic approach to establishing a method that would ensure that Africans were taught effectively, comprehended the essential elements of Catholic Christianity, and consented to their baptism and inclusion into the Christian community.

Sandoval's meticulous outline of his evangelization method reflects a conviction that each element of his strategy had to be followed precisely in order to effectively christianize Africans, taking into account the environment of the seventeenth century Atlantic World. He implored:

> The success of this entire enterprise depends on working with an organized method. If we do not use the right methods, our entire project, so valued by God, will fail. The *natural condition* of those we are working with demands a method and a plan. If we do not follow our plan, we will reverse the good we have already achieved.[31]

Over the course of his own ministry to enslaved Africans, Sandoval then sought to make the following elements central to his own missionary practice. He established a "methodical system" that allowed missionaries "to go directly to the truth and make progress toward baptism." His system sought to account for all of the elements of evangelization—instruction in the catechism, preparation for baptism and confession, administration of the sacraments, and, when necessary, offering enslaved Africans a Christian death. *De Instauranda*, was an extensive text with several aims and ends, but ultimately it served as a manual for what Sandoval deemed to be the most effective and efficient methods for the evangelization of enslaved Africans. Book three of the text in particular, was comprised of detailed instructions that delineated Sandoval's personal

[31] Ibid., 99. Emphasis added.

strategies. He described the third section of his text as presenting "the fundamental goal and purpose of the book."[32]

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"Go directly to the truth": The Cartagena Jesuits' Evangelization Method

In the early seventeenth century, Cartagena de Indias was the primary port serving the Spanish Americas, and the preeminent port responsible for the importation of enslaved Africans. In the first half of the seventeenth century, Africans disembarking in Cartagena arrived from the ports of Guinea, Angola, Cape Verde, and São Tomé. When a slave ship arrived in Cartagena in the early seventeenth century, Jesuits Alonso de Sandoval and Pedro Claver would have been among the first to know, as slaves of the Jesuit order would rush to notify them. Brother González, a contemporary of Claver, reported that the Jesuit would offer spiritual rewards or would say masses in the honor of those who would first bring him the news. As such, governors and other colonial officials would also clamor to tell Claver the news "to obtain such a signal reward because of his reputation for holiness."[33]

Historian Maria Cristina Navarrete indicates that with the arrival of a slave ship central Cartagena would take on an unusual bustle with the atmosphere of a fair as countless people came to witness the scene, "some brought by their greed, others curiosity, and some out of compassion."[34] Upon entering Cartagena's port, slave ship inspectors, Inquisition officials, and colonial administrators would board the ships to assess the slaves and cargo. Alongside them, Jesuit missionaries with teams of multilingual African translators would similarly meet the ships

[32] Ibid.
[33] Ángel Valtierra, *Peter Claver, Saint of the Slaves* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1960), 104.
[34] María Cristina Navarrete, *Historia Social del Negro en la Colonia Cartagena, siglo XVII* (Santiago de Cali [Colombia]: Universidad del Valle, 1995), 76. Translation by author.

at the dock and board them if necessary to begin the work of examining the recently arrived Africans to determine the status of their christianization. Many of the Africans arriving to the Americas were malnourished and riddled with disease as a result of the physically brutal and dehumanizing Middle Passage. The ultimate concern for Sandoval and his companions was the salvation of their souls before disease, death, or the precarious future of chattel slavery claimed them.

Sandoval's writings reflect a vivid and keen awareness of the harsh realities of the transatlantic voyage and the bleak prospects that awaited those who survived the journey. He estimated that nearly a third of the Africans compelled to endure the Middle Passage died before arriving.[35] Given the paucity of evidence on slave mortality rates for transatlantic passages in the early seventeenth century, it is hard to verify Sandoval's estimate. Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin cite historical records that suggest that the mortality rate for slave ships arriving to Cartagena in the period was likely 10 to 15 percent for ships originating in Upper Guinea and slightly higher for ships from Angola.[36] Though Sandoval's estimate was likely inflated, there is no question that the transatlantic passage claimed a high percentage of the lives of Africans subjected to its horrors.

Despite Sandoval's sustained confidence and belief in the ultimate merit of Spain's Christian imperial project, he was nevertheless aware of the current landscape of the New World slave environment and the precarious fate that awaited those who boarded ships in African ports

[35] Sandoval, *Tratado sobre la esclavitud*, 152, 397.

[36] For further analysis of mortality rates in the Portuguese trade to the Spanish Americas in the early seventeenth century see Linda A. Newson and Susie Minchin, *From Capture to Sale: The Portuguese Slave Trade to Spanish South America In the Early Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 109-111. See also, Newson and Minchin, "Slave Mortality and African Origins: A View from Cartagena, Colombia, in the Early Seventeenth Century," *Slavery & Abolition* 25, no. 3 (2004): 18-43.

destined for slavery in the Americas—"If slaves set sail without receiving baptism and the faith, they [would] probably stay that way," he reflected.[37] As scholars have noted however, despite being a staunch defender of the amelioration of slavery as currently practiced in the Americas, Sandoval never outright rejected the institution of slavery in and of itself. Like many ordained religious of his time, Sandoval was familiar with centuries of theological tradition in which slavery was a biblically sanctioned practice that had well-established theological and secular precedent. Therefore, instead of denouncing or seeking to abolish the slave trade, Sandoval largely saw his vocation as an architect of a mission system and broader colonial environment that would bring the Spanish colonial project and the institution of Atlantic World slavery in full alignment with Catholic doctrine and the mission of the spread of the Christian faith to all the peoples of the world. "Bread must be rolled before it is baked," he commented, "and the slave ships are the paddles for placing this bread into the oven of the church."[38]

Historian Enriqueta Vila Vilar estimates that between 1595 and 1640, a period that overlapped with much of Sandoval and Claver's ministry, approximately 135,000 enslaved Africans entered the Spanish Americas through the port of Cartagena de Indias.[39] Sandoval believed his mission to be the surest hope that those thousands of souls of enslaved Africans would be won for the Catholic faith. Over the course of several decades, Sandoval and his apprentice Pedro Claver did in fact evangelize and baptize thousands of enslaved Africans over the course of their missionary practice.[40] As such, the instructions in faith and efforts toward

[37] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery*, 73.
[38] Ibid.
[39] As cited in Olsen, *Slavery and Salvation,*14-15.
[40] During Claver's beatification process many of his contemporaries referenced his assertion that he had baptized 300,000 Africans during his ministry. Though impossible to verify, demographic data has led historians to believe that figure is likely inflated given the records for arrivals of enslaved Africans during the period.

evangelization that Sandoval and Claver provided often served as the first initiation that enslaved Africans received into the religious and social world of the colonial Americas.

Given what Sandoval had come to learn about the carelessness and inconsistency of the standard baptisms taking place in African ports, an extensive process of examination became an elemental part of his missionary strategy both for newly arrived Africans *and* longtime enslaved African residents of the city—even those who had Christian names and appeared to have been effectively christianized. His method required an extensive degree of vigilance, bordering on surveillance, to compensate for the mayhem of new slave arrivals and the momentum of the slave trade. Some Africans arriving to the port would be purchased by residents of Cartagena or the surrounding hinterlands, but the vast majority were destined for other locations throughout South America. Ship captains and slave traders, anxious to receive their profits, would try to complete the sales as soon as possible upon arriving in the Americas. The turnaround time from arrival to sale could happen in as little as two weeks, which added a sense of urgency for the Jesuits. "If black slaves who arrive in this port are sold without holy baptism, they run the clear risk of never being baptized for their entire lives," Sandoval cautioned.[41]

Due to the poor conditions in the slave holding warehouses on both sides of the Atlantic and on the slave ship itself, a considerable number of the remaining slaves that had survived the Middle Passage arrived to the Americas with serious illnesses or on the brink of death. Understanding the severity of the situation, Sandoval indicated that as soon as the ships arrived missionaries should meet them at the port, determine the number of slaves, the region of provenance, the nationalities of the enslaved, and how many were ill. While slave traders and merchants aboard the slave ships and in the designated slave warehouses disregarded the corpses

[41] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery*, 150.

of dead Africans and ignored the diseased and sickly bodies "as if they were beasts," Sandoval and Claver would conversely seek out Africans on the verge of death or would cover the often naked bodies of the deceased to give them some sense of decency in death.[42] Once on the ships, the Jesuits, armed with water and citrus fruits to fight prevalent outbreaks of scurvy, would seek to do what they could to "save" the bodies and souls of Africans. Africans that were dangerously ill or seemed to be dying were prioritized. They would receive a brief, summarized version of the doctrine after which missionaries could administer baptism and Last Rites. If any slaves had already been taken from the ship, the missionary would note how many and investigate where they were taken. Most often, newly arrived enslaved Africans would be unloaded quickly and taken to the holding pens, barracks, and warehouses where preparations would begin for their auction and sale. In one of the only documents in which Claver wrote directly in 1617, he described the process of tending to the recently arrived slaves:

> Yesterday[…] there came to land a great ship laden with negroes from the Rivers. We went there laden with two baskets of oranges, lemons and tobacco. We entered their house which seemed like another Guinea, piles of them on all sides; we made our way through till we reached the sick of whom there were a great number lying on the ground, which, as it was damp and liable to flooding was leveled up with sharp-edged pieces of brick and tiles, and this was their bed, where they lay naked without a stitch of clothing. We threw off our cloaks and went to fetch planks from another store-room and we laid a floor there and carried the sick in our arms, pushing our way through the rest. We collected the sick in two circles, my companion taking over one and I the other.[43]

Through an interrogation of the Africans and the crew of the ship, missionaries would also assess the procedures for baptism that the slaves had undergone before departing in Africa. An extensive questioning process sought to ascertain things like whether or not a baptism had been performed at all prior to departure; if water had actually touched the bodies of each person

[42] Ibid., 109.
[43] De Andrade, *Vida de San Pedro Claver,* 54. As quoted in Valtierra, *Peter Claver,* 110.

(not just their hair); if instruction in the faith had occurred prior to the baptism; if interpreters had been utilized in the process; if so, if each individual had understood and heard what had been taught "even roughly or crudely, conforming to their capacity";[44] if all had given their consent to receive the sacrament; and if that consent was given freely or was coerced.

Missionaries divided enslaved Africans into groups based on the results of these examinations and proceeded to repeat these questions many times and in many different forms to ensure full comprehension and "free will" in the christianization process. These priests would then re-baptize conditionally those whose initial baptism did not fully comply with all of the requirements and would provide instruction to prepare them for additional sacraments. The missionaries and interpreters identified the Africans who had not been baptized or instructed in the faith at all and placed them in small groups of around ten according to nation and language for instruction and preparation for baptism. Because much of the instruction occurred orally, Sandoval identified translators to facilitate instruction in the native language of the catechumens when possible. He would ensure that the evangelizers individually assessed each convert as a core aspect of his missionary practice. They repeatedly questioned each of the Africans to evaluate their understanding and comprehension. After baptism, slaves received a Christian name and a medal (*medalla de estanfo*) to wear around their neck to indicate that they had been subject to this more rigorous and thorough evangelization process.

According to Sandoval's account, missionaries following his instructions relayed an attenuated form of Christian doctrine to enslaved Africans in order to prepare them for baptism. For example, priests explained the following elements of the Christian faith: there is one God, creator of all things; God manifests in the three persons of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and

[44] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery*, 162.

Holy Spirit; Jesus Christ, as God's son, was born of a virgin, and came to save those that are baptized and follow his law; sin is a violation of the laws of the Christian God; the ritual of baptism and washing with holy water indicates those willingly choosing to be Christian; souls do not die; and upon death, souls go either to heaven or hell—to eternal reward or eternal punishment—based on earthly behavior. André Sacabuche, an enslaved translator that worked closely with Claver indicated that in Claver's missionary practice, priests additionally taught Africans to cross themselves and to say the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Nicene Creed in their native languages, and they relayed the story and mysteries of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, along with the general structure and hierarchy of the Catholic Church and the Ten Commandments.[45]

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"Why do we think that a black person should understand our language?"

African translators were central to Claver and Sandoval's missionary system, and finding a way to approach this work was an ongoing problem. Establishing a philosophy and strategy for how Christian theological concepts ought to be translated into native languages was a longstanding question and challenge for religious orders and secular clergy attempting to convert new populations to the faith in the Americas and in Africa.[46] Sandoval himself identified over

[45] See the Testimony of André Sacabuche in *El proceso de beatificación y canonización de San Pedro Claver* (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javerina: Universidad Católica del Táchira, 2002).

[46] "Secular clergy" is the designation given to indicate the members of the traditional Catholic Church hierarchy—such as the priests and bishops—in contrast to the members of the religious orders—such as Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits. This distinction was especially critical in the Iberian Americas due to the fact that the papacy granted members of the religious orders special privileges to engage in duties, such as the administration of sacraments, that were traditionally the exclusive purview of secular clergy given the magnitude of the missionary project to non-Christian populations.

seventy African languages that were spoken among the enslaved community of Cartagena. With the sheer volume of languages and potential catechumens, it was impossible to develop a singular method or establish uniformity in the translation strategies for each language. And it is evident throughout his descriptions that, as much as Sandoval valued developing a standard approach to baptism and evangelization, too many factors affected the translation process, making it impossible to fully regulate. Despite the Jesuits' intensive efforts, it remained a process of trial and error based on the given circumstances.

European Christians in general had to wrestle with a number of pressing questions. Among them were: Should native peoples be taught European languages? Should missionaries learn native languages? Could essential Christian concepts find accurate (or even adequate) cognates in native languages without transferring the meanings these native words inevitably held as part of another linguistic and cosmological system? Many missionaries did their best to learn the languages and cosmologies of local peoples and sought to identify reasonable translations to convey the heart of the Christian doctrine into the languages of their catechumens. For example, John Thornton reveals that Capuchin missionaries to Allada allowed the Fon term for god, "Vodu," to be used to identify the Christian God in their catechism. Similarly, the Kikongo term for their highest deity, "Nzambi a Mpungu," became the term to identify the Christian God in Central Africa, and Catholic priests accepted the use of the local Kikongo term for a spirit medium or priest, "nganga," to identify themselves.[47]

Conversely, many other missionaries in Africa and the Americas argued that using indigenous words in the evangelization process as a means of relaying important Christian

[47] John Thornton, "On the Trail of Voodoo: African Christianity in Africa and the Americas," *The Americas* 44, no. 3 (1988): 267.

concepts such as “heaven” and “hell,” “good” and “evil,” or “god” and the “devil” fundamentally distorted the Christian teachings. Scholarship by Louise Burkhart has suggested that missionary strategies among Nahua populations in Central Mexico strategies did often result in an “Indian Christianity” that allowed much of the Nahua cosmological framing to stay intact. Larissa Brewer-Garcia and John Thornton’s work similarly suggests that for African subjects of missionary projects on both sides of the Atlantic these processes of mediation allowed for distinctly African forms of Christianity to emerge. As a result, some missionaries chose instead to insert European terms and concepts such as the Spanish word “*Dios”* for the Christian God, to avoid this retention of cultural and cosmological baggage that resulted from repurposing the names and identifiers of deities in indigenous languages. Such a strategy was not foolproof however, because it then became more difficult to ensure that the potential converts comprehended the full meaning of a newly introduced term that had no precedent or relation to their linguistic, cultural, or cosmological systems. Without a well-established point of reference, the newly introduced terms would lack both significance and authority for the catechumens.

In fact, Augustinian, Franciscan, and Dominican missionaries with active evangelization projects to indigenous populations in Santa Fe de Bogotá, another region of the Spanish New Kingdom of Granada during the same period that Sandoval and Claver labored in Cartagena, struggled with these very questions. As J. Michael Francis demonstrates, the central debate in one case was whether or not missionaries should learn and develop a catechism in the indigenous Chibcha language or encourage their catechumens to learn Spanish. Some missionaries took the firm stance that Chibcha dialects were “extremely poor in vocabulary, lacking such terms as Christ, charity, grace, contrition, penance, etc.” Desiring “true conversion,” which would require a thorough understanding of these essential concepts and mysteries of the faith, Jesuit

missionaries subsequently translated essential prayers and a brief catechism into the Chibcha language, despite its limitations. After much debate and controversy, in 1606 the governor of New Granada, Don Juan de Borja, issued a proclamation that established the accuracy of the Jesuit translations. Local authorities determined that the translation "carried the same meaning as the original Spanish clauses that the theologians spoke, in the best possible way in such a barbarous and inadequate language as is that of the said Indians."[48]

These concerns over various semiotic ideologies and strategies produced extensive debates throughout the colonial Atlantic World. Different religious orders and missionaries came down on alternate sides of the debate. In some cases, missionaries addressed those questions in the context of a singular mission environment that was therefore more contained linguistically. Even regions where multiple indigenous languages were spoken in certain regions of the Americas, there could be a *lingua franca* that was shared that would become the common language for missionary translation. More sustained *reducciones*, *aldeias*, and mission villages constructed for indigenous communities also ensured that missionaries had access to the new converts for extended periods of time to allow for a longer-term christianization process. The situation in Cartagena was noteworthy then, not only because of the sheer numbers of enslaved Africans arriving and the dizzying variety of languages spoken, but also because of the movement and temporality that defined the missionary experience there. Sandoval, Claver, and their team of Jesuits had a brief window within which to find an effective means of communicating and "translating" the Christian faith to hundreds of slaves at a time in a matter of

[48] J. Michael Francis, "Language and 'True Conversion' to the Holy Faith: A Document from the Archivium Romanum Societatis Iesu, Rome Italy," *The Americas* 62, no. 3 (2006): 445-453.

days and weeks before the vast majority would be transferred and sold far beyond the reach of the Cartagena Jesuits.

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"Do not drown them in mysteries they do not understand"

While separating Africans by nation and language went a long way to assisting in their comprehension and acquisition of the tenets of Christianity, Sandoval admitted that challenges of diminished black capacity remained an obstacle of the missionary effort. He encouraged his fellow missionaries and translators "to say no more than absolutely necessary." Anything beyond the most basic of catechization would do more harm than good, in his estimation. "The slaves are like invalids with no appetite for food, who must be given something simple and nutritious," he explained. Though he always defended the ultimate capacity of Africans to comprehend enough to allow for baptism to occur, he nevertheless believed that "[Africans] can only comprehend the most basic points, and more details only bother or embarrass them because they don't understand them." Rather than incorporating "elaborate rhetoric," "subtle arguments," or "intricate ideas," Sandoval recommended short, simple instructions that avoided "wordiness" and any "verbal ornamentation or elegance." That was the only way to "preach to vulgar people," he reasoned. "You do not drown them in mysteries that they do not understand."[49]

Though Sandoval relied heavily on the language skills of multilingual enslaved Africans, he similarly found many of their capacities to be lacking. Given that, Sandoval recommended extensive repetition for the interpreters as well, and established an examination process to test the translator as he or she served as the mediator for the African catechumen. A priest should question the interpreter about the elements of Christian doctrine, requiring him or her to describe

[49] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery*, 91.

them to the missionary. Once the missionary was satisfied, he should then instruct the translator to parrot exactly what had been said to the enslaved catechumen in his or her own language. Though arduous, Sandoval recommended proceeding with that process "patiently" and "gently" to ensure successful evangelization through a translator.[50]

For his own part, Claver was known to speak "the language of Angola," which was likely Kikongo or Kimbundu. Given his language skills, he served as a translator and confessor to accused Africans that testified before the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Cartagena.[51] Claver was also known to have acquired a team of dedicated African interpreters, owned by the local Jesuit college, to assist with his ministry. These translators showed themselves to have what Claver interpreted as exceptional spiritual as well as linguistic capacities, and there is some evidence that, at times, these established translators had more autonomy in their evangelization efforts than those employed by Sandoval.[52] The reports contained in the Annual Letters of the Jesuit Order lauded the accomplishments and abilities of this team of "almost eighteen" African interpreters. In the report to the Jesuit superiors, these letters noted the talented interpreters were taken "from those uncivilized and barbarous races and prepar[ed] to serve and help us to catechize, teach and convert their comrades." The letters further reported these translators'

[50] Ibid., 104.

[51] Jane Landers, "The African Landscape of Seventeenth-Century Cartagena and Its Hinterlands," in Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury. *The Black Urban Atlantic In the Age of the Slave Trade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 150.

[52] Landers reports that Claver's interpreters included "Andrés Sacabuche (Angola), Ignacio Alvanil (Angola), Alfonso Angola, José Monzolo (Congo), Francisco Yolofo (Wolof), Manuel Viáfara, Domingo y Diego Folupo, Ignacio Soso (Zape), Lorenzo Zape, Antonio Balanta, Francisco and Domingo Bran, and the impressive Calepino," who was known to speak 11 languages. See Landers, "The African Landscape of Seventeenth-Century Cartagena and Its Hinterlands."

noteworthy language skills, citing that many knew three to four languages, others six to eight, while one particularly gifted African interpreter spoke eleven languages.[53]

Nevertheless, both Sandoval and Claver emphasized that, even with the execution of all of these methods and the assistance of the African translators, the mission to enslaved Africans was taxing labor. Instructing Africans in the Christian faith using a method that met his own standards for proper evangelization and catechization to prepare them for baptism required "much exhausting work, effort, and sweat."[54] Because Africans could not "understand[...] as quickly as Spaniards do," more time and effort had to be allotted for their christianization in even the basic elements of the faith.[55] He described facing "many challenges and annoyances" due primarily to the diminished capacities of the Africans.[56] His assessment of the capacities that Spaniards had for Christianity as compared to those from African nations remained a latent element of Sandoval's missionary efforts. He reminded his readers, "We do not assume [Africans] are Christians with a Spanish level of education but merely that they know enough to receive a decent baptism."[57] Defending the value of the efforts to christianize African populations despite the perceived difficulties, Sandoval spoke to the heart of the debate of whether or not Africans had the spiritual, intellectual, and moral capacities to be Christians at all. An evaluation of their ability to "reason" was an essential element of that question. He referenced the conclusions of Christian scholars, who "believe[d] that there are many kinds of simpletons: some who utterly lack the use of reason and others that are somewhat cogent." If an

[53] Hazañero, Valtierra, *Letras Annuas de la Provincia del Nuevo Reino de Granada desde el año 1638 hasta el año 1643.* As quoted in Valtierra, *Peter Claver,* 101.
[54] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery,* 119.
[55] Ibid., 110.
[56] Ibid, 95.
[57] Ibid., 141.

individual or group was deemed to possess the use of reason to any degree, then they could become Christian and should receive the Eucharist. Sandoval thus compared African spiritual and intellectual abilities to those that the Spanish "think of as fools or dunces," but "[those] people always take communion," he reasoned, "so the blacks must also."[58]

While the elaborate system of examination and small group catechization using the Jesuit owned translators appears to have met Sandoval's standards for effective christianization for a segment of the arriving African population, his account also suggests that the realities of the colonial environment still left a large portion of enslaved Africans without effective catechization, meaning that the basics of the faith had not been translated in a form that he could reasonably believe resulted in the requisite level of comprehension. He described, for example, encountering Africans who spoke rare languages. In those cases, it was necessary to use multiple translators to find a means of communicating effectively.

In such cases, Sandoval might spend many exhausting days searching for an appropriate translator, which led to his innovation of keeping a notebook with a list that included each interpreter, the name of their owner, where to find them, and the languages they spoke.[59] At other times, he would spend several days and would require several translators to effectively communicate with one potential convert. For example, he related the following experience:

> One day I entered the house of an honorable man. I saw a very old and sick black woman working the house as if she were a healthy young girl. I wanted to question her to see if she was a Christian. I heard that she was not Christian, because it was too hard to teach her. They said she was a *bozal* and did not understand anything, so no one bothered to teach her about Christianity. When I spoke to her, I could tell from her words that she was not as crazy as people said, although I had to teach her the catechism using an interpreter who spoke her own language. For three days, I

[58] Ibid., 157.
[59] Ibid., 103.

> asked her questions and taught her the catechism, using several different interpreters. After this I knew she was not Christian, so I baptized her.[60]

Evidently the evangelization process, even with the use of African interpreters, was far from seamless. Larissa Brewer-Garcia has indicated that this process that relied heavily on the use of other Africans as mediators reveals that Africans in the Spanish colonial environment had a much more influential role in molding and shaping the character of Catholic Christianity than has previously been acknowledged.[61] Jesuits like Sandoval and Claver, despite their extensive efforts, could not establish a foolproof mechanism for maintaining control over the meanings communicated throughout the conversion process.

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"But they still learn something of God": Black Colonial Christianity

Throughout his writings, Sandoval demonstrated a consistent awareness of the challenges to establishing an effective missionary project to enslaved Africans in Cartagena. In addition to what he and others deemed to be differentials in black spiritual capacity, as well as the extensive language barriers, Sandoval recognized that the circumstances of enslavement and the contingencies of the colonial system presented further obstacles missionaries must account for and overcome. Sandoval had a sober understanding of the colonial environment of which he and his enslaved catechumens were a part. Throughout *De Instauranda,* he described in detail the sadness that enslaved Africans expressed over leaving their homeland and being separated from their kin. He recounted stories of the pain they suffered from illness, poor living conditions, and the cruelty of masters and slave traders. And he acknowledged the humiliating circumstances and brutal conditions associated with nearly every element of the slave experience.

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[60] Ibid., 74.

[61] Larissa Brewer-Garcia, "Beyond Babel: Translations of blackness in colonial Peru and New Granada," (doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2013).

Nevertheless, one of the most defining elements of Sandoval's evangelization system involved reference to these same material realities of enslaved Africans as a means to "translate" fundamental Christian concepts. He identified connections between the understanding of the Christian faith that he sought to communicate to his catechumens and specific elements of the colonial *environment, experiences,* and *station* of enslaved peoples in the New World in order to facilitate their understanding of Christianity. In doing so, Sandoval and those who followed his methods took the most demeaning elements of life in the colonial Spanish Americas for Africans – the hierarchy of the colonial environment, the master-slave relationship, and the violence and pain associated with the slave experience—and infused them with theological meaning throughout the evangelization process.

For example, during one particularly challenging encounter, Sandoval reported having difficulty making inroads in the evangelization of a captive African:

> Once I could not, no matter how hard I tried, learn anything about one man's baptism, even after pleading with him and giving him presents. Then I saw him staring at a jug of water, and I asked him if he wanted a drink. He said yes and then drank insatiably. When he was satisfied, he stood up in a happier mood. He spoke and answered my questions, so then I could baptize him.[62]

From that experience Sandoval developed a new method that he could use regularly in his missionary endeavors. While catechizing, he would ask the catechumen to recall the "nice, sweet, fresh water" that they drank "when[…] parched with thirst"—typically in the immediate aftermath of the Middle Passage when their hunger and dehydration had been most severe. Encouraging the potential convert to inhabit those feelings and memories, he would explain to them, "[h]owever happy your body felt to receive that water, your soul will be much happier

[62] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery,* 128.

when your head is washed with the holy water and when I tell you about God and heaven."[63] This moment of extreme dehydration and temporary satiation of thirst for an African potential convert became for Sandoval the ideal tool to symbolize the transformation that would occur through baptism. Sandoval linked the material reality of the Middle Passage, enslavement, and colonization explicitly to the processes and concepts of the Christian faith in order to facilitate understanding, comprehension, and translation of the Christian religion to Africans.

At another point in the text, Sandoval reflected on this correlation more specifically noting, "They are very thirsty when they leave the slave ships. It seems like their insides have been burned by the salt water. They are forced to drink salt water because their masters forget to give them fresh water, and they are afraid to ask for it, so they are left to die of thirst." With the captives in their presence, in many cases "literally dying of thirst," Sandoval and Claver spiritually capitalized on their pain and discomfort with the aim of emphasizing how their experience paralleled the desired transformation as they entered the Christian fold. [64] Claver made similar connections for his catechumens to drive home the meaning of the baptismal waters and to guide them toward the feelings of relief that should accompany the sacrament. He would instruct parched slaves, "Tell me, my child, do you not remember the great pleasure your body felt when it received that jug of water[?]… Well, listen, just as your body was happy because of that water, there will be much more and even greater happiness in which you have there inside your flesh, when they wash your head with the water I am telling you about[…] to take away your sins."[65]

[63] Ibid., 129.
[64] Ibid., 96.
[65] As cited in Grimes, *Fugitive Saints*, 21.

In an attempt to convey the significance of Christian conversion, and what it ought to mean for Africans to leave behind their old belief systems to become children of the Christian God, Sandoval referenced another key event of Atlantic World slavery that would have held strong and painful memories for the enslaved catechumens. Slaves were regularly branded with a sign or symbol that indicated the master that they belonged to. Sandoval determined that an explicit comparison to this branding process would be most effective for conveying this theological concept. In the same way that enslaved Africans received a brand as a "mark and sign of their master," so too the baptismal waters made their souls "white and washed clean of sin" and the identified them "as children of God."[66] Just as slaves in the Spanish Americas were encouraged to honor, obey, and show sentiments of gratitude and love for their masters, Sandoval considered this an apt metaphor for conceptualizing their relationship with the Christian God.

The master-slave relationship proved to be one of the foundational frames of reference that Sandoval gave for conveying to enslaved Africans how they ought to understand and relate to the God of the Christian faith. He used that relationship as one of the central pedagogical frameworks to move African catechumens toward the requisite affective state to prepare them for the sacrament of confession as well. Through the christianization process, Sandoval sought to teach Africans to identify their sins and express proper remorse and contrition in order to have a priest or other religious authority absolve them of their sins. He expressed exasperation that many of the Africans did not understand the concept of the sacrament of confession. Missionaries "could say something a dozen or more times without them understanding it." The confessor would have to "prompt and question them very carefully" to detect any behaviors that

[66] Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery*, 136.

were deemed sinful. In addition to identifying sins, Christian doctrine considered the affective experience of the confessing Christian to be a critical component for sacrament to be administered effectively. When engaging in the sacrament, a Christian should *feel* the emotional experience of regret and contrition for the absolution of sins to occur. Eliciting the proper emotions from slaves proved to be a difficult task, and Sandoval reported that often, "they show no reaction, no sadness or repentance, no matter what we say to them."[67]

As a result, Sandoval took an alternate pedagogical approach to teaching the process of confession to Africans and encouraging them to inhabit an emotional state of regret for their sins. He constructed a metaphor as a conceptual bridge for enslaved Africans to come to understand the relationship they should have with God in confession through the lens of their relationship with their masters.

> Because these people understand very little, it is difficult for them to make the act of contrition for their sins, which is necessary before we can administer the sacraments to them[…] They might understand the idea of pain and anger if they compare it to doing something evil to their masters who become angry with them and punish them frequently. If they ask humbly to be pardoned for their sins, their masters do not punish them but pardon them and ask them to improve themselves. God also might want to punish them for their sins, throw them in the fire of hell and lash them, but if they ask pardon and promise to improve, he will pardon them like their masters do[…][68]

By employing this method, Sandoval recognized that slaves would understand the concept of *sin* and *wrongdoing* by relating the concept to the wrath and punishments they received at the hands of their masters. Not only would they comprehend the connection, but Sandoval found, likely through trial and error, that making this comparison simultaneously had the effect of triggering the *emotional response* of regret, remorse, or at least fear, that they felt when awaiting

[67] Ibid., 95.
[68] Ibid., 139-140.

punishment for behaviors that went against the will of their masters. This emotional reaction was precisely the precondition for confession that Sandoval strived to evoke from his catechumens for him to feel confident in administering the sacrament of baptism. Even if the slaves did not express full *contrition*, historian Nicole Von Germeten relates that since the Council of Trent, Catholic leaders and theologians had established that "regretting sins out of fear of punishment," otherwise known as "imperfect contrition," had been deemed adequate "to allow for an effective confession and absolution."[69] Using this method that employed the analogy between a punishing God and punishing slave master, Sandoval tried to ensure that his catechumens had fulfilled the necessary conditions of at least "imperfect contrition" in order for a valid confession to take place.

With his goal of ensuring that all elements of Catholic doctrine and theological tradition were met before administering the sacraments of baptism and confession to enslaved Africans, these methods and the responses they elicited from his catechumens allowed Sandoval to identify visible embodied and emotional cues that led him to believe that comprehension and the requisite emotions had been elicited such that African souls were being saved. However, those same methods of instructing Africans in the Christian faith also sent a concrete message to the enslaved that the position in the spiritual universe they were being compelled to enter closely mirrored that of their social position in colonial society. They implied that there was a fundamental parallel between the relationship of masters and slaves in the earthly social order and the relationship enslaved Africans should expect to have with God in the heavenly realm. The very same rhetoric that was intended to transition slaves to a Christian religious world also

[69] See Sandoval, *Treatise on Slavery*, 142, footnote 41.

inherently required them to accept a socio-political position of inferiority in order to accept the religious doctrine presented.

Not only were enslaved Africans subject to an intensive and likely disorienting process of evangelization amidst the tragedies and trials of the Middle Passage, but the most violent and dehumanizing aspects of that experience then became the very tools and concepts missionaries used to translate, communicate, and offer the foundation for an understanding of the new belief system and the spiritual and social community enslaved Africans were entering into. To the extent that these theological meanings did in fact translate (either in the moment or subsequently), an enslaved Africans' understandings about the nature of the Christian God, the general orientation and affective connection they should have with the new deity, what baptism symbolized, their place in this new religious-social system, and their affective and embodied experience in the new religious community would have been heavily influenced by these evangelization methods, particularly the discursive strategies employed and the content and structure of the ritual activity. The effect of this approach was that Sandoval, Claver, and the other Jesuits involved in missionizing in Cartagena were the first line of molding, shaping, and establishing a foundation for a fundamentally colonial Catholic Christian system in which clear hierarchies of spiritual capacity and spiritual station were theological and religious inevitabilities. Specifically, they elaborated a particular black Christian subjectivity that was inextricably linked to Africans' status as enslaved subjects. The emotions, experiences, and challenges of the slave experience became the very metaphorical and tangible pathways Africans were encouraged to follow in order to understand their new faith.

The enslaved Africans whose fate brought them to Cartagena de Indias in the early seventeenth century were baptized en masse on slave ships in Africa, and then were re-baptized

immediately upon their arrival to Cartagena. The context likely would have over-determined their understanding of their position within this new religious and cultural system. Their catechization and first encounter with the sacraments of the Christian religion occurred in the slave pens and barracks of Cartagena in the midst of extreme heat, hunger, thirst, exhaustion, disease, and death, and often took place while they remained in chains. Missionaries attempted to turn these into the "sacred sites" of the Christian religion for enslaved Africans. Their first experience with the new religion of their owners and colonizers sent the clear message, one that would come to define much of their experience in the New World, that the slave system and the religion of the Christian God were intimately intertwined.

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Conclusions

As Sandoval established the foundations of his missionary project to enslaved Africans, he had to determine what catechism for enslaved blacks should entail and how to overcome the perceived obstacles of Africans' spiritual nature and the colonial environment that he identified. He particularly sought to construct a catechism that would be effectively suited to his understanding of the diminished spiritual capacities of Africans, both those that stemmed from a seemingly innate spiritual difference and those that were a product of the challenging circumstances presented by the colonial context and the slave system. After extensive trial and error, Sandoval produced an elaborate method of catechization and strategy of christianization that was particularly tailored to the environment and situation of enslaved Africans, so much so that it relied on colonial hierarchies and the imagery of enslavement as the very pedagogical tools that would transition African slaves into new roles and subjectivities as members of the Catholic Christian community in a particular, divinely ordained subordinate role.

This chapter has examined the foundational methods that Sandoval and Claver employed as the leading missionaries on the front lines of the evangelization project for enslaved Africans in the Spanish Americas. It reflected the reality that even the missionaries most committed to the christianization of enslaved Africans harbored deep-seated beliefs about Africans' spiritual deficiencies and understood them to be spiritually distinct from European Christians in critical ways. Those beliefs directly influenced their evangelization *practice.* The methods that Sandoval and Claver advocated and utilized were founded upon their belief that any effective christianization of African slaves would have to be tailored to their limited capacities. It is not entirely clear whether Sandoval understood black spiritual incapacity to be innate, immutable, and inheritable or merely a product of environment and circumstance—namely the particular role and station enslaved Africans held in the broader imperial project. In different moments in *De Instauranda*, Sandoval acknowledges both realities and possibilities. In either case, his understanding of black spiritual incapacity as channeled through his evangelization system had profoundly racializing effects.

Though Sandoval recognized the brutalities and violence of the current slave system as practiced throughout the Iberian Atlantic and very tangibly in Cartagena de Indias, he never outright decried it. Instead, he and Claver drew from the most agonizing dimensions of the African slave experience for the very pedagogical tools, images, and frameworks through which to translate the Christian experience to African catechumens. In doing so, Sandoval and Claver were at the leading edge of constructing a distinctly black colonial Christian experience, theology, and subjectivity that was fundamentally bound up with their experiences and subjectivity as enslaved persons.

Sandoval's influence spread throughout the Iberian Catholic Atlantic. Through networks of letter writing, Jesuits and secular clergy in Spain, regions of Africa, and South America were aware of his efforts with African slaves, referenced his strategies, and sought to employ them in their own missions. *De Instauranda,* published first in Seville in 1627, influenced ecclesiastical and colonial policies on both sides of the Spanish Atlantic. A 1685 Spanish council convened on the question of the legitimacy of the slave trade cited Sandoval's work as part of its authorization of the legitimacy of the transatlantic slave trade.[70] However, whether or not the strategies that the Cartagena Jesuits employed were implemented widely, the fact remains that from 1610 into the early 1650s, Sandoval, Claver, and their team of missionaries and interpreters met nearly every slave ship that arrived to the docks of Cartagena de Indias, the primary port of entry for slave ships to the Spanish Americas. The thousands of enslaved Africans that entered Cartagena in the first half of the seventeenth century, regardless of their final destination in the Spanish Americas, whether they became urban slaves, domestic slaves, plantation slaves, worked on a sugar plantation or in the mines, would have experienced this first phase of encounter with the religious and social world of the Spanish colonial Americas through Sandoval and Claver's Jesuit evangelization project.

Sandoval and Claver's methods set the stage for the colonial Christianity that enslaved Africans in Cartagena and other Spanish American territories would face. The Jesuits utilized these methods, drawing from the material worlds and experiences of the Middle Passage and enslavement, not only as a last resort strategy of translation when other forms of communication

[70] Vincent P. Franklin, "Alonso de Sandoval and the Jesuit Conception of the Negro," *The Journal of Negro History* 58, no. 3 (1973): 349-360. See also Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1930), Vol. I, 125-126.

and translation fell short, but also because it reflected a broader belief of the period that servitude and enslavement were the divinely ordained fate for Africans brought to the New World.

Building upon biblical sources and Christian tradition, many religious authorities and theologians of the early modern period came to see Africans as inhabiting a particular theological identity within Christianity. Enslavement in the earthly realm was seen as a theological vocation for Africans that the Christian God had ordained as an essential experience along their path to redemption and eternal salvation.

Portugal "has for its particular and special end, the propagation and extension of the Catholic faith in heathen lands, for which purpose God raised and founded it. And the more that Portugal acts in keeping with this end, the more sure and certain is its preservation; and the more it diverges therefrom, the more doubtful and dangerous is its future." - Antônio Vieira

"I cannot accept the idea that God, who created these people as much in His own image as He did the rest of us, would have predestined them for two hells, one in this life and another in the next. But when today I see them so devout and festive before the altars of Our Lady of the Rosary, all brothers together and the children of the same Lady. I am convinced beyond any doubt that the captivity of the first transmigration is ordained by her compassion so that they may be granted freedom in the second." – Antônio Vieira

<< Chapter 3 >>
Slavery and the Atlantic World Economy of Salvation: Antonio Vieira in Seventeenth Century Bahia

Introduction

Nearing the end of his life, the Portuguese Jesuit Antônio Vieira returned to the Recôncavo region of Bahia to deliver a final sermon to a group of enslaved Africans and their masters nearby a local *engenho*. The *engenhos* of colonial Brazil were complexes of sugar plantations and sugar mills that dominated the economy for much of the colonial period that were largely manned through enslaved African labor. This sermon followed at least two others over the course of Vieira's career that he specifically composed and delivered for the black religious brotherhoods of Our Lady of the Rosary in Brazil throughout Vieira's life and career.[1]

[1] The three extant sermons composed for Our Lady of the Rosary are part of a larger set of Vieira's sermons dedicated to the Virgin Mary and published as part of a series entitled "Mary Mystic Rose." Vieira himself was particularly devoted to the Virgin, as he attributed his own spiritual awakening as a Jesuit novitiate to her. For more on Vieira's revelation see João Lucio d'Azevedo, *História de António Vieira* (Lisboa: A.M. Teixeira, 1931), 1:12. Many of Vieira's sermons can be found in the original Portuguese in the series of his complete works edited by Rev. Padre Gonçalo Alves—Obras completas do padre Antônio Vieira. See António Vieira and Gonçalo Alves, *Sermões* (Porto: Lello & irmão, 1907). The three referenced sermons to the black brotherhood and their masters are included in these volumes as "Sermão Decimo Quarto," "Sermão Vigesimo," and "Sermão Vigesimo Setimo." Excerpts of "Sermão Vigesimo Setimo have been translated to English and are included in Robert E. Conrad, *Children of God's Fire*

The black brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary was one of many lay religious confraternities or *irmandades* that were the heart of lay religious life in the colony.[2] Christians of all races prioritized membership in the brotherhoods, though they were typically segregated with particular brotherhoods for *brancos* (whites), *pretos* (blacks), and *pardos* (mulattos).[3]

In Vieira's sermons to the masters and slaves of the *engenhos*, he adopted a particular pedagogical approach that would address both factions of his audience. He was adamant that the message of the gospel was applicable to all, but like other missionaries in the early Americas, he expressed doubts about the spiritual capacities of non-European Christians, suggesting that they may possess inherent spiritual deficiencies that affected their ability to fully grasp aspects of the Christian faith either intellectually or morally. He similarly expressed beliefs that Christianity needed to be presented to certain nations and populations strategically, utilizing methods that were particularly suited to their specific spiritual capacities, lived experiences, and even their

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 163 – 174. Translations of these sermons included here are my own unless otherwise indicated.

[2] Historian C.R. Boxer relates: "Early in the eighteenth century, Bahia had no less than thirty-one approved brotherhoods dedicated to the Virgin Mary alone. These were divided on a racial basis, six being reserved for Negroes and five for Mulattoes (pardos), the remainder being exclusively white confraternities constituted according to social position or to age. Some of the Brazilian white brotherhoods were so exclusive that their statutes contained a clause that any brother who married beneath him in class or colour should automatically forfeit his membership." See C.R. Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1415-1825* (London: Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Councils, 1957). For more on black brotherhoods see Elizabeth Kiddy, *Blacks of the Rosary: Memory and History in Minas Gerais, Brazil* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005); Mariza de Carvalho Soares, *People of Faith: Slavery and African Catholics in Eighteenth Century Rio de Janeiro* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011)*;* Patricia Mulvey, "Black Brothers and Sisters: Membership in the Black Lay Brotherhoods of Colonial Brazil," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 17, no. 2 (1980): 253-79; and Mieko Nishida, "From Ethnicity to Race and Gender: Transformations of Black Lay Sodalities in Salvador, Brazil," *Journal of Social History* 32, no. 2 (1998): 329 – 348.

[3] There were confraternities devoted to Our Lady of the Rosary for each group, however over time, popular understanding became that the Virgin was particularly connected to the African population, and black confraternities prioritized their devotion to her and to other specific saints, such as São Benedito.

divinely ordained station. At the outset of his sermon, Vieira expressed a word of caution, saying:

> I will try to say it so clearly that you [the enslaved black members of the congregation] will all understand me. But if this does not happen because the topic requires a greater *ability* than all of you can have, at least, as St. Augustine said in your own Africa, I will be satisfied if your masters and mistresses understand me; so that they may more slowly teach you *what for you and for them* is very important to know.[4]

In this case, he alluded to the possibility that the enslaved Africans may not have possessed the requisite intellectual capacities to comprehend his message and that their successful christianization would likely require a paternalistic relationship with their masters.

For the enslaved listeners, he outlined the theological foundation that accounted for "the condition of [their] servitude." Their condition or status was not foremost a matter of economic concern. He saw African enslavement as a deeply religious matter, but it was not simply an average state of religion, he argued. He instead believed that the condition of slavery that blacks inhabited in Brazil operated like a vocation and was in that way comparable to one of the most austere religious orders in Christianity.[5] In offering them instruction on what their enslavement consisted of and how they ought to behave in it, he hoped that they would accept their position such that they would not "make it worse."[6]

Rather than addressing the enslaved congregants exclusively or presenting one unified message for the entire congregation, throughout the sermon Vieira switched gears, directing particular points of his message alternately to masters and slaves. His rhetorical style underscored his belief that Portuguese Christians and African Christians—masters and slaves—

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[4] Antônio Vieira, "Sermão Vigesimo Setimo," 305. Emphasis added. As cited in Conrad, *Children of God's Fire*, 165.
[5] Vieira, "Sermão Vigesimo Setimo," 325.
[6] Ibid., 305.

had distinct theological roles to fulfill, and that his message should be tailored accordingly. The slave masters, then, were not simply present to serve as conduits for the religious instruction of their slaves. They too received instruction regarding their own theological vocation. And according to Vieira, neither race was fully living up to the standards of pious behavior that their vocation required. For masters, Vieira sharply admonished their behavior throughout the sermon. He questioned the white congregants asking, "what theology could justify the inhumanity and brutality of the exorbitant punishments with which these same slaves are mistreated?" Even that word, "mistreated," he found to be inadequate. The blacks of the Recôncavo region were being "tyrannized" and "martyrized," he continued, putting his case more strongly.[7] With that claim Vieira harkened back to the very first sermon that he had delivered while still a Jesuit novitiate, which had similarly been for a congregation of slaves and masters decades earlier in 1633 on the feast of St. John the Evangelist. In that sermon, he had similarly referenced the potential "martyrdom" of enslaved Africans in Brazil:

> You slaves of the *engenho* are the imitators of Christ crucified because you suffer as he suffered. His cross was made of two timbers; yours in the *engenho* of three. […] Christ's passion took place partly in a sleepless night and partly in a restless day; so are your nights and days. Christ was naked and you are naked. Christ had nothing to eat and you are hungry; Christ was abused in every way and so are you. The irons, the shackles, the lash, the open wounds, the insults, of all there your imitation is composed. And if you have patience, you too will have the merit of martyrdom…[8]

He explicitly linked the concrete materials and circumstances of enslaved blacks in colonial Brazil to Christ and salvation history. This rhetorical strategy reflected Vieira's understanding

[7] Ibid., 333.
[8] Vieira, Sermão Decimo Quarto, 276. As cited in David Sweet, "Black Robes and 'Black Destiny'": Jesuit Views of African Slavery in 17th-Century Latin America," *Revista de Historia de América*, no. 86 (1978): 107.

that Africans and Portuguese Christians had distinct theological stations within Christendom and that the role they inhabited in the temporal realm mirrored their particular spiritual lot.

Elaborating the role of African Christians in the colonial system and the relationship of the different members of this heterogeneous flock was essential to Vieira's work. His writings are replete with attempts to work out the spiritual nature and status of the different populations of Brazil and to then identify the proper role they should play in the colonial environment as a result. According to his worldview, enslavement was a tool and station that God applied throughout Christian history to provide certain nations with a method of necessary spiritual refinement. In those cases, it was divinely ordained and spiritually redemptive. Rather than their enslavement signifying that God despised Africans, Vieira believed it reflected the fact that they were among God's *chosen* people, metaphorically linking African slaves with the Israelites. For Vieira, being chosen by God and being enslaved on earth were not discordant ideas. They coexisted quite seamlessly and were readily reconciled within this biblical tradition. Through his sermons, his primary goal was to communicate this broader theological foundation to enslaved Africans and their Portuguese masters such that each group could more fully inhabit their divinely ordained station in order to fulfill their roles and thus bring about corporate and ultimately universal redemption.

The primary flaw he saw in the colonial slave system as it was manifested in seventeenth century Brazil was the failure of white slave masters to understand and embrace their apostolic calling and thus to fully inhabit and establish a Christian slave and social order. Through his missionary endeavors, pastoral guidance, and impassioned oratory, in which he employed a distinct pedagogical style, vivid biblical images, and colonially rooted metaphors, Vieira aimed to remedy this disconnect between his theological vision and the material reality of the slave

system. Vieira plainly outlined the standard of pious behavior for Africans and the Portuguese within each of their divinely ordained vocations.

Though distinct, the messages to enslaved Africans and their white masters complemented one another, and resulted in a cohesive framework. Vieira sketched in no uncertain terms the contours of an elaborate Atlantic World Economy of Salvation—a system of reciprocity or mutual obligation in which all of the races of the world had a particular, divinely ordained role to play in order to fulfill their part in the European Christian God's providential designs for a universal Christendom. He understood this theology and ideology to be the essence of the plan for salvation for all of the peoples meeting on the shared stage of colonial Brazil, and ultimately the entire world. It followed then, that this plan must be the foundation for how colonial society should be structured and governed. However, this theology simultaneously had the effect of incorporating enslaved Africans into the colonial system under marginalized and subordinate terms that were intimately connected to their slave status and had clear racializing effects. As such, even taking into account Vieira's abiding concern for the spiritual fate of black Africans and his horror at their treatment in colonial Brazil, an analysis of his theology and methods reveals him to be one of the prime architects of a system of spiritual racialization in the colony.

This chapter analyzes Vieira's theological approach to African christianization and the intimate ties he articulated between Christian redemption, the slave system, and the colonial economy. Given his status within the Jesuit Order and the broader Portuguese imperial administration, Vieira was an influential figure that had a considerable amount of control over the emergent structure of religious and colonial governance in colonial Brazil. He serves as a representative figure that offered the clearest and most comprehensive articulation of a broader-

theological and colonial system. While the historical documentation regarding religious and social life in seventeenth century Brazil is limited, by the early eighteenth century it is clear that many of Vieira's contemporaries—his fellow Jesuits and others in the religious administration of colonial Brazil—shared similar philosophies. In the decades after Vieira's death, other writings and documents of colonial administration indicate that this theological worldview that Vieira articulated powerfully in his sermons was being disseminated as the standard for African christianization and slave management. Vieira's fellow Jesuits, Jorge Benci and João Antônio Andreoni, were equally vocal about developing a form of Christian slavery that would unite the divine economy with the temporal economy. Similarly, the Archbishop of Bahia, Sebastião Monteiro da Vide advocated an ideal colonial Christian order for his archbishopric in which white slave masters would play a particular role as intermediaries facilitating the salvation of their slaves. By the late eighteenth century when a much more vivid historical picture of the colonial milieu emerges, it is clear that an elaborate form of Christian paternalism with intimate ties between the religious colonial order and the plantation order had crystallized in Bahia.

As a result, considering Vieira's vision within the context of the contemporary efforts to christianize enslaved Africans in colonial Brazil offers a lens to interpret the early emergence of an iteration of the Atlantic World economy of salvation as it would come to operate in colonial Brazil. Such an analysis reveals that the ideological and theological roots of the structure that would come to define much of the Brazilian system of colonial and religious governance were in circulation throughout the seventeenth century. Though Vieira, Benci, Andreoni, and Vide all forcefully and emphatically denounced poor treatment of enslaved Africans and the negligence and cruelty of some slave masters, they also elaborated, authorized, and were responsible for the colonial implementation of an economy of salvation that aligned with a colonial Atlantic World

economy of European domination of which African enslavement was a constitutive, and divinely ordained, element.

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The Emperor of the Portuguese Language

Antônio Vieira had a lasting influence on Luso-Brazilian history, culture, and language. He has been heralded as *"O Imperador da Lingua Portuguesa"* ("the Emperor of the Portuguese language") and historian C.R. Boxer described him as "the most remarkable man in the seventeenth century Luso-Brazilian world."[9] Neither title is undeserved. Over the course of what was a long and storied career as a missionary, orator, statesman, diplomat, and prolific writer, Vieira wrote, preached, and provided theological and political guidance at all levels of the Portuguese imperial administration. Early in his career, he developed a reputation as the "colony's most gifted orator" and his rich sermons were the cornerstone of much of his missionary endeavors.[10] He also served directly as the trusted advisor to the monarch, Dom Pedro IV. He understood himself as a missionary to all members of Brazilian colonial society, but committed himself particularly to missionary work among the Indian and African populations of Brazil. He proposed colonial legislation and served as a profound visionary and critic for the ideal and practical implementation of a theologically rooted Portuguese imperial project.

His voluminous body of writings left no stone unturned and commented extensively on political, economic, and military matters, all interpreted through the theological lens of a deeply

[9] C.R. Boxer, *A Great Luso-Brazilian Figure, Padre Antonio Vieira, S. J., 1608-1697* (London: Hispanic & Luso-Brazilian Councils, 1957), 3-4.
[10] Thomas M. Cohen, *The Fire of Tongues: António Vieira and the Missionary Church In Brazil and Portugal* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 4.

committed religious thinker. As scholar Thomas Cohen notes, "Vieira's biographers and critics tend to focus on his political goals in isolation from his apostolic ones, and thereby allow the reader to forget that Vieira was first and always a priest. Vieira wrote in a religious idiom regardless of the subject. In a body of sermons and other writings accessible to a wide audience, he challenged his contemporaries to draw on Scripture and their own experience to revitalize their belief in the role of the Portuguese in postbiblical history."[11] To best understand Vieira as a colonial strategist and early modern thinker, it is essential to take his religious commitments and convictions as the starting point for all of his endeavors.

Vieira's life spanned the better part of the seventeenth century. He was born in Lisbon in 1608, but he moved to the Portuguese colony of Bahia in Brazil at the age of six when his father was appointed as a clerk to the high court. He was drawn to a religious vocation at a young age. At fifteen years old, he ran off to join the Jesuit College of Bahia and began his religious training. Early in his career as a Jesuit, Vieira expressed a clear vocation for missionary work among the non-Christian populations of enslaved Africans and Indians in the New World. Over the course of his life and career, he reaffirmed his desire to devote himself to that purpose, though his notable talents as a writer, preacher, political thinker, and strategist led his religious and political superiors to regularly demand that his talents be redirected to and employed for other political and ecclesiastical affairs instead.

Since the establishment of the administrative structure of the colony in 1549, the Jesuits had considerable influence in orchestrating the religious life in Brazil. The first Jesuits arrived in Bahia along with the first governor-general, Tomé de Sousa. The first Superior of the Jesuit Order in Brazil, Manuel da Nóbrega (1517-1570), was a powerful religious and political force in

[11] Ibid., 12.

his own right, and was responsible for much of the early establishment and structure of Catholic religious life and missionary endeavors in Brazil. [12] Vieira wholeheartedly embraced the colonial element of his missionary training and vocation, and he had a dynamic vision for the relationship between the colony and metropole within a broader understanding of Portugal's apostolic mission. He recognized that the missionary projects would have to be a cornerstone of colonial Brazilian society. Throughout his extensive writings, one of the most prominent themes Vieira expressed was a Luso-centric, yet universal, millenarian vision of Catholic religious, political, and imperial expansion that would bring God's kingdom to earth.[13] The conversion of "heathen" peoples to the Christian faith was central to this plan and to Portuguese imperial endeavors, as both the monarchy and the Catholic religious authorities of the era regularly emphasized. In his writings, Vieira succinctly summarized the central thesis of this particular theological worldview that provided the foundation for all of his endeavors stating, Portugal "has for its particular and special end, the propagation and extension of the Catholic faith in heathen lands, for which purpose God raised and founded it. And the more that Portugal acts in keeping with this end, the more sure and certain is its preservation; and the more it diverges therefrom, the more doubtful and dangerous is its future."[14]

Vieira was not speaking hyperbolically when he made such a claim. The continuation and preservation of the Portuguese crown and its dominion over lands in the Old World and the New was tenuous throughout the seventeenth century. On the Iberian Peninsula, Portugal struggled to

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[12] See Serafim Leite, *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil* (Lisboa: Livraria Portugalia, 1938).

[13] For more on Vieira's "Luso-centric millenarianism" see José van den Besselaar, "Erudição, espíritu critic a acribia na *História do futuro* de António Vieira." And Vieira, *Esperanças de Portugal* (1659).

[14] Vieira, "Letter to the King," April 1657. As cited in C.R.Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415-1825* (London, 1969), 231.

retain its status as a distinct monarchy from the Spanish crown. After a crisis of succession, from 1580 to 1640, the crowns of Castile and Portugal were unified under the Spanish Habsburg dynasty, thereby temporarily unifying the entire Iberian Peninsula and the overseas possessions of both emergent empires. Meanwhile, Portugal's dominion over territories in the Americas was gravely threatened as the Dutch capitalized on Portugal's weakness and occupied much of the Northeast of Brazil in the first half of the seventeenth century. Vieira, like many other early modern Christians, understood significant political developments, threats to sovereignty, and natural disasters as direct reflections of divine favor or disfavor. If Portugal, as an emergent imperial power, existed primarily if not exclusively to facilitate the establishment and extension of a universal Christendom, failure to act in alignment with divine will to that end would result in divine retribution, if not total elimination of the Portuguese empire altogether, Vieira believed. He interpreted the troubling events of the early seventeenth century as foreboding omens.

In keeping with this understanding, concern for the place of non-Europeans in the emergent vision of this universal Church remained central to Vieira throughout his life and career. He believed that Portuguese colonists must at all times fulfill and prioritize their apostolic role of bringing New Christians of these distant lands into the faith, and he saw all of the political and economic goals of the fledgling empire as inextricable from this broader mission. Undoubtedly, the native peoples of America were critical to this vision, and Vieira devoted much of his career to designing a missionary project and attendant economic system that would simultaneously Christianize native Brazilians and incorporate their labor into the colonial economy.[15] But so too were the "Aethiopians." Vieira saw the activities of the Portuguese in West Africa and the slave trade that brought Africans to Christian territories in the Americas as a

[15] See Leite, *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil* and Cohen, *The Fire of Tongues.*

means of bringing those nations into God's Kingdom. His sermons referenced Psalm 68:31—"Aethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." He described the Portuguese as the conduits to fulfill that biblical prophecy through their colonial enterprises in the Atlantic World. He assured his flock that this prophecy was "fulfilled principally after the Portuguese conquered West Africa, and today it is fulfilled more and even better here in America than in any other part of the world, where the same Aethiopians are brought in such an incalculable number."[16]

To contribute to this apostolic mission, in his early years Vieira served an apprenticeship among the sugar estates of Bahia's Recôncavo region. A significant portion of the middle of his career was spent in the *aldeias*, or mission villages, of the Maranhão that were designed for the spiritual, social, and economic incorporation of native Brazilians. He studied both the Angolan language of Kimbundu as well as a form of Tupi-Guaraní, the Brazilian Indian *lingua geral*. He was also adamant that other Jesuit priests should learn Angolan languages and that the order as a whole should develop a more substantial missionary system to attend to the spiritual care and conversion of recently embarked slaves arriving to the port of Salvador as his colleagues Alonso de Sandoval and Pedro Claver had constructed in the Spanish port of Cartagena de Indias.

In reality, however, no such sustained and systematic missionary project for enslaved Africans materialized, though the need was no less dire than it was in Cartagena. São Salvador da Bahia, or Bahia as it was known through the nineteenth century, like Cartagena de Indias, was a major commercial and slave trading port. Bahia was also the capital of the Brazilian colony until 1763 at which point the seat of the colonial government moved to Rio de Janeiro. Since its official settlement in 1549, sugar cultivation was a priority for the developing colony. The first governor-general, Tomé de Sousa, arrived to Brazil with express instructions from the

[16] Vieira, Sermão Decimo Quarto, 271.

Portuguese crown to establish *engenhos.* The Portuguese Crown intended to profit from the taxes levied from the exportation of sugar. Native Brazilian workers made up the primary workforce of the *engenhos* in the first several decades of sugar cultivation, but African labor soon replaced indigenous labor as the primary means of manpower. By the last decade of the sixteenth century, the *engenho* labor forces in Bahia were racially mixed, and within the first two decades of the seventeenth century, sugar plantations in the region transitioned to almost exclusively black slave labor.[17] As a result, the majority of enslaved Africans arriving to the port in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries would have been sold to *senhores de engenho* in the Recôncavo region and other local areas, although urban slavery in Salvador grew proportionately as well.[18] European foreigners regularly remarked that Africans and mulattos made up a sizable majority of colonial Bahia's population. Some claimed that they thought they had arrived in a "new Guinea." Another wrote that it appeared to be a "metropolis of negroes," and "[e]veryone that runs, screams, works, everyone that transports [someone] or carries [something] is black."[19] Contemporary accountings of the archbishopric recorded that out of the approximately 90,000

[17] For a thorough treatment of the development of the sugar industry in Brazilian history see Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society: Bahia, 1550-1835* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). For an accounting of the transition to African slave labor see Chapter 3, "First Slavery: From Indian to African."

[18] Urban slavery in Salvador was largely comprised of domestic labor and a hire-out or *ganho* system, in which slaves would hire out their labor and remit a daily or weekly payment to their masters; they would keep the rest of their earnings and take care of their own expenses for daily living. Many slaves joined groups known as *cantos,* often organized along ethnic lines. These groups of workers would occupy the street corners offering their labor and services.

[19] As cited in A.J.R. Russell-Wood, *Society and Government in Colonial Brazil* (Great Britain: Variorum, 1992), 135. and João José Reis, "African Nations in Nineteenth-Century Salvador da Bahia," in *The Black Urban Atlantic In the Age of the Slave Trade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 64.

souls in the region, "many" more than 50,000 were slaves.[20] It would have been impossible to ignore the presence of Africans as part of the religio-social landscape of the Catholic colony.

Unlike regions of the Spanish Americas, the ecclesiastical structure of the Portuguese Americas was limited. For the first roughly fifty years of colonization in Brazil, the colony was under the jurisdiction of the bishopric of Funchal in Madeira. After the founding of the archbishopric of Bahia in 1551, the entire territory of the expansive colony was under the jurisdiction of only that one bishopric for the next hundred years. In the urban center of Bahia, dedicated parishes manned by secular clergy and a more considerable mendicant presence provided a more cohesive structure for religious guidance.[21] Outside of the urban areas, the limited presence of secular clergy, the distance between plantations and parishes, and a less developed missionary network made it difficult for the religious needs of the colonists to be met adequately. The Portuguese Crown mandated that previously unbaptized slaves should be baptized upon their arrival in Brazil. However, because the colonial religious authorities were unable or unwilling to construct an evangelization project to meet arriving slave ships with the same zeal and dedication that Sandoval and Claver had done in Cartagena, Jesuit missionaries, priests, and clerics traveled instead to the *engenhos* and plantations of the Recôncavo to minister to the Portuguese colonists and the indigenous and African laborers. In spite of this evangelizing work, christianizing the large population of enslaved Africans that inhabited the region proved extremely difficult within the constraints of Brazil's religio-political organization.

[20] Feitler and Souza, *Constituições primeiras do Arcebispado da Bahia* (Sao Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo), 15.

[21] See chapter 2, footnote 46 for an explanation of the term "secular clergy" as employed in the colonial Iberian Atlantic.

Given the relatively weak institutional presence of early Brazilian Catholicism, the colonial church tended to blend with the broader social and economic structures. This approach aligned with the strategies that the Jesuits and other religious orders had employed throughout the Iberian Americas to facilitate the christianization of indigenous populations. In the same way that Indians were "reduced" to mission villages (*reducciones / reduções*) throughout Latin America, missionaries recognized that the *fazendas, engenhos,* and plantations of colonial Brazil could offer the same benefits in the process of evangelizing and civilizing the enslaved Africans.[22] As such, as Vieira's sermon revealed, it would not have been unusual for masters and slaves to attend services together on the *engenhos.* It was common practice for masters to attend masses or other religious events held specifically for black confraternities with their slaves. Some masters paid the annual dues for their slaves to join the black confraternities. There are even cases of masters and slaves joining black confraternities together, such as the white slaveowner, Antonio Pereira Arouca, who joined the black brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary along with 9 of his slaves.[23]

As a result, sermons like Vieira's would have been as much about offering Portuguese masters a theological framework and foundation for understanding their role in the unfolding expansion of Christendom as it was about educating the black slaves. Vieira saw an essential part of his mission to be providing theological and temporal vocabularies and frameworks that would

[22] See João Evangelista Martins Terra, *O Negro e a igreja* (São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1988) for a description of the organization, structure, and evangelization strategies used on some *fazendas.*

[23] APB, vol. 78, fol. 275-286, VOTRB, Compromisso (31820). Similarly, Africans—enslaved or free—were typically not allowed to hold certain positions of leadership within the black confraternities. For example, it was not unusual for the *compromissos* or statutes of black confraternities to only be accepted by the ecclesiastical and colonial governing structures if they stipulated that white Christians would occupy the positions of treasurer and secretary and if confraternity activities would be approved by the local clergy.

enable Portuguese colonists to incorporate Africans into their spiritual and social world. He aimed to provide slave masters the structure and tutelage necessary for them to approach their relationships with their slaves in such a way as to bring the colonial system in closer alignment with the Christian God's providential designs. Doing this effectively was of great consequence to him because it would affect not only the individual and corporate salvation of all parties in the colonial environment, but would directly impact the broader salvific mission of the aspiring universal Christendom.

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"The People of the Sorrowful Mysteries"

In his three extant sermons delivered to the members of the black brotherhood and their masters, Vieira articulated a blueprint for a colonial vision that would be in full alignment with this particular Christian theological mission. Vieira saw the Portuguese as chosen to fulfill a specific apostolic role in bringing God's kingdom to Earth, therefore their colonial holdings were meant as spiritual frontiers to enact that vision. In that sense, the colonial environment in Brazil was central to the broader unfolding providential plan. Vieira elaborated a complex and robust method for fulfilling this plan in the specific context of seventeenth century Bahia and within the realities of the colonial Brazilian slave system.

In laying the groundwork for his theological and colonial vision, Vieira articulated a biblically based argument that blacks were indeed descendants of Adam, children of God, and part of the redemptive plan of the Christian God from early on in biblical history. The "inclusive" theological and colonial vision that Vieira described did not result in temporal equality however, nor was it meant to. Though people of all nations and colors were equally loved by God and the Virgin Mary and were equally included in the Body of Christ, Vieira did

not suggest that it erased temporal hierarchies, which were themselves, he argued, rooted in divinely ordained station and spiritual potential. That too, Vieira illustrated, was part of the broader providential design set forth in Christian scripture.

Vieira instructed his listeners that God had distinguished the men of the world that had descended from Adam "by the quality (*qualidade*) of each one." They were divided into different nations in separate parts of the world—Europe, Africa, Asia, and America—"conforming to the different climates there." In the case of blacks, this division led the descendants of the second son of Noah to become black after two thousand years in Africa.[24] Vieira emphasized to the Portuguese slave owners that even the black color of the people of Africa was merely a part of God's providential design, not a reason for the whites of Brazil to despise them.

While they should not be rejected for their black color, Vieira believed the Bible did suggest a hierarchical order among nations of the world that seemed to correspond to a destiny that would put each nation in the proper place in the broader Christian body to allow them to fulfill their spiritual potential. In times that the Scriptures referenced Aethiopians, Vieira pointed out that they were often listed last. He saw that ordering as deliberate—not because blacks would be the last nation temporally to come into the Kingdom of God because, as he had indicated, they were in fact one of the first. Rather, prophets "placed the Aethiopians and the blacks last because this is the place that the world gives them, and the low esteem with which they are treated by other men, though they are children of Adam."[25]

In his acknowledgement that the denigration of African peoples was largely a flaw of "other men," he alluded to the idea that it also had a basis in some inherent and/or transmittable

[24] Vieira, Sermão Vigesimo, 90.
[25] Vieira, Sermão Decimo Quarto, 266.

moral stain or deficiency. While Vieira did not mention the Curse of Ham specifically in his sermons, by referring to the inhabitants of Africa as the descendants of the second son of Noah, Vieira may have been invoking the common understanding that Africans were descendants of Noah's son Ham that had been cursed by God, and as such were destined to inhabit the role as servants of other nations. There was a notable, albeit unclearly defined, hereditary element to their destiny. He interpreted the description of the baptism of the first Aethiopian, the eunuch described in Acts 8, as serving "without a doubt" as the scriptural model for the future fate of all other men of the same "color" and "nation" who would later convert to Christianity. It was their particular fortune that they were destined to be an "unhappy race of men, that were born to serve."[26] "Ultimately, of all of the mysteries of the life, death and resurrection of Christ those that belong to the blacks by their condition, *and as an inheritance*, are the sorrowful [mysteries.]"[27]

This prevailing notion that blacks had a particular proclivity for servitude as their divine inheritance was one that had profound consequences in the colonial environment. These categorizations of the spiritual nature and capacity of blacks and natives lay at the heart of the European Christians' religious, social, and political imagination. Vieira, for example at one point was strongly in favor of replacing Indian laborers with African ones because, the latter were "a people servile by nature, tough and capable of any kind of work, who survive for many years unless hunger and bad treatment finish them off."[28] This kind of discourse and colonial strategizing represented developing ideas about the theological identities and spiritual capacities

[26] Ibid., 281-2. Emphasis added.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Antônio Vieira, "Resposta aos capítulos que deu contra os religiosos da Companhia em 1662 o Procurador do Maranhão Jorge de Sampaio," in *Obras escolhidas* V, 298-299. As cited in Sweet, "Black Robes and Black Destiny," 103-104.

of Amerindians and Africans, and became the foundation for the racial ideologies and hierarchies that prescribed colonial populations differing roles in the emergent colonial civic and economic systems.

Vieira's sermons to the black brotherhood members made a case for African enslavement and built directly on theological understandings about the nature of black souls, their proclivity toward immoral behavior, and the perils of black religion. He lamented the heathen state of Africans in their native lands. He believed that it was God's mercy that had brought some blacks from Africa, "the country where [they] and [their] ancestors lived like savages,"[29] to America that they might achieve salvation, which led him to conceive of their enslavement as a spiritual opportunity. Not all blacks had been chosen by God and the Virgin Mary for redemption, which made it all the more miraculous that the blacks of Our Lady of the Rosary of Brazil had been saved. Vieira pointed out that "The Aethiopians that David's text speaks of are not all the blacks universally, because many of them are gentiles in their lands. [The text] speaks only of those that I also speak of that, by the mercy of God and His Holy Mother, by way of faith and knowledge of Christ, and by virtue of baptism, are Christians."[30]

In his sermon, Vieira stressed the significance of this division most clearly for the enslaved listeners: "Your fathers that were born in the pagan darkness and in it lived and ended their lives without the light of faith nor knowledge of God, where will they go after death? All of them as we already believed and confessed will go to hell and are burning and will burn for

[29] Vieira, Sermão Decimo Quarto.
[30] Vieira, Sermão Decimo Quarto, 267. This idea is one that Vieira elaborated more explicitly in a later text in which he explained that in the universal Christian church, all nations would be represented, but inclusion would not necessarily extend to all individuals. See Cohen, *The Fire of Tongues*, 178.

eternity, all of them perishing. [….]"[31] By contrast, he assured the black slaves in Brazil, that by becoming Christian, they would be saved and go to heaven. For this reason, he acknowledged that the experience of enslavement in the Americas may have appeared to the enslaved Africans to be "exile, captivity, and misfortune," but assured them that it was, in fact, a "great miracle." Vieira spoke directly to the enslaved *pretos*, attempting to console them stating, "Mary (seeing your devotion) chose you from among the people of many nations and performed the great miracle of transporting you here and into the Church so that you would not be lost like your ancestors, but would be saved." [32]

Despite conceiving of the slave trade as a spiritual opportunity and great miracle for blacks, Vieira had no illusions about the heavy trials of the slave experience. Preaching to his audience in the Recôncavo region, he witnessed the suffering of black slaves first hand. His sermons aimed to reconcile the theological principle of a spiritually redemptive servitude for African nations with the harsh realities of the slave experience in colonial Brazil that lay just outside the doors of the church. He could not deny that this "great miracle" was one of delayed gratification following a painful earthly life. Vieira presented a vivid, but harrowing image that had strong resonances for the enslaved listeners, and his words made abundantly clear what their divinely ordained status was to be in this earthly realm:

> What in the confusion of this world is more like Hell than one of these sugar mills, especially the large ones which have aptly been called "sweet infernos?" Truly anyone who sees those enormous ovens always burning in the dark of the night, with flames leaping out at both ends by the vents through which the fire breathes; who sees the Aethiopian Cyclops bathed in sweat, as black as they are muscular, stoking the fires with rough logs and stirring it with pitchforks; the cauldrons like boiling lakes bubbling endlessly, vomiting foam, exhaling clouds of hot steam which condense and drip back into them to be exhaled once more. The terrible racket of the cane-mill rollers, of the chains, of the groaning men the color of night

[31] Vieira, Sermão Decimo Quarto, 272.
[32] Vieira, Sermão Decimo Quarto, 271 – 272.

> who toil without rest. Any witness to that wild and uproarious apparatus of Babylon, even if he had seen the eruption of volcanoes [Etna and Vesuvius], must see that it is like unto Hell. But if in the midst of that pandemonium voices are to be heard praying the Rosary, the voices of men meditating upon the mystery of Christ's suffering, then that Hell shall be transformed into Paradise, the racket into celestial harmony, and the men—black as they are—into Angels.[33]

In an equally vivid description, Vieira's contemporary described the brutal experiences of the slaves designated to work the *engenho* furnaces late into the night. [34] In *Cultura e opulência do Brasil por suas drogas e minas* Padre André João Antonil suggested that slaves were assigned that most taxing responsibility as a method of physical and moral purification. He noted that slaves with "yaw and those with an imbalance in their humors" were given that role "in order to purge themselves by their prodigious sweat of the acidic humors filling their bodies." Other slaves deemed "wicked and perverse" would similarly be "locked in long and heavy iron chains in this demanding work. They pay for their wicked excesses with little or no hope of mending their ways."[35] As historian Stuart Schwartz confirms, slaves with venereal diseases and other physical maladies were given this role to sweat out their diseases. Similarly, runaway or other disobedient slaves would work the furnaces "in chains to work their resistance out of them."[36]

According to Vieira, in being brought from Africa to America, black slaves traded the damnation of the afterlife experienced by their forefathers for a hell in their current life. With this

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[33] Vieira, Sermão Decimo Quarto, 282. As translated in Sweet, "Black Robes and 'Black Destiny,'" 108.

[34] For a description of the process of sugar production in the colonial Americas see Ward J. Barrett, *Sugar Hacienda of the Marqueses del Valle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1970). André João Antonil's contemporary source, *Cultura e opulência por suas drogas e minas*, also offers an extensive account of the sugar economy in colonial Brazil. Antonil and Vieira were not alone in their comparison of the mills to an "inferno." Jesuit Fernão Cardim, in *Tratados da terra e gente* and Joseph Israel de Costa in his report written for the Dutch West India company around 1636 used similar descriptions.

[35] Antonil, *Brazil at the Dawn of the Eighteenth Century*, 76.

[36] Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations In the Formation of Brazilian Society*, 144-145.

powerful metaphor, Vieira illustrated unequivocally for enslaved blacks in colonial Brazil, that what for them might feel akin to the torments of hell, was in fact their earthly destiny as part of a particular Christian religious and social system, that had been foreordained by this new God of theirs, for their salvation and reward in a life to come. These hell-on-earth experiences of the Middle Passage and the brutalities of New World slavery were, in Vieira's view, actually a spiritually liminal step, a divinely ordained purgatory that would provide the necessary education, discipline, and correction to ensure the salvation of black slaves. In this theological rendering, slavery enabled those chosen Africans to overcome their deficient spiritual natures and eventually rise above their concomitant subordinate religious and social position on earth. In the same way that working the *engenho* furnaces could provide physical and moral purification, the general experience of slavery would offer spiritual purification and refinement for the blacks of Brazil.

Due to the particular station and inheritance of these "chosen" members of African nations, slavery was their calling. Vieira likened their enslavement to a religious vocation that defined their ordained roles on earth and their relationships to God and other Christians. While some religious orders went barefoot, he argued that the clothing of enslaved Africans was "bare feet and rags" and their black skin served as a habit of "[their] own color." He instructed blacks that just as every religious order had an "object and vocation and its special grace" that theirs was "whips and punishments."[37]

That they might better understand and embrace the challenges of their sorrowful lot, Vieira was clear that providence had ordained their membership in this religious order of enslavement as a spiritual process of refinement that would result in an even higher form of

[37] Vieira, Sermão Vigesimo Setimo, 325-236. As translated in Conrad, *Children of God's Fire*, 171.

freedom. If they embraced with "good will" their earthly destiny, Our Lady of the Rosary would grant them a "Certificate of Freedom" in the afterlife.[38] In this sense, enslaved blacks in Brazil were only "half slaves," enslaved in the body, but not the soul. Their souls still retained free will, he surmised. And through enslavement, they would receive the necessary pedagogy and discipline that would make possible an eternal form of spiritual freedom. [39]

With this understanding, Vieira spoke directly to the *pretos* of Our Lady of the Rosary and encouraged their fortitude. He referred to them as the "brothers of God's preparation" and "the Children of God's fire," "because in this condition God's fire impressed the mark of slavery upon [them]; and, granted that this is the mark of oppression, it [had] also, like fire, illuminated [them], because it has brought [them] the light of the Faith and the knowledge of Christ's mysteries, which are those which [they] solemnly profess on the rosary."[40] He encouraged their gratitude for God and the Virgin Mary's infinite mercy that had created a temporal situation that would enable Africans to overcome their spiritual limitations and inheritance so that they might be included in the body of Christ and enjoy the eternal rewards that accompanied salvation.

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[38] Sermão Vigesimo Setimo, 316-317 and 325 – 326. Vieira went on to suggest that it was possible for the Virgin Mary to additionally free them from temporal slavery. However, because their enslavement offered them opportunities for spiritual refinement, they should embrace that calling to "more easily" achieve salvation. See Sermão Vigesimo Setimo, 322. In responding to correspondence toward the end of his life, Vieira further suggested that runaway slaves who were not manumitted through the proper means were in fact living in a state of sin for rejecting their God-given station. "Since they are slaves who have risen in rebellion, they are and will remain in a state of sin in which they cannot be absolved, nor may they receive the Grace of God, until they have returned to obedience and to the service of their masters—which they are certain to refuse to do." See Sweet, "Black Robes and 'Black Destiny,'" 119.

[39] Missionaries throughout the early modern Atlantic espoused similar understandings of the effect on slavery on African souls. A Jesuit report from Brazil in 1617 had likewise indicated that slavery was "useful for the Blacks, because it teaches, helps, and consoles them." See Leite, *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil.*

[40] Vieira, Sermão Vigesimo Setimo, 304. As translated in Conrad, *Children of God's Fire*, 165.

Despite their difficult lot however, Vieira nevertheless saw the plight of enslaved Africans as a spiritual yoke to be admired. For him, the challenges the enslaved faced on earth put them in closer proximity to the sufferings and slave status of Jesus. For this reason, in spite of their inherently diminished spiritual capacity, blacks in Brazil were, paradoxically, more likely to be the recipients of divine grace and mercy than whites. If enslaved Africans were able to withstand the challenges of their vocation—endless toil, floggings, and punishments—with Christ-like patience in imitation of his earthly suffering, and if they could fulfill the spiritual obligations of their given status with a "good will," they would receive eternal life, perhaps without any further punishment in purgatory. He articulated a profound parallel between the black slaves of the sugar plantations and Christ himself in their shared martyrdom. In a notable inversion of the colonial order of things, instead of being the despised of God, Vieira proposed that the slave status of Africans in Brazil indicated their status as God's chosen, rhetorically linking them with the Israelites, who similarly had suffered periods of enslavement and exile, and with Christ himself.

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"Oh, how I fear the Atlantic will be our Red Sea[…] and all of Brazil like Egypt!"

Vieira elaborated a vision of the Christian social world in the Portuguese Americas as one divinely designed so that all members could execute their spiritual obligations according to their stations and bring about universal salvation. God had given each "nation" of the world different roles within the Body of Christ, which the social systems of the temporal world then reinforced. Individuals from these nations must fulfill their duties and stay within the stations to which they were called.

Vieira conceived of the Christian faith and the social world that emanated from it as a system of mutual obligation. This lesson was a particularly important one for those of the African nations, Vieira said. He asked them to pay close attention so that they would understand what their captivity was meant to consist of and how they should "conduct themselves in it" so that they would not "make it worse."[41] Enslaved Africans' obligations included giving proper thanks to the Christian God, existing in a constant state of praise for the "miracle" of the mercy that delivered them from Africa to redemption in America, praying the rosary daily, and being obedient to all virtuous commands from their masters. According to Vieira, these were the essential elements of African Christian spiritual practice; fulfilling these spiritual imperatives would usher them into a state of salvation.

This system of obligations was far from one-sided in Vieira's vision, however. Portuguese Christians had their own challenges and responsibilities in the emergent colonial order. For Vieira, the master-slave relationship was a divinely ordained relationship of reciprocity between masters and slaves that would lead to the salvation of both blacks and whites only if they played their given parts in the drama of salvation unfolding in the New World. In his view, slave ownership also operated as a kind of temporal purgatory for Portuguese slave masters that engendered its own process of spiritual refinement and that had its own series of expectations and obligations. Namely, it was the obligation of Portuguese slave masters to fulfill divinely ordained roles of Christian stewardship for enslaved blacks by providing them with spiritual instruction and offering them an example of a pious Christian life to imitate.

Vieira was in no way calling for abolition, nor even a complete overhaul of the slave system. He did recognize and criticize the horrors of the current execution of slavery in Brazil,

[41] Vieira, Sermão Vigesimo Setimo, 305.

but ultimately he was not against slavery. He only sought to bring it more in line with what he understood as proper "Christian" ethics and values. Discussing the matter in front of a panel convened in Lisbon in 1662, Vieira clearly asserted, "it is not my intention that there should be no slaves." Rather, he only encouraged that proper care and attention be paid to determining the proper legal and ethical grounds for enslavement.[42] He instructed masters to encourage slaves to recite Ave Marias as they labored and to teach enslaved Africans how to uphold their end of the reciprocal spiritual obligation.

The reality for many slave masters of the Recôncavo however, was that their strategies of slave ownership were not in line with Vieira's model. On the whole, the colonists in Brazil had not enacted the doctrine of a Christian economy and Christian slave system. As a result, Portuguese slave masters were not exempt from the hellish experiences of the *engenhos*. As early as 1627, Father Andrés de Gouvea identified the moral depravity of masters and believed they would experience their hell in the afterlife as payment for their negligence and abuses. For him, "an *engenho* [was] hell and all the masters of them [were] damned."[43] Similarly, Benci referred to masters that ignored the sufferings of their slaves as "Lucifers on earth."[44] And Vieira ended his final sermon to the masters and slaves of the *engenho* by drawing similar conclusions. Taking on the tone of a jeremiad, he warned slave masters of the consequences if they continued to neglect the obligations of their divinely ordained station. He informed them that they were

[42] Antônio Vieira, "Sermão da Epifania," in *Sermões* 4:534. "It is not my intention that there be no slaves. Rather I have asked[…] that this Court form a Junta (as has been done) and that this Junta declare the criteria for legal enslavement, as it has done in the Law it has issued." See also Gil de Agrobom, *As contradições do Padre António Vieira e outros escritos,* 24. Cohen, *A Fire of Tongues,* 11. And David Sweet, "Black Robes and 'Black Destiny,'" 122.
[43] As cited in Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society,* 264.
[44] Souza, *The Devil in the Land of the Holy Cross,* 83.

gambling with their own earthly spiritual status and their ultimate salvation.[45] Divine retribution would be imminent, he warned, and he turned to examples from biblical history for proof. Like the Egyptians, whom God punished with plagues and destruction, or the Israelites, who suffered exile and enslavement in Babylon, Vieira warned Portuguese Christians that they would incur God's wrath and punishment either on earth or in the afterlife, which would amount to an inversion of the temporal realm and their status within it. He did not mince words, and informed the masters that they were likely going straight to hell after death if they concerned themselves more with economic gain and profit than the proper spiritual care of their slaves.

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The Atlantic World Economy of Salvation

Throughout his life, Vieira was highly critical of the slave masters' abuses of the enslaved African population, their overuse and manipulation of the native workforce, and their general neglect of and failure to provide stewardship to these populations. He utilized the power of the pulpit to condemn Portuguese colonists directly for their poor treatment of slaves and Indians, and he employed his political connections to influence policy and colonial strategy to ameliorate the situation by proposing new models to construct a system he believed was more in

[45] Sermão Vigesimo Setimo, 310-311. He went on to question, "Is it necessary that, in order to add another fathom of land to your cane fields, and another day's work each week on your plantation, you must sell your soul to the devil?" Your own soul, however, since it is yours, you may go ahead and sell and resell. But those of your slaves, why must you sell them too, putting your lust for gold and your damned and always ill-acquired possessions ahead of their salvation? Because of this your slaves lack Christian Doctrine; because of this they live and die without the Sacraments; and because of this, even if you do not altogether prohibit the Faith to them with a level of greed which only the devil might invent (to express this in popular language,) you do not wish them to come near the door of the Church. You allow the slave men and women to go about in sin, and do not permit them to marry, because you say that married slaves do not serve you as well. Oh reason (if such it is) so unworthy of your intelligence and Christianity!" As translated in Conrad, *Children of God's Fire,* 166-7.

line with proper Christian colonial governance. He lamented that under the prevailing system, "the slaves will say to God at the hour of death that we have taught them nothing, but how to cut cane and plant manioc."[46] He was appalled at the failure of Portuguese Christians to uphold their divinely ordained obligations as trustees or stewards of African souls. He argued that because Portuguese colonists were shirking their divinely ordained responsibilities, the economic blessings with which God had endowed Brazil would cease as well. The temporal economy, he surmised, was inextricably bound up with this Atlantic World economy of salvation, which God had ordained, and within which slaves and masters had specific reciprocal obligations to one another as part of their assigned spiritual and social roles. Continued economic and political prosperity for Portugal depended on slave masters upholding their end of that bargain.

Vieira notably never saw economic gain or political expansion as contradictory to the goal of universal salvation. Rather, he believed economic incentives were seamlessly interwoven into God's plan for Christian redemption. He elaborated on that idea noting,

> The silver, the gold, the rubies, the diamonds, and the emeralds that those lands nourish and hide in their entrails; […] the Brazilwood, the violet, the ebony, the cinnamon, the clove, and the pepper that are born in those lands, were such powerful incentives for man's greed that they made it much easier to bear the dangers and travails of the navigation and conquest[…] for it is certain that if God in his providence had not enriched those lands with those many treasures, no amount of religious zeal would have been sufficient to bring the faith to them.[47]

As Thomas Cohen has indicated, Vieira's writings and his broader missionary endeavors demonstrate that he "never derided or underestimated the importance of the economic forces that drove the empire. Instead, he sought to convince the Portuguese that their economic well-being

[46] Vieira, "Sermão I Anjo," in Afrânio Peixoto & Constancio Alves (eds.), *Vieira Brasileiro* II (Paris, 1921), 227-29.
[47] As cited in Cohen, *The Fire of Tongues*, 162.

depended on conducting themselves as Christians."[48] Vieira was not one to dismiss the value of economic prosperity. He merely sought to remind his flock that these material blessings should be a by-product of their spiritual mission, not their primary goal. In fact, he asserted that bringing their economic endeavors into alignment with God's providential plan would result in increasing abundance.

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Toward a Christian Economy

Vieira was not the only Jesuit in Bahia who sought to correct the misalignment between the colonial economy and an ideal Christian order. Notably, several of Vieira's Jesuit contemporaries were equally vocal about trying to ensure that a robust, Christian form of slavery and broader colonial and economic system would flourish in the region. Not long after Vieira delivered his last sermon to the masters and slaves in the Recôncavo, Jorge Benci, an Italian Jesuit Friar, petitioned Jesuit authorities for permission to publish sermons that outlined masters' obligations to their slaves. This text, *Economia cristã dos senhores no governo dos escravos* (*Christian Economy for Masters in the Governance of Slaves*), written at the turn of the century and published in Lisbon in 1705, elaborated on Vieira's descriptions of what Christian slaveholding should entail. Similarly, in 1711 Jesuit João Antônio Andreoni, writing under the pseudonym, André João Antonil, published *Cultura e opulencia do Brasil por suas drogas e minas* (*Culture and Opulence of Brazil from Its Drugs and Mines*). Andreoni not only held important offices in the Jesuit order, he also served as confessor to two governors of Brazil and as the advisor to Archbishop Sebastião Monteiro da Vide on legal and religious matters.[49] His

[48] Ibid., 7.
[49] See Stuart B. Schwartz, "Preface," in *Brazil at the Dawn of the Eighteenth Century* (Dartmouth, Mass.: Tagus Press, 2012), xi.

text offered a thorough description of the economic structure of the Brazilian colony—surveying the sugar, tobacco, and mining industries. Given that all three men were high ranking in the local Jesuit order, there is no doubt that they were familiar with each other's ideas for missionary strategy and the broader organization of religious and social life in the colony. Andreoni and Vieira had known each other since the early 1680s when they met in Italy, and Andreoni traveled to Brazil with the more senior Vieira in 1681.[50] Like Vieira, it is clear that Benci and Andreoni saw no clear lines of demarcation between the broader colonial economy, the religious world, and the slave order. Both of their texts stressed that in order to manage a Christian plantation or economic enterprise, a master should provide their households and their slaves with adequate religious instruction. They should allow slaves to marry and raise Christian families. Sundays and holy days must be reserved for religious instruction. Slaves should be well provided for in terms of sustenance and other provisions, and where necessary, should have ample time for the cultivation of their own food. Slaves should be cared for in illness, old age, and death. Andreoni made the explicit recommendation that each plantation should have a plantation chapel and that the plantation owners ought to prioritize hiring a devoted chaplain that would be responsible for the "teaching everything concerning the Christian ways of life," fulfilling the central duty of "catechizing and instructing the household and the slaves."[51] He even delineated a Christian model for slave punishment. After an investigation, if an enslaved offender was found guilty, the slave could be punished "with a moderate flogging." It was recommended that the master "not punish at the spur of the moment, with a vengeful mind." Andreoni asserted: "It is certain if the

[50] Andreoni remained in Brazil for the rest of his life and career. Over the next several decades, he rose in the Jesuit ranks, serving as a rector of the Jesuit College and as provincial to the Brazilian Jesuit order.

[51] Antonil, *Brazil At the Dawn of the Eighteenth Century*, 25.

planter treats the slaves like a father, giving them what they need to sustain and clothe themselves and some needful respite from work, he can subsequently treat them like a master. They will not then object to being punished rightly but mercifully for the misdeeds they have committed."[52]

This approach that merged the prioritizing of Christian instruction for enslaved Africans with the labor demands and disciplinary practices that enforced their position as enslaved subjects offered a pragmatic solution to the particular challenges of the Brazilian colonial landscape and the limitations of the Catholic Church infrastructure in the colony. Placing the responsibility for evangelization and religious education on masters and in chapels on plantations built and staffed for that purpose did certainly respond to the paucity of clergy and weakness of church institutions. However, contemporary religious authorities, Vieira included, also had a deeper theological understanding and rationalization for the structure of the missionary-colonial project to Africans. As Vieira suggested in his sermons, it was a common understanding at the time that, given the spiritual limitations of Africans, their successful christianization required a paternalistic relationship with white Christians. The missionary project to Africans was structured according to this belief that through the relationship with European missionaries, religious authorities, and slave masters that served as intermediaries, the intellectual deficiencies and immoral tendencies of Africans might be overcome, allowing the enslaved to receive the gospel in a palatable form designed for and targeted to their capacities.

As the Brazilian colony grew and the religious infrastructure of the colony became more established, the contours of this system of Christian paternalism as the standard for slave Christianization was codified into ecclesiastical law. In 1707, Bahia's archbishop, Sebastião

[52] Ibid., 43.

Monteiro da Vide, issued the *Constituições Primeiras*, an extensive compilation of regulations and precepts to dictate the proper governance of the colonial religious community. The text was organized into five books[53] comprised of 274 titles and 1,312 precepts.[54] The *Constitutions* delineated a structure of colonial religious administration and governance that readily aligned with the Christian slave economy as outlined by the Brazilian Jesuits. In the second precept of the *Constitutions,* the archbishop ordered "fathers, teachers, lords and gentlemen to teach the Christian doctrine to their children, students, servants and slaves."[55] This ordinance reflected what Gilberto Freyre and others have labeled as the paternalistic "familial Catholicism" that functioned as one component of the "Mansion-Slave Quarters-Chapel Triad" that was

[53] The five-book structure of the *Constituições* was common for this genre, following the example of other important ecclesiastic documents such as Pope Gregory IX's *Decretais*. The document's replication of this tradition emphasizes its formal nature. As a text emerging from the council's collaboration, produced by and for the purposes of ecclesiastical authorities and destined for publication in the metropole, it utilized a formulaic structure and official tone. Adhering to these conventions did not allow the authors to elaborate extensively on the colonial situation or the motivations and intentions that had inspired specific regulations. While the text may not be directly transparent in this way, closer analysis yields important insights related to the workings of the religio-social landscape of early eighteenth century Bahia, particularly as it relates to the position and treatment of African slaves.

[54] The first book outlined the profession of faith, the core doctrines of Catholic belief and practice, the obligations for clergy and heads of households to Christianize those in their care, and the proper administration of the sacraments. The second book pertained to the celebration of mass, the obligation of all parishioners to honor the Sabbath and the feast days and the requirements and expectations for proper conduct for clergy. Book three included stipulations for the public processions and other aspects of Christian doctrine adapted to the local situation; additionally it contains a brief instruction for adjusting the mysteries of the faith to a mode of communication appropriate for the catechization of slaves. The fourth book reinforced the authority of church personnel and the reverence that should be displayed for church property, holy places and other sacred objects; it also includes a number of precepts addressing burials and proper rites for the deceased. Book five dealt with sins and abuses of the faith including heresy, blasphemy, sins of the flesh, witchcraft, superstitions and other magic arts; it stipulated the punishments to be associated with each crime including suspensions and excommunication.

[55] Vide, *Constituições Primeiras do Arcebispado de Bahia* (São Paulo: Editora de Universidade de São Paulo, 2007), 126. Translation by author.

characteristic of the colonial Brazilian social structure.[56] In this formulation, slaves were conceived of as part of familial units that made up the broader socio-religious network.

The precepts that immediately followed this title however, made further distinctions between the capacities and spiritual status of slaves and the rest of the colonial population. Throughout the *Constitutions*, the archbishop reflected on the seeming incapacities of enslaved Africans. He referred to them as "brutos," "boçais," "rústicos," and "rudes" (brutish, uncivilized, rustic, and rude)—connoting a lack of intelligence, culture, and civility that impeded their christianization. To overcome these deficiencies, he instructed his slave-owning parishioners to uphold their responsibility to make sure their slaves received catechism "many times" from "learned and pious people."[57] The Archbishop repeatedly reminded slave owners that the spiritual well-being of enslaved Africans was their responsibility. The Archbishop indicated that slaves, like children, were the spiritual responsibility of their masters, and as such, had to be monitored and mandated to ensure their continued spiritual progression. He even threatened masters to uphold their spiritual obligations to their slaves under penalty of excommunication and the payment of fines for certain offenses. Ignoring the christianization of slaves threatened more than the salvation of the captives; the masters' souls were affected in the process as well. The Archbishop noted that when masters failed to teach Christianity to their slaves or ensure they received proper access to the sacraments such as a Christian marriage, they were "acting in a contrary fashion[…] commit[ing] mortal sin, and tak[ing] upon their own consciences the guilt of their slaves, and thus do they frequently fall into and remain in a state of damnation."[58] While

[56] Laura de Mello e Souza, *The Devil and the Land of the Holy Cross*, 45.
[57] Torres-Londono, Fernando. "As Constituições do Arcebispado da Bahia de 1707 e a presence da escravidão", 277.
[58] Vide, *Constituições Primeiras.* As cited in Conrad, *Children of God's Fire* "Slavery and Church Doctrine," 159.

the archbishop did ultimately allow for a truncated version of the catechism to be employed and baptism to be performed anyway for Africans who proved to be uneducable, he stressed to the vicars and curates that would follow his ordinances that they should use that strategy as a last resort.[59] They should not administer the sacraments under those modified conditions "until they [were] convinced that the masters [had] made a great effort and that, because of the slaves' great ignorance, this was not enough."[60]

Vide's *Constitutions* highlighted the strong overlap, if not a complete confluence, between the religious system and slave regime as it pertained to Africans that emerged in colonial Brazil with paternal white Christian slave masters as essential mediators. Official religious authorities and slave masters, operating as unofficial colonial authorities, were meant to cooperate in a co-management system designed to convert and acculturate the slaves in their care. This paternalistic familial model of Christianity created a position for slaves in which their designation in the spiritual "family" unit mirrored that of their social one in which they were relegated to the very bottom of the communal hierarchy, if included at all. Ideologically, Vide and others authorized this designation through the expression of a patriarchal, hierarchical religious system in addition to an articulation of slaves' diminished abilities in the realms of faith and civility.

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[59] See chapter 2 for a more thorough description of the *Breve Instrução* as it was used for slave evangelization in colonial Brazil.
[60] Vide, *Constituições Primeiras.* As cited in Conrad, *Children of God's Fire* "Slavery and Church Doctrine," 156.

"Others are born to live, them to serve"

The proposal for a more humane, paternalistic slave system did not remain an element of the theological imagination of missionaries and religious authorities in colonial Brazil. The Jesuits and other religious orders in Brazil and the Iberian Atlantic participated fully in the sugar and plantation economies of their colonies and had extensive slave holdings of their own as a means to support their activities in the Americas.[61] The Jesuits owned six different mills in Bahia throughout the colonial period. The Carmelite and Benedictine Orders similarly participated in the plantation economy in the colony, though their holdings were less extensive. Stuart Schwartz has demonstrated that in the mid-eighteenth century, the sugar mills and associated cane farms produced roughly 40% of the annual income of the Benedictines of Brazil. At the height of the sugar economy, in the last decade of the eighteenth century, two-thirds to half of the Benedictine Order's income was derived from the sugar plantations.[62] As scholar Margaret Olsen indicates, historical analysis of Jesuit ownership of plantations has suggested that treatment of Jesuit owned slaves was in some identifiable ways more humane. On the Spanish Jesuit haciendas, for example, the *Instrucciones,* a book of regulations, served as a guide for the administration of Jesuit plantations that encouraged benevolent treatment of enslaved Africans.[63]

Though rare, select sources reveal the philosophies and practices of slave management at work on these plantations in colonial Brazil and offer a sense of what a vision like Vieira's would have looked like in its implementation. The travel account of Henry Koster, a British

[61] The Society of Jesus was one of the largest slaveholding institutions in the Americas, and they retained extensive properties throughout the Portuguese and Spanish Americas.
[62] Stuart Schwartz, "The Plantations of St. Benedict: The Benedictine Sugar Mills of Colonial Brazil,"*The Americas* 39, no. 1 (1982): 3, 11.
[63] Margaret M. Olsen, *Slavery and Salvation In Colonial Cartagena De Indias* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 16.

Protestant traveler to Brazil, offers an extensive report of the system of slave management on the Benedictine plantation, Jaguaribe. He described a plantation system in which labor was "conducted with the greatest attention to the system, and with the greatest regard to the comfort and ease of the slaves." He particularly recognized that the Benedictines ensured that the African slaves were christianized and cultivated a spiritual environment where "children [were] carefully taught their prayers" and slaves regularly sang hymns to the Virgin Mary. He noted that slaves were given time for their own subsistence, were provided with clothing, and had time for rest. Ultimately, Koster's account suggests that the Benedictine monks had managed to cultivate the foundations of a paternal relationship with the enslaved Africans, evidenced for him by his observation that all of the slaves treated the abbot with a combination of "great familiarity" and "respect."[64]

Many scholars have understood the participation of the Catholic religious orders in the slave economy to be an ethical contradiction or an example of Jesuit morality and theology being at odds with their practice. Considering the practice of Jesuit slaveholding through the lens of Jesuits like Vieira, Benci, and Andreoni and their theological vision for colonial Brazil, the use of slave labor on plantations owned and managed by religious orders hardly presented a theological dilemma. Contemporary Jesuits recognized such an arrangement as the proper divine order, and it would not have been fundamentally at odds with the most foundational elements of their worldview and theological commitments. It reveals instead, the most tangible example of their theological commitments in practice.

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[64] Henry Koster, *Travels in Brazil* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1816).

Conclusions

For Vieira, the notion of perpetually inherited servitude for Africans in Brazil was far from discordant with a Christian theology in which the hand of God was immanently at work ordering the temporal realm. He, like many early modern Christians, recognized this concept as one of the foundations of biblical tradition and history. His sermons reflect the thinking of an erudite theologian and missionary practitioner that had carefully mined centuries of tradition, biblical, and extrabiblical Christian sources as the foundation for a worldview that he passionately advocated throughout his life. Atlantic World slavery was merely one piece of this broader worldview, but was nonetheless a significant and constitutive element.

Vieira's worldview was based on a deeply rooted theological conception of Portugal's unique missionary and apostolic calling. He believed that Portugal—the emergent Portuguese empire in inextricable association with the Luso-Brazilian Church—was singularly positioned to bring about the ideal of a universal Christendom and had been divinely tasked to do so. Central to this mission was the goal of bringing all the nations of the world into the Christian fold. Given his intimate knowledge of the colonial project in Brazil and his role in its administration, Vieira felt it was part of his calling to set the tone, provide the ideology, and help direct the infrastructure of colonialism so that it could be in alignment with this ultimate goal—building a religious and social system that would facilitate the coming of God's Kingdom to earth.

The result was an elaborate and thoroughly articulated Atlantic World economy of salvation in which enslaved Africans and their Portuguese masters had mutual obligations in their divinely ordained stations. According to Vieira, to be a "master" or a "slave" in colonial Brazil was not simply an occupation, social role, a matter of color, or economic status, it was a *religious vocation.* And the ultimate redemption of individuals within the colonial system and the

corporate Christian body as a whole depended upon a pious acceptance and fulfillment of the associated requirements of that station. For the blacks of Brazil, Vieira outlined a nuanced theology of suffering. According to his understanding, the horrors and challenges of their vocation served as a process of purification that would compensate or atone for any inherent or inherited immorality. Properly fulfilling their obligations in this hell-on-earth would ultimately allow for their redemption and inclusion into the Christian God's heavenly kingdom in the afterlife.

Vieira was hardly alone in this worldview and this endeavor. Given his influence and his centrality to the religious and political administration of the Portuguese colonial-imperial project, others echoed his proscriptions for the ideal congruence between the Christian slave system and colonial economy. Other Jesuits and secular clergy alike also advocated the approaches Vieira outlined, and the Jesuits, Benedictines and other religious orders enacted these practices and tried to establish a system of "Christian slavery" on their plantations throughout colonial Brazil. Their efforts strongly suggest that these theologies were not mere justificatory schemes to authorize the rampant greed and inhumanity of Portuguese slave masters, of whom they were outspoken critics, though they themselves also participated and benefitted economically from the slave system. Many missionaries and religious authorities of the colonial Americas elaborated lived theologies that would make Christian tradition and biblical history applicable to the colonial environment they confronted. However, in elaborating this lived theology, these figures constructed a religious identity for blacks in Brazil in which their inclusion in colonial Christianity, and ultimately, their eternal salvation was dependent on their acceptance and acquiescence to an inferior religious, social, and economic position as enslaved subjects. The most violent and dehumanizing components of that system—forced dislocation, brutal labor

demands, surveillance, discipline, and harsh punishment—were cast as the precise experiences that would sanctify Africans, releasing them or cleansing them from generations of moral defects, and compensate for their inherited spiritual stains or inherently limited capacities. He believed and advocated that in slavery these blessed individuals from miserable and unfortunate nations were to find their redemption in the Portuguese Christian Empire.

Notions of natives and Africans as infantile, deficient, or resistant in their practice of the faith further bolstered and solidified the notion that it was the divine calling of European Christians to serve in an apostolic role of Christian paternalism. In this role, Europeans were to construct a religious and social system to shepherd these populations toward salvation despite what they believed to be natural proclivities to the contrary. Through preaching and missionary strategizing, evangelizers like Vieira sacralized this already widespread worldview and authorized this spiritually paternalistic relationship. In doing so, he played an important role in solidifying this supposedly divinely ordained hierarchy as the basis of colonial governance.

"Indeed the goodness of my God to my soul is beyond expression; none can know it but those who have felt it; it is a heaven begun upon earth." – Hugh Bryan

"Had any one told me before that illness, that we were to be born again of God, and feel the power of God in our hearts, convincing us that we were the children of God, and making so entire a change in us, as to make us new creatures, and to be so entirely altered, not only in our outward actions, but in our thoughts, words, and desires, as to endeavor to make them all tend to God's glory, or else, that we were not in a state of salvation, I should have thought it very strange, and what could not be true; but now I am very much convinced of it, as that I am now writing. Indeed we may feel the spirit of God in our hearts, and be as sure of it, as that we feel anything we have in our hands." – Catherine Barnwell Bryan

<< Chapter 4 >>
"Into the Household of God":
Hugh Bryan in Eighteenth Century South Carolina

Introduction

On February 5, 1740, Hugh Bryan, a plantation owner in colonial South Carolina, penned a letter to his sister to give an account of his recent conversion. Bryan had long participated in the civic and religious life of the colony. He held commissions in the magistracy and militia, and was a communing member of the Anglican Church in St. Helena's Parish where he served as a vestryman. However not long before, his wife, Catherine Barnwell Bryan, had suffered a "severe fit of sickness" that had profound spiritual consequences for both of them. In reckoning with her illness, Mrs. Bryan became convinced of the "insufficiency of all her religious works and endeavors." Mr. And Mrs. Bryan set on a course of spiritual seeking, which resulted in what they described as a "new-birth" caused by the Holy Spirit. Bryan began "to pray publicly in [his] family, and was more zealous to attend all the means of grace."[1] Their newly discovered religious fervor led them to the evangelical teachings of the charismatic itinerant preacher,

[1] Hugh Bryan, *Living Christianity delineated in the diaries and letters of two eminently pious persons lately deceased: viz. Mr. Hugh Bryan, and Mrs. Mary Hutson, both of South-Carolina* (London : Printed for J. Buckland), 7-9.

George Whitefield. After Bryan's first encounter with Whitefield, he, his wife, and his brother, Jonathan Bryan, were deeply inspired by his preaching and became some of the foremost proponents of evangelical religion in the colony. Over the next decade, Hugh and Jonathan Bryan corresponded regularly with Whitefield and the brothers appear prominently in the evangelist's journals and other writings. They became two of his most dedicated disciples, even serving as the benefactors of Whitefield's orphanage in Bethesda, one of the evangelist's most prized endeavors.

Throughout the course of Bryan's letter, he described in vivid detail the transition from his previous spiritual state to a regenerated one. His spiritual conversion had produced a fundamental change in his relationship to God and his sense of what was expected of him as a member of God's chosen. Bryan recounted the basic tenets of Protestant evangelicalism. He described his evolution from operating within a traditional Anglican worldview that emphasized moral behavior and good works, and its attendant formal style of worship, to a spirituality rooted in the principles of an "awakened" evangelical religion. Based on the fundamental belief in justification by faith alone, evangelicalism required a conversion experience of deep internal regeneration that would instantaneously result in a to total transformation at the level of the soul.

According to Bryan, this "new birth" initiated a profound change in all areas of his life, including his relationship with his African slaves. In his previous spiritual state, he "sought to advance [his] fortune in worldly goods, supporting it to be consistent with [his] duty to God and man." In hindsight however, Bryan acknowledged the disregard he had for his slaves. In his relationships to other men he thought that he had "endeavored to do what was just," but he had "overlook[ed] at the same time that justice which was due to [his] poor slaves, who were spending their strength and lives for [him], and were left in their ignorance and the common

salvation through Jesus Christ." [2] While Bryan, believed that he had previously been "ignorant" and "blind," he had since been "regenerated and changed." He resolved to "put off the old man[…] and put on the new man."[3] In so doing, he committed to transforming his relationship with his slaves accordingly.

In a similar letter that Catherine Bryan wrote to her own sister in October of 1739, Mrs. Bryan likewise shared passionate and sincere accounts of her spiritual transformations. She expounded the joys she experienced with this new "living faith" as well, but ended her letter with a clarifying post-script. She assured her sister that she had "felt and experienced" the spiritual awakening she had described so vividly "before [she] had read Mr. Whitefield's works on the new birth or justification, or heard, or thought any such things were to be felt or known." She did not want her sister to think that she had been "led away by him with his enthusiastic notions, as the world [was] pleased to call them."[4]

This chapter considers the evangelization projects to enslaved Africans in eighteenth century colonial South Carolina through the lens of Hugh Bryan and his religious rivals. It reveals the ways that a diverse and at times contentious religious landscape with competing Christian worldviews and theologies had a direct impact on circulating understandings of black spiritual potential for Christianity and the methods of evangelization that would be employed for black christianization and their religious incorporation to the colonial body. Unlike the colonial environments in the Iberian Catholic Americas that had a more homogenous religious landscape, South Carolina and the British Atlantic more broadly were hotbeds of religious diversity and

[2] Ibid., 7.
[3] Ibid., 8.
[4] Ibid., 23.

competition by comparison. The revivals of the Great Awakening spurred conflicts between Anglicans and radical evangelicals in Charleston that brings this pattern into sharp relief. As Hugh Bryan's religious evolution unfolded, his understanding of his slaves' theological identity and spiritual and temporal relationship to them changed accordingly. An analysis of his spiritual trajectory demonstrates the deep ties between his theological worldview and commitments, his understanding of the theological identity of Africans, and his belief about their proper position in the emergent religious and social colonial system.

Considering Bryan with an eye to his broader colonial context and the responses his religious evolution elicited from his contemporaries reveals broader concerns in the eighteenth century British Atlantic over the nature of "true religion" and proper religious experience. Questions about black bodies and souls—their spiritual nature and capacities—proved to be a pressure point for these debates. Different factions of Protestant Christians sought to determine how, if at all, enslaved Africans ought to be incorporated into the religious, social, and economic world of the British colonies.

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"Surely God's judgments are upon us"

After his evangelical awakening, Hugh Bryan refused to sit idly by when he suspected immoral behavior or evidence of divine disfavor. Therefore, on November 20, 1740, two days after a fire had swept through downtown Charles Town, South Carolina, Bryan penned a letter to a friend that was later published publicly in *The South Carolina Gazette*. In it, he articulated a providential vision by which the people of South Carolina were being punished for their

sinfulness. "Surely God's judgments are upon us," he lamented. "*Is there evil befallen a city, and the Lord hath not done it*?"[5]

No doubt the tragedy had dealt a significant blow to the prosperous port city. In the preceding decades, Charles Town had risen in prominence from a fledgling colonial outpost to a bustling center of trade, commerce, and agricultural success. Reporting on the "unfortunate occasion," *The South Carolina Gazette* recounted that "the wind blowing pretty fresh at north-west, carried the flakes of fire so far, and by that means set houses on fire at such a distance, that it was not possible to prevent the spreading of it."[6] For nearly six hours the flames spread, causing destruction to significant portions of the town. The fire "consumed the houses from *Broad-Street* and *Church-Street* down to Granville's Bastion, (which was the most valuable part of the town on account of the buildings and trade)." Over 300 houses, in addition to storehouses, stables and wharfs that provided goods for the town and surrounding areas, were likewise destroyed.[7]

For Bryan, however, the fire was just one more occurrence in a long list of God's dispensations that proved that it was a time of reckoning for the people of Carolina. Emboldened by the evangelical fervor sweeping the region during the era of the Great Awakening, his call was swift and impassioned for the people of Charles Town to atone for their sins to prevent further calamity because the lowcountry region had suffered a string of catastrophic events in the years leading up to the fire.[8] Summing up those calamities, Bryan lamented,

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[5] *The South Carolina Gazette*, January 15, 1741, "A Letter from Mr. Hugh Bryan to a Friend."
[6] *The South Carolina Gazette*, November 27, 1740.
[7] Kenneth Scott, "Sufferers in the Charleston Fire of 1740," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 64, no. 4 (1963): 203.
[8] In 1738, epidemics of small pox and yellow fever had ravaged the town and surrounding countryside. Simultaneously, the region incurred a serious drought that threatened to drastically limit the available provisions necessary to sustain the population in the upcoming year. In

> [God's] drought hath spoken; his diseases inflicted on us and our cattle have spoken; the insurrections of our slaves have spoken; our *Augustine* expedition hath spoken; the Faithful of CHRIST's Ministers have lately, in a remarkable Manner, been speaking; and the yet later dreadful Fire of *Charles-Town* hath spoken terror: And if we regard not this to lay it to heart, humble ourselves, and repent truly of our Sins; the just GOD will yet pour out upon us more terrible vials of his wrath.[9]

He implored his fellow Carolinians to heed the severity of this situation. He hoped would lead them to "repentance" so that the "fury of [God's] anger may turn away" and Charles Town would not be "utterly consumed."[10]

Bryan was not alone in his belief that catastrophes of such significance should be interpreted as acts of divine punishment. Though "awakened" evangelicals like Bryan comprised a small, but vocal minority of Carolina residents, traditional Anglicans would have ascribed to the belief that the recent events must be interpreted as signs of God's displeasure as well. William Bull, then governor of the Province of South Carolina, issued a proclamation for a "Day of Publick Fasting and Humiliation" to be held on Friday November 28, 1740, ten days after the fire. As a result, the city as a whole would engage in the communal ritual of supplication in an effort to regain divine favor.[11] In one such sermon occasioned by the tragedy, "The Burning of Sodom with its Moral Causes," Reverend Josiah Smith, a Presbyterian minister in Charleston and a more moderate Whitefield sympathizer similarly inspired by the evangelical movement, likened the recent conflagration to God's destruction of the biblical city of Sodom as punishment

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September of 1739, the white population's greatest fears about the control of the black slave population came to fruition when as many as 100 slaves revolted near the Stono River just outside of the town in what was the most serious slave insurrection in the colony's history to date. A failed expedition of the militia against the Spanish Catholic enemies to the South at St. Augustine made the situation in South Carolina all the more dire.

[9] *The South Carolina Gazette*, January 15, 1741, "A Letter from Mr. Hugh Bryan to a Friend."

[10] Ibid.

[11] *The South Carolina Gazette*, December 4, 1740.

for the pervasive immorality of its inhabitants.[12] As Smith reminded his congregation, God would not "idly destroy the works of his own hands" nor lightly choose to "grieve the children of men." Rather, "there must be some sufficient moral reasons assigned for this severe piece of divine conduct." Smith chastised Charlestonians for the vices of wantonness, vile language, improper decorum, lust (including acts of adultery and racial miscegenation) and, most notably, pride. Given such widespread moral laxity, God had clearly sent the flames to purify the "heaps of pollution" produced by the community's acts of depravity. Not only did he intend to prevent further earthly calamities, Smith also saw the fire as a vivid harbinger of the "everlasting burnings" to come if Charles Town's inhabitants continued on the current path ripe with indulgence and immoral behavior.[13]

Like Bryan and Smith, the iterant evangelical preacher, George Whitefield, was well aware of the afflictions that had plagued Charles Town and the surrounding region in recent years. According to a Protestant providential worldview, just one of these events would have

[12] For the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah see Genesis 19:1-29. Whitefield likewise preached a sermon comparing the Charles Town tragedy to Sodom and Gomorrah on December 10th, a few weeks after the fire. He related in his journal: Wednesday December 10: "Had a pleasant passage and arrived at Charleston last night. As we came over the bar, I was informed of a fire, that broke out about three weeks ago, and destroyed three hundred houses in the best part of Charleston in the space of three hours. The news much affected me, because I loved the people, and preached to them this morning from Isaiah i. 9., 'Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom and Gomorrah.' In handling the subject, I endeavoured to show what were the sins which provoked God to punish the Israelits in that manner. I drew a parallel between them and the Charleston people, and then made an application suitable to the solemn occasion of my preaching. May the Lord grant it may produce the desired effect, and be a means of preserving the inhabitants from being cast into that fire, which shall never be quenched!" See George Whitefield, *Journals* (London: Banner of Truth Trust), 502.

[13] Josiah Smith, *The Burning of Sodom, with It's Moral Causes, Improv'd in a Sermon, Preach'd at Charlestown South-Carolina, after a Most Terrible Fire, Which Broke out on Nov. 18. 1740* (Boston, N.E.: Printed by D. Fowle, for Eleazer Phillips in Charlestown, South-Carolina, 1741).

been sign enough that God had expressed his discontent. The confluence of these events suggested to Whitefield that there was severe moral depravity at work in Charles Town. In addition to concerns about the vanity, greed, and pride of the residents of South Carolina, Whitefield also saw a particularly glaring transgression in the poor treatment of African slaves in both the temporal and spiritual realms. Writing from Savannah, Georgia in January of 1740, Whitefield penned a letter, "To the inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-Carolina, concerning their Negroes," in which he admonished the "cruelty" of southern whites that treated their slaves "as bad, nay worse, than as though they were brutes." [14] Even more concerning to him however, was the near total neglect of the *spiritual* condition of black slaves. In his opinion, "enslaving or misusing their Bodies would, comparatively speaking, be an inconsiderable evil was proper care taken of their souls."[15]

Whitefield's condemnation of the treatment of enslaved Africans in Carolina served as a microcosm for his larger criticism of the state of religion in the colony more broadly. In particular, he argued that the Anglican clergy, in their unregenerate state, were failing to properly guide and instruct their congregations, and thereby set an improper moral tone for the rest of society. Bryan echoed the concerns of Whitefield. He, too, believed the clergy had been remiss in their spiritual duties and were guilty of the same vices that then ran rampant in the population at large. "As are the people, so are the priests," he decried, "every one seeking after gain; nourishing their hearts as in a day of slaughter." The clergy were responsible for setting the moral tone of society. And, in Bryan's opinion, the clergy had been remiss in their spiritual

[14] George Whitefield, *Three Letters From the Reverend Mr. G. Whitefield: Viz., Letter I. To a Friend In London, Concerning Archbishop Tillotson : Letter II. To the Same, On the Same Subject : Letter III. To the Inhabitants of Maryland, Virginia, North and South-carolina, Concerning Their Negroes* (Philadelphia: Printed and sold by B. Franklin, 1740), 13.
[15] Ibid, 14.

duties and were guilty of the same vices that then ran rampant in the population at large. The result was "many poor careless souls[…] in every parish that stood in need of being informed of their danger, and of the absolute necessity of being born again of God."[16]

This critique of the clergy was a serious invective against the established church of the colony, and reflected the broader tensions between the dominant religious establishment in Charles Town and those of other denominational and religious affiliations that challenged its religious and political authority.[17] Bryan's letter invoked the displeasure of Charles Town's civic and religious establishment. It further exacerbated existing tensions between evangelicals and more traditional Anglicans that had bubbled to the surface during Whitefield's previous visits. Commissary Alexander Garden, the Bishop of London's representative in Charleston, was particularly vexed by Bryan and Whitefield's critiques.[18] At core, the spiritual dispute between evangelicals and the Anglican conformists centered on the question of the proper means to and nature of salvation. Awakeners challenged the Anglican clergy's moralistic message that

[16] *The South Carolina Gazette,* January 15, 1741, "A Letter from Mr. Hugh Bryan to a Friend."

[17] Religious diversity was a defining characteristic of Charleston society since its founding in 1670. Nevertheless, Anglicans were able to command authority based on their wealth and elite status in society, though they did not make up a majority of the Charleston population at any point during the colonial era. Thus, in 1706, through the Church Men's control of the House of Commons, the Anglican Church had become the established religion of South Carolina. Disputes between the Church Party and Dissenters defined much of the political and social conflicts over the course of the colonial period. And one's religious affiliation did much to determine one's position in society. As Brinsfield demonstrates in *Religion and Politics in Colonial South Carolina,* "in some ways the most lasting, political distinctions the colonists made among themselves were religious in origin." The brewing conflict between traditional Anglicans and Awakeners was simply another iteration of religiously rooted conflicts that dominated Charleston society in the period.

[18] Throughout the colonial period for mainland British North America, the Bishop of London retained spiritual jurisdiction over the overseas territories, and no local bishops were designated in the colonies. As a result, commissaries were appointed as the bishop's representatives as part of the attempts by the Church of England to assert Anglican authority. Their primary responsibility was to establish and preserve ecclesiastical discipline among the clergy and laity of the overseas parishes.

emphasized moral behavior and good works. Instead, they ascribed to the theology of justification by faith alone. For them, true conversion required an experience of regeneration. This "new birth" would be sudden and lead to an instantaneous total transformation. The results of this theology were passionate revivals that drew large crowds engaged in emotive and ecstatic worship. Conformists, by contrast, espoused a more gradual and deliberate pathway to grace that manifested itself in formal and reserved styles of worship in the traditional Anglican churches.

Over the course of the next several years, an impassioned public debate ensued between these evangelicals, namely Whitefield and Bryan, and the religious and political establishment of Charles Town. The various contours of this debate spoke to a variety of converging tensions that had been bubbling beneath the surface of Carolina colonial life and the larger British Atlantic. Through pamphlets, letters, newspapers, and other publications, white colonists articulated competing visions of what God's kingdom on earth should look like in practice—particularly how should it be accessed and maintained, who should be included, and what roles they should inhabit therein. Questions about the correct means to achieve salvation, acceptable behavior and styles of worship, and the proper spiritual and social role of black enslaved and free people in the colonial order dominated the debate. In the midst of these concerns, the black body and soul took center stage as it was deemed to be the principal threat to the well-being and stability of the colony at the same time that slave labor was the primary source of its prosperity.

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"This is what may be expected from converting Negroes!"

Commissary Garden rejected Whitefield's assessment of the poor physical treatment of slaves as "false and injurious," and asserted that "the very reverse of it [was] true."[19] Garden did admit, however, that Whitefield's claims regarding the neglect of the spiritual well-being of Carolina's bondsmen were more accurate: "As to the little or no proper care taken by owners of the souls of their slaves, it is too sad a truth; and I tremble to think, what account they will give of it at the great day!"[20]

From their arrival in the Americas in the early years of the eighteenth century up until the American Revolution, Anglican missionaries deployed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts regularly lamented the general disinterest of Carolina slaveowners for christianizing their slaves. Writing to the Secretary of the Society in 1709, SPG missionary, Francis Le Jau, indicated that many Carolinians "by their whispers and conduct" made it clear that "they would not have me urge of the contributing to the salvation, instruction and human usage of slaves and free Indians."[21] Such reports were so common among the American missionaries that in 1727 the Bishop of London penned a letter exhorting masters and mistresses to prioritize the conversion of the enslaved population. Speaking of the number of unconverted slaves in the American colonies, he wrote:

> I find the numbers are prodigiously great; and am a little troubled, to observe how small a progress has been made in a Christian Country, towards the delivering those poor creatures from the pagan darkness and superstition in which they were bred, and the making them partakers of the light of the gospel, and of the blessings and benefits belonging to it. And, which is yet more to be lamented, I find there has not

[19] Alexander Garden, *Six Letters to the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield* (Boston: Re-printed and sold by T. Fleet, 1740). See letter six, "On his letter concerning the Negroes."
[20] Ibid.
[21] Francis Le Jau, *The Carolina Chronicle of Dr. Francis Le Jau: 1706-1717* (Millwood, N.Y.: Kraus Reprint, 1980), 50.

> only been very little progress made in the work, but that all attempts towards it have been by too many industriously discouraged and hindered.[22]

The masters and mistresses had many reasons for being remiss in their evangelization efforts, not least of which was their belief that blacks, by nature, lacked the spiritual capacities for proper participation in the Christian community. Le Jau reported that "many masters can't be persuaded that Negroes and Indians are otherwise than beasts, and use them like such."[23] The result was a colonial atmosphere in which enslaved Africans and Indians were understood to be largely outside the bounds of the religious and social body.

Since the founding of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) in 1701, Anglican missionaries such as Samuel Thomas and Francis Le Jau had taken up the cause of slave evangelization in spite of the opposition, but they failed to make significant inroads. That was in part due to the reticence of white Carolina slave owners to consent to the evangelization of their slaves, but there were larger theological beliefs that influenced the structure of the missionary project as well. Le Jau's letters to the Society suggest two competing impulses that led to a fundamental paradox undergirding Anglican Christianization efforts to enslaved Africans. While serving as a missionary on the Caribbean island of St. Christopher shortly before coming to his missionary post in South Carolina, Le Jau's assessment of African spiritual capacity was largely positive. He found many of his black catechumens "generally sensible and well disposed to learn."[24] Yet, his assurance was tested when he confronted the reality of the mission environment in the Carolina lowcountry. A mere six months after his arrival, Le Jau had

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[22] Edmund Gibson, *Two Letters of the Lord Bishop of London: The First, to the Masters and Mistresses of Families In the English Plantations Abroad; ... The Second, to the Missionaries There* (London: printed by Joseph Downing, 1727), 13-14.
[23] Le Jau, *The Carolina Chronicle,* 55.
[24] Ibid., 11.

suspicions about immoral proclivities of some of the slave population. He reported in April of 1707, "the Negroes are generally very bad men, chiefly those that are scholars."[25] His concerns about certain "Negro scholars" became all the more pronounced in 1710 when he reported to the SPG Secretary that one black slave, "the best scholar of the Negroes in his parish,[…] create[d] some confusion among all the Negroes in this country."[26] This slave, who had seemed to Le Jau very "sober and honest," had "put his own construction upon some words of the Holy Prophet's which he had read," anticipating an imminent day of judgment. He prophesied directly to his master that "there would be a dismal time and the moon would be turned into blood, and there would be a dearth of darkness." Other enslaved Africans overheard him, and "it was publicly blazed abroad that an angel came and spoke to the man, he had seen a hand that gave him a book, and he had heard voices, seen fires, etc."[27] Writing to his superiors, Le Jau assured them that the situation had been resolved, but he nevertheless, feared the consequences. He suspected that not all Africans could be instructed in the faith without danger of their learning becoming corrupted in the process. Le Jau lamented:

> I fear that those men [Africans] have not judgment enough to make good use of their learning; and I have thought most convenient not to urge too far that Indians and Negroes should be indifferently admitted to learn to read, but I leave it to the discretion of their masters whom I exhort to examine well their inclinations. I have often observed and lately hear that it had been better if persons of a melancholy constitution or those that run into the search after curious matter had never seen a Book...[28]

[25] Ibid., 24.
[26] Ibid., 70.
[27] Ibid., 70 and 74.
[28] Ibid., 70.

Le Jau maintained his belief in the spiritual capacities of blacks generally, but retained a host of concerns about moral deficiencies in some of the black population that further influenced his catechization strategies.

Under his system, black Christian salvation persisted as a possibility, but tended to be the exception rather than the rule. Le Jau committed to evaluating slaves on a case-by-case basis. He observed their behavior and character carefully and relied on the testimonies and assurances of their masters that they demonstrated potential for pious Christian behavior. He assured the SPG Secretary, "I will baptize none but such as lead a Christian life and of whom I have a good testimony."[29] While his standards to admit Africans for baptism were high, he was even more meticulous in his evaluation of slaves before admitting them to the sacrament of communion. In 1709, he reported that 450 "heathens and infidels" remained unconverted in his parish. And while "pretty many" blacks had been baptized, he listed only two black communicants in his church.[30] He admitted only "the most sensible of [the] slaves[…] to the Holy Sacrament."[31] He would then use the select blacks that had been admitted to communion to serve as an example for reluctant slave masters to allay their fears that Christianization made blacks undutiful or rebellious.[32] The Anglican missionary's repeated emphasis on the "sensibility" of potential African converts underscores his commitment to Anglicanism as a "rational" faith and reflects the developing division between reason and enthusiasm that marked the religious conflicts of the period. Le Jau's suspicion continued to be a defining feature of his missionary project. When rumors or conspiracies of slave rebellions surfaced, he carefully examined the blacks of his

[29] Ibid., 24.
[30] Ibid., 50.
[31] Ibid., 136-7.
[32] Ibid., 125.

parish to assess their involvement. When an intended insurrection was being investigated in the Goose Creek parish in 1714, Le Jau was relieved to determine that none of the blacks in his parish were involved in the plot. He garnered further assurance from his prized, sensible black communicants that if they ever were to become aware of such a future conspiracy they would report it to him directly.[33]

Like Le Jau, many white Carolinians had begun to articulate a link between black religion, fanaticism, and rebellion that bolstered their resistance to slave conversion projects. In 1723, limitations were placed on slave gatherings at church due to the fear of potential uprisings.[34] Missionaries testified time and again that one of slave owners' most common objections to evangelizing their slaves was their belief that christianizing slaves made them proud, intractable and rebellious. Reports of religiously inspired rebellion abroad also reached the ears of Carolina residents, and further fueled their anxieties. *The South Carolina Gazette* reported the news of a foiled slave conspiracy in Antigua in 1737 that was set to take place over the Christmas holidays. Many of the Africans involved in the plot were literate and had been taught the Christian religion following the methods that the Bishop of London proposed. When recruiting other slaves into their ranks, the *Gazette* reported that the rebellious Africans in Antigua had mixed Christian teachings with African religious forms of expression.[35] Carolina residents may have interpreted these developments to mean that even when missionaries employed rational modes of Christian instruction, the irrational proclivities of Africans could corrupt Christian teachings. Many came to the conclusion that converting their slaves was a futile and even dangerous endeavor. A Carolina resident lamented the fact that white Carolinians

[33] Ibid., 136-7.
[34] Varnod to SPG, January 13, 1723, series B, vol. 4, no. 132, SPGLB.
[35] *The South Carolina Gazette,* April 30, 1737.

were increasingly convinced of the threat of slave christianization. He summed up a common response to the news of the Antigua plot proclaiming, "Insurrection, Murder and Blood[…] This is what may be expected from converting Negroes!"[36] If slave evangelization were to continue, white Charleston residents hoped to proceed cautiously and only incorporate those they deemed most worthy of the slave population.

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"Rather enthusiasm than religion"

It was in this context of the broader religious and social climate that the evangelical fervor of the Great Awakening took hold in Charles Town. Swept up in the spiritual atmosphere, Hugh Bryan's theological approach toward his slaves followed suit. Even prior to his religious awakening at the hands of Whitefield, Bryan had demonstrated some concern for the spiritual state of his slaves. As early as 1734, he and two other Carolinians corresponded with the Associates of Dr. Bray, a missionary and philanthropic organization founded by Rev. Thomas Bray located in Maryland that worked for the conversion and religious education of enslaved Africans. They requested materials to be used for slave catechization, and subsequently confirmed receipt of "three parcels of books containing in each 3 Bibles, 30 primers, 30 small spelling books, 30 horn books, 20 testaments and 30 psalters… for instruction of their Negroes."[37] Though there is little evidence to show exactly what Bryan's efforts at slave evangelization looked like in its earliest stages, the requested materials indicate that he was

[36] *South Carolina Gazette*, July 23, 1737.

[37] John C. Van Horne and Associates of Dr. Bray (Organization), *Religious Philanthropy and Colonial Slavery: The American Correspondence of the Associates of Dr. Bray, 1717-1777* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 72. The original letter has been lost, but records from the meeting minutes of the Associates of Dr. Bray include reference to a letter from Bryan confirming receipt of the catechization materials.

encouraging literacy among his black catechumens, and therefore was likely following careful and methodical catechization practices similar to those Anglican missionaries had espoused in the Carolina lowcountry in recent decades. If so, Bryan's initial efforts at slave christianization likely communicated a hierarchical religious system to his slaves. He would have appealed to methods of reason to impart Christian doctrine, encouraged their learning through reading and comprehension of the faith, and promoted controlled, pious behavior. As he indicated in his letter to his sister, prior to his conversion and new birth, he prioritized good works and external compliance to Christian tenets in his religious life, and was largely devoid of intensity of religious feeling and commitment. This form of Christianity had bred a relationship of social distance with his slaves in which he had not actively reflected on their spiritual experiences or the spiritual obligations he might have to them.

After his experience of regeneration however, Bryan's efforts toward the religious instruction of his slaves appears to have shifted dramatically. Evidence from Whitefield's journals suggests that the itinerant encouraged the Bryan brothers, Hugh and Jonathan, to commit to opening a Negro school with a dedicated head master in charge of religious instruction.[38] In that context, Bryan's efforts to christianize the enslaved community with newfound zeal and devotion took on a more evangelical tenor. Around that time, Lewis Jones, another SPG missionary working in St. Helena parish near the Bryan plantations, became frustrated with the numbers of blacks expressing interest in evangelical forms of religion of the kind Whitefield and the Bryans were championing. Writing to SPG authorities, Jones lamented that it was "rather enthusiasm, than religion" that inspired recent converts in the area. The fact that Bryan's followers claimed "to see visions, and receive revelations from heaven and to be

[38] George Whitefield, *Whitefield's Journals*, 451.

converted by an instantaneous impulse of the spirit" further discredited the movement in the eyes of Anglican authorities.[39]

Though little evidence remains about the specifics of Hugh and Jonathan Bryan's negro school, the activities of their missionary efforts were sufficiently disruptive and notorious such that, less than two years later in February 1742, Hugh Bryan found himself in trouble with the colonial government. The Commons House of Assembly initiated a committee to investigate a response to a public grievance reported regarding religious meetings for the enslaved blacks in St. Helena's Parish. The accounts of the investigation identified Bryan as responsible for "great bodies of negroes [that had] assembled together on the pretense of religious worship." Given that these meetings were "frequent and numerous" and the knowledge of them so "public and notorious," the committee requested that immediate legal action be taken against Bryan and his associates. According to the Commons House of Assembly, these gatherings were "contrary to law, and destructive to the peace and safety of the inhabitants of [the] province." Fellow evangelicals, Jonathan Bryan, William Gilbert, and Robert Ogle, were also implicated for their involvement in "preaching to [enslaved blacks] at private houses without authority for so doing."[40]

Those charges would have been serious in and of themselves, but Bryan's evangelical fervor continued to progress to prophetic new heights. His condemnation of the immorality of white Charlestonians reached a breaking point. Bryan twice ventured into town to implore the governor to heed his warnings. When the political establishment failed to adequately acknowledge his prophetic calls, Bryan submitted a journal containing his prophecies to the

[39] Lewis Jones to Dr. Bearcroft, December 12, 1743, BR 1 26, SPG.
[40] J. H. Easterby, R. Nicholas Olsberg, and Terry W Lipscomb, *The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly* (Columbia, S.C.: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1951), 72.

speaker of the colonial assembly. He publicly predicted an imminent insurrection of slaves that would cause the destruction of Charles Town.[41] His journal foretold of an imminent apocalypse in which "Charles Town and the Country as far as PonPon bridge [would] be destroyed by fire and sword, to be executed by the Negroes before the first day of next month."[42]

Between the trances and visions that Jones described in his letter, the complaints of Bryan's contemporaries, and the prophetic proclamations that Bryan himself delivered to the colonial administration, it is clear that the intensity of Bryan's evangelical spiritual practice had led him into the realm of mysticism and prophetic religious zeal. He ventured far from the rational, controlled Anglican faith that he had known prior to his conversion, that had determined his relationship with his slaves, and that still structured much of religious and social life in the colony. In his new spiritual state, the boundaries of social and spiritual distance that had formerly governed Bryan's relationship with his slaves thinned dramatically. Through intense and emotive beliefs and forms of worship, he seems to have begun to conceive of and practice a more egalitarian spiritual order. As his theological commitments shifted, so too did his perception of the ideal model for social relations as it related to enslaved Africans. He fervently advocated a radical reformation in the colonial order to match his "converted" notion of the theological identity of black Africans. As he experienced resistance from his contemporaries and the broader colonial establishment, Bryan's religious zeal increased in intensity. Ultimately, he saw no way to reconcile his vision and commitments with the current state of the colonial milieu. His religious passion provoked him to call for nothing short of a complete destruction of the religious

[41] Neither the journal nor specific recordings of Bryan's prophecies have been found. Scholars speculate that colonial authorities destroyed the journal was destroyed given the dangerous and seditious nature of its contents.

[42] Eliza Lucas Pinckney, *The Letterbook of Eliza Lucas Pinckney* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1997), 30.

and social order to be enacted by black Africans—the very subjects that were denied a meaningful place within it.

These "enthusiastic prophecies of the destruction of Charles Town, and the deliverance of the negroes from their servitude" greatly troubled the assembly, which thereby recommended that the court take "effectual and speedy measures[…] to prevent and suppress" Bryan and his comrades.[43] The white population of Carolina would not have taken such threats of insurrection lightly. Just three years earlier they had seen their greatest fears realized as the enslaved population rose up against them during the Stono Rebellion.[44] In September of 1739, approximately sixty to one hundred enslaved blacks revolted near the Stono River just outside of Charles Town. More than twenty white settlers were killed before the militia intervened and apprehended the rebels.

The specter of the Stono Rebellion loomed large over the conflict between Bryan and Carolina's authorities. The religious establishment was already wary of "awakened" evangelicals that meddled in the colony's slave order and explicitly or implicitly challenged the legitimacy of the status quo. In Whitefield's infamous letter regarding the treatment of slaves, he had gone so far as to muse: "I have wondered, that we have not more instances of self-murder among the

[43] *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly*, J. H., R. Nicholas Olsberg, and Terry W Lipscomb, eds, (Columbia, S.C.: Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1951).

[44] Enslaved Africans had been present since the earliest days of the colony, having arrived with the first white settlers in 1670. Over the colonial period the enslaved population continued to grow. Charles Town, as the largest port of the lower South, was one of the preeminent suppliers of enslaved Africans to the rest of the colonies prior to independence. From the beginning of the 18th century to 1776, over 93,000 slaves entered through the port, which equaled more than 40% of all slaves brought into the colonies during that period. Many of the imported slaves remained in South Carolina. By the second generation enslaved Africans made up the majority of the colony's inhabitants and their numbers steadily rose over the rest of the colonial period. In the urban center of Charles Town the population was roughly evenly split between blacks and whites for most of the eighteenth century.

Negroes, or that they have not more frequently rose up in arms against their owners. Virginia has once, and Charlestown more than once been threatened in this way."[45] Commissary Garden refused to let Whitefield's denunciation of Carolina's slave order go unchecked. He responded, chastising him for meddling in affairs that "may endanger the peace and safety of the community."[46]

Living in the immediate aftermath of the worst slave revolt attempted in the colony's history, the white residents of Charles Town remained on guard for any possible threat of insurrection. They reacted with horror to Whitefield and Bryan's proclamations. They feared that slaves and free blacks might overhear the "enthusiastic prophecies," which could fuel a sense of righteous indignation in them that would certainly incite further rebellion. Bryan's apocalyptic prophecies in particular had caused alarm and panic among the white population of Charles Town. Writing to her friend Mrs. Cheesman in March of 1742 shortly after the prophecy came to light, Eliza Lucas Pinckney recalled the "fearful apprehensions for the consequence of Mr. B[ryan's] prophecy" that her friend had displayed on their last meeting.[47] Rumors circulated that Bryan and his "African Hosts" were gathering weapons and ammunition and "encamped in the wilderness" to prepare for their siege.[48]

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[45] Whitefield, "A Letter to the Inhabitants…" in *Three Letters From the Reverend Mr. G. Whitefield* (Philadelphia: Printed and sold by B. Franklin, 1740).
[46] Alexander Garden, *Six Letters to the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield* (Boston: Re-printed, and sold by T. Fleet, at the Heart and Crown in Cornhill, 1740), "Letter VI. To the Reverend Mr. Whitefield."
[47] Pinckney, *Letterbook*, 27.
[48] *Boston Weekly Postboy*, May 3, 1742.

“Had not divine providence interposed”

Religious and civil authorities suppressed Bryan’s prophesied insurrection plot as much out of fear of the eccentricities of black religious expression as out of fear of black violence. Variants of black religion posed a threat to the Protestant Christian worldview, and that challenge was a source of consternation for white Christians with strong convictions about proper belief and religious expression. Questions about the nature of black spirituality fanned the flames of the public crisis over the nature and substance of “true” religion. These concerns added another dimension to a complex religious landscape where white Christians were already embroiled in conflicts between Protestants and Catholics and Anglicans experienced tension with other dissenting denominations and emergent factions of evangelicals about proper belief and religious expression. The distinctions between Christians and pagans, heathens, or infidels had historically been a more concrete and well-defined boundary.

Nevertheless, the question of who was, in fact, in possession of divine favor continued to weigh on the minds of white Carolinians. Over the course of the eighteenth century, the general sentiment grew in the colony that blacks were susceptible to “bad religion.” Their fanatic, enthusiastic, and irrational religious beliefs and forms of worship, it was believed, fueled inclinations toward seditious activity. White colonists remained convinced that their adherence to “good religion” ensured that they would prevail should any challenges to the social and spiritual order arise. In letters and reflections written after the Stono and Antigua plots, white colonists regularly reflected on the good fortune that God had intervened on their behalf. One writer exclaimed: “What success so well laid a scheme would have had is too plain, had not divine

Providence interposed." [49] Maintenance of the master-slave social order was not beyond the realm of God's intervention. Just as slaves might be inspired to revolt based on false, incomplete or even diabolically inspired religious revelations, the Christian God regularly intervened to ensure that the proper relation between the white Christian settlers and their black slaves remained intact. With each foiled insurrection plot, white colonists believed they had further evidence that they were on the right side of God's providential designs.

As scholarship has shown, providential thought and retrospective narration of events with an eye to God's designs was a common theological tradition among eighteenth and nineteenth century Protestants from a variety of backgrounds. Rather than seeing the Christian God's plan as limiting human agency, those who ascribed to this tradition sought to discern God's will and align individual behavior and communal order such that human action would be an affirmation of providential designs. It also operated as one of the primary modes of narrating and making meaning of lived experience.[50]

Thus far, Providence had largely been on the side of the white settlers, but the Stono Rebellion was a near miss. Whitefield played on potentially lingering anxieties to that effect in his letter when he reflected: "And though I heartily pray God they may never be permitted to get the upper hand; yet should such a thing be permitted by Providence, all good men must acknowledge the judgment would be just."[51] Whitefield's, Bryan's and other radical

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[49] Referring to foiled insurrection plot in Antigua in 1736. From *The South Carolina Gazettte,* December 11, 1736.

[50] For more on the role of providential thinking among evangelicals in 18th Century South Carolina and Georgia see Phillippa Koch, "Slavery, Mission, and the Perils of Providence in Eighteenth-Century Christianity: The Writings of Whitefield and the Halle Pietists," *Church History* 84, no. 2 (June 1, 2015): 369–93. Koch demonstrates how eighteenth century protestants' defenses of slavery and their understandings of the evangelical responsibilities slave owners had to their bondsmen had roots in this theological tradition.

[51] Whitefield, "To the Inhabitants…"

evangelicals' pronouncements seemingly undermined the religious and racial order of the colony, and threatened the very theological underpinnings of white Carolinians understandings of providential order. With his prophetic proclamations, Bryan inverted the ownership of moral authority, putting forth a vision of a religio-social order in which enslaved Africans were the chosen of God rather than the morally and spiritually inferior wards of their white masters or potentially excluded from the Kingdom of God altogether as the current prevailing religio-social models ordained.

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"Horrid blasphemy and nonsense"

Bryan's challenge to the status quo briefly shook the very foundations of Carolina's religio-social order. However, it was quickly rejected as "enthusiasm." In the ensuing battle over the nature of "true" religion throughout the British Atlantic, the charge of enthusiasm was one of the most damning for evangelicals. The passionate, emotive religious expression of evangelicals stood in sharp contrast to the rational, sensible faith of traditional Anglicanism. For Commissary Garden, enthusiasm as presented by Whitefield and others was seductive, but ultimately was the most dangerous of all "religious maladies." Whereas "Atheism, paganism or deism" and "Judaism, Mahometism or Popery" were still "within the reach of all the arguments and conclusions of natural reason," enthusiasm was entirely out of reach.[52] Evangelicals claimed to have direct access to spiritual guidance and revelation "without any rational objective evidence, or clear and sufficient proof." As a result, Garden believed them to have a false sense of their

[52] Alexander Garden, *Regeneration, and the testimony of the spirit. Being the substance of two sermons lately preached in the Parish Church of St. Philip, Charles-town, in South-Carolina. Occasioned by some erroneous notions of certain men who call themselves Methodists* (Boston: re-printed, and sold by Tho. Fleet, at the Heart and Crown in Cornhill, 1741).

own infallibility that deeply threatened the hegemony of the established Anglican order.[53] Garden made targeted efforts over the course of the early 1740s to correct the appeal of enthusiastic religion. He delivered sermons and published letters and pamphlets targeting enthusiasts broadly, and Whitefield's seductive rhetoric and manner of speaking that was "adapted to take the ear and excite the passions of his hearers" in particular.[54] Garden and other traditionalists believed enthusiasm to be evidence of weak and frantic minds. For them, true Christianity was a sensible faith. Eliza Lucas warned that those that rejected reason "refuse[d] that assistance which the bountiful Author of our being has naturally revealed to us and set up in every man's mind." Enthusiasts like Bryan "highly dishonor our religion" when they "affirm there is anything in it contrary to reason."[55]

Since South Carolina's founding, its charter included tenets of religious tolerance that made it a safe haven for various groups of persecuted European Christians. The bounds of that tolerance were not limitless, however. Colonial authorities quickly intervened when religious expression crossed the border into what they deemed "fanaticism." The idea that Bryan and other enthusiasts might receive direct revelations from God had the potential to threaten the social order, particularly if those kinds of revelations came from or influenced the wrong sorts of people—the enslaved black population first and foremost. One Carolina resident wrote in to *The South Carolina Gazette*, appalled at Bryan's consistent gatherings of "[c]abals of Negroes about him without public authority, at unseasonable times, and to the disturbance of a neighborhood." Rather than instilling his enslaved population with the true and proper "principles of

[53] Ibid.
[54] Alexander Garden, *Take Heed How Ye Hear* (South Carolina: Printed by Peter Timothy, 1741), 13.
[55] Pinckney, *Letterbook.*

Christianity," the author believed him to be "filling their heads with a parcel of phrases, trances, dreams, visions and revelations."[56] The people of South Carolina found Bryan's actions all the more troubling because of his social status. Far from a fanatic on the fringes of colonial society, Bryan was a member of the elite, a preeminent planter, an accomplished member of the militia, and therefore was deeply ingratiated into the colonial establishment. He held the positions of lieutenant, captain, and major. Over the course of his military tenure, he had been intimately involved in expeditions against internal and external threats to the colonial order. It was deeply troubling to other Carolina residents that someone of Bryan's status and renown was now propagating designs that encouraged the rebellion of the slaves, one of the very threats he had recently protected against.[57] "For him to engage in activities so contrary to the character of his class implied a weakening of the consensus that sustained the colony's racial arrangement."[58]

As Bryan's ordeal continued to unfold, he proved to be decisively on the wrong side of the division between reason and enthusiasm in Carolina society. Evangelicals and traditional Anglicans alike rejected his excursion into religious mysticism and the eccentricities of his new religious beliefs and expressions. Shortly after delivering his journal to the Assembly, Bryan, led by an "invisible spirit, with which [he] conversed so familiarly for many days, went out into the wilderness where he expected to be able to work miracles. He took a rod and attempted to divide the waters of a river to pass through on dry land. Instead, he fell "splashing and sputtering the water about with it, till he was quite up to the chin; and his brother, who had pursued him as fast

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[56] *The South Carolina Gazette*, April 24, 1742.

[57] *As* recently as 1739, Hugh Bryan, Jonathan Bryan and other Port Royal resident members of the militia had sought reimbursement for the expense by which they retained a scout boat and watchmen to survey the region in response to Spanish threats from St. Augustine that might lead to the desertion of slaves.

[58] Harvey Jackson, "Hugh Bryan and the Evangelical Movement in Colonial South Carolina," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (Oct., 1986): 596.

as he could had enough to do to save him from being drowned." [59] This final iteration of his prophetic visions had gone too far. His prophecies were decidedly discredited as "horrid blasphemy and nonsense."[60] What began as an anxiety-provoking threat to the very foundations of the colonial order became a comical cautionary tale of the dangers of evangelical enthusiasm gone awry. Writing to a friend, Eliza Lucas mused, "I hope he will be a warning to all pious minds not to reject reason and revelation and set up in their stead their own wild notions."[61]

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The Anglican Response to Slave Evangelization

Bryan's rapid fall from grace had the effect of further solidifying the majority of Carolina colonists' convictions that Africans were unfit for Christianity and that slave evangelization begat improper and enthusiastic religion that tended to instigate seditious activity. It also served to reinforce the emerging associations between black religion and chaos, disorder, insurrection and danger in the slave holding society. Understanding the challenges of the current political and religious climate in the aftermath of the Bryan affair, a few of the remaining advocates of christianization of the enslaved population sought to rectify the situation in a public letter published in *The South Carolina Gazette* a few weeks after Bryan's ordeal had ended. Josiah Smith and James Parker strategically avoided mentioning Bryan by name in their appeal, in order to divorce slave evangelization from the eccentricities of the Bryan affair. They instead referred directly back to the Bishop of London's letter as the guiding moral authority on the subject.

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[59] "Extract of a Letter from South Carolina," Mar. 22, 1742, in *Boston Weekly Post-Boy*, May 3, 1742. As quoted in Jackson, "Hugh Bryan and the Evangelical Movement in Colonial South Carolina," 608-609

[60] Easterby, *Journal of the Commons House of Assembly,* 3:461; Boston Weekly Postoby, May 3, 1742

[61] Pinckney, *Letterbook*, 27-30.

Using the bishop's own words, they sought to "awaken in [slave masters] a religious concern for the instruction and salvation of negroes, under their respective charge." To make their loyalties clear however, they stated unambiguously that they "humbly submit to the wisdom of our superiors, whether, and how far, attempts of this nature may be thought to deserve their public protection, countenance and sanction."[62] For the Carolina planter class at large however, the pleas of the evangelicals fell on deaf ears. The evangelical fervor that been instigated by Whitefield's visit waned as Bryan's actions confirmed their fears that enthusiastic religion posed an imminent threat to the established order. Evangelical religion and concerted efforts toward the Christianization of the slave and free black population were repressed and ridiculed.

For the majority of Carolina residents in the early to mid-eighteenth century, evangelical religion remained a threat to the established religious and social order and the enslaved population continued to be regarded as an internal threat to the safety and order of the colony. Though blacks were the decisive majority of the population, at the level of the white religious and social consciousness, they continued to be relegated to a marginal status. That reality paralleled the virtual absence of any widespread efforts to incorporate them into the broader Christian community. More moderate white Charlestonians resisted attempts to have large numbers of blacks congregate or engage in activities geared toward their religious education. Enslaved blacks and the evangelicals that attended to them remained on the periphery of Charleston's religious community in the ensuing decades.

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[62] *The South Carolina Gazette,* April 17, 1742. Similarly, in the aftermath of the Antigua slave insurrection a Carolina colonist adamantly defended the virtue of slave christianization. Contrary to popular notions among the white population, he argued that it was actually the lack of Christian religion among the slave population that led to seditious activity. He failed to write further on the issue, however, as "prudence and our safety forbids" it. See *The South Carolina Gazette,* August 6, 1737.

Similarly, in the decades that followed the Great Awakening disputes, the Stono Rebellion and the Hugh Bryan Controversy, Christian outreach to Charleston's black population proceeded cautiously and not without considerable and vocal opposition from the majority of the white Protestant community. Anglican efforts for religious education to Charleston slaves did progress. As a staunch opponent to revivalism, Commissary Garden could not allow Bryan's success among the African population to be the final word on slave conversion. As part of an effort to counter Whitefield's claim and to offer a more suitable alternative to the enslaved population that was becoming increasingly receptive to and inspired by evangelical forms of Christianity, Garden and the SPG put plans in motion to open a Negro School in Charleston that would be firmly rooted in the established tenets and practices of Anglicanism.[63] The school opened in 1743, and two enslaved blacks were purchased to serve as the school's teachers. Garden personally educated the catechists Andrew and Harry to prepare them for the task. It was far from coincidental that the catechists were enslaved. Garden sought to send the message in concrete terms that evangelization and conversion did not beget freedom and that their spiritual salvation would not correspond with an alteration of their social status. In a letter written prior to opening the school, Garden outlined the rationale for this structure. The enslaved students should be taught "by Negro schoolmasters, home-born, and equally property as other slaves, but educated for this service, and employed in it during their lives, as the others are in any other services whatsoever."[64] Fitting with Anglican theology, Garden staunchly supported clear

[63] For more on Garden's Negro School see Fred Witzig, "Beyond Expectation: How Charles Town's 'Pious and Well-Disposed Christians' Changed Their Minds About Slave Education During the Great Awakening," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 114, no. 4 (2013): 286-315. and Travis Glasson, *Mastering Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), Chapter 4: "Masters and Pastors: Anglicanism, Revivalism and Slavery, 1740-65."

[64] As cited in Glasson, *Mastering Christianity*, 124.

demarcations of social status that were intended to correspond with one's divinely ordained social position.

Garden's chosen evangelization style likewise mirrored the rationalism of traditional Anglican theology. In a sharp departure from the evangelical style of the revivalists and a return to the style of catechization that the early SPG missionaries advocated, the students of Garden's school were taught to read as a means to convey the fundamentals of Christian doctrine and religious ritual. Where revivalists had emphasized an instantaneous conversion inspired by an ecstatic worship experience, more traditional Anglicans like Garden encouraged a process of gradual religious instruction that would guard against any inclinations toward enthusiasm.

Over the course of its 22 years of operation, the school had regularly enrolled thirty to seventy students at a time for daily instruction. Though this number would have made up only a tiny fraction of the city's sizable black population, the SPG largely considered the school to be a success. As Robert Olwell argues in *Masters, Slaves and Subjects*, the conclusion that scholars have come to about the relative failure of Anglican efforts at slave conversion rests on a fundamental "misconception of how the Anglican Church actually functioned and a false assumption that mass conversion of the entire slave community was what the church establishment desired."[65] In keeping with the hierarchical understanding of the divine and social order that motivated the Anglican imagination, church authorities and the white membership were selective about admitting black congregants and communicants. When they did so, they were admitted to a carefully proscribed position within the church body. As Nelson argues in *The Beauty of Holiness*, "the fact of sin meant that the church militant would not and could not be

[65] Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, & Subjects: The Culture of Power In the South Carolina Low Country, 1740-1790* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), 199.

free from internal hierarchies and distinctions. Complete unity and equality in the church was reserved for the Church Triumphant, divorced from this world, fully redeemed, and free from sin. The Church Triumphant was a church— a *corpus*—hoped for but not yet seen." By contrast, the "church militant" was the body of believers "understood to be under reconstruction after the fall [of man]." Man's sinful nature "also meant that there was division in the ranks, both between denominations of the Church—made explicit in the Reformation—and within any local gathering."[66] Notions of the inherent connections between sin and the flesh would have further reinforced circulating beliefs that skin color and other physical features might be a physical manifestation of a theological state or natural condition that indicated the place of different populations within the hierarchy of the body of Christian believers.

These elements of theology and doctrine directly impacted the aesthetics and structure of Anglican churches in Charleston and defined the limits of black incorporation into the ritual and spiritual space of the High Church. All elements of the worship experience from the liturgy to the physical organization of the church interior were designed to reinforce understandings of proper order. Heavily scripted Anglican sermons stood in sharp distinction to the passion and fervor of the evangelicals' worship experiences. The Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* provided a strict structure and regularity to services and sacramental experiences. The white population's increasing concerns about the threat the black population posed to the body politic and their notions of limited spiritual capacity or an inferior spiritual status for blacks were mutually reinforcing. Between 1740 and 1810, there is only once instance of a black member receiving the Eucharist recorded in Charleston Anglican records "suggesting that the earlier drive to draw

[66] Louis P. Nelson, *The Beauty of Holiness: Anglicanism & Architecture In Colonial South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 181.

blacks to the Eucharist had waned."[67] Black congregants were similarly relocated in the physical space of the church as the 18th century progressed. Anglican churches constructed galleries to segregate black and white worshipers into distinct sections.[68] This would have been a very explicit gesture given the well-established association of pew location and social rank that was a fixture of Charleston Anglican culture and had longstanding roots in English tradition more broadly.[69] As the racial order of Charleston crystallized "slaves occupied the margins of the buildings, taking only those spaces left over by the fixed seating."[70]

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"Into the Household of God"

Meanwhile, the religious and civil establishment intervened, and arrested Bryan to subdue the threat his prophecy had posed. Their swift action along with Bryan's failed mission immediately curbed his enthusiastic religious leanings.[71] A short time later, he publicly retracted his previous pronouncements, and claimed that they had stemmed from "delusions of Satan." He begged for forgiveness, and apologized specifically for the "dishonor [he had] done to God, as well as the disquiet which [he] may have occasioned to [his] country." He recommitted himself to the present political order, and implored his peers to remember his former reputation as an upstanding and respected member of the community. In a final post-script, he sought to dispel

[67] Nelson, *Beauty of Holiness*, 239.
[68] They even went so far as to use different metals to distinguish the collection plates for white and black donations. See Nelson, *Beauty of Holiness* 239.
[69] Ibid., 310.
[70] Ibid., 326.
[71] Though there is little evidence of Bryan's formal punishment, Jonathan Bryan reported to a friend that in their case with the court "everything had gone against them; yet the Lord helped them through gloriously, even though it did cause him expense and effort." George Fenwick Jones, "John Martin Boltzius' Trip to Charleston, October 1742," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 82, no. 2 (1981): 102.

any lingering fears about where he stood on the divide between the source and nature of spiritual truth, writing: "P.S. May we all keep close to the Law and to the Testimony of our God, and hearken to no other revelation for divine Truth."[72] He made subtle concessions that seemed to favor good works and reason over enthusiastic religion and direct revelation as the proper pathways for religious devotion. In sum, he articulated a strong message of renewed support for the established religious, social, and political order. Carolina residents could rest assured that Bryan's delusions and the threat that accompanied them were cured. For the time being at least, Garden's earlier assessment that Whitefield's discourses would eventually "appear what they really are[…] a medley of truth and falsehood, sense and nonsense, served up with pride and virulence, and other like saucy ingredients" had come to fruition.[73]

In the aftermath of the incident, Hugh Bryan did not entirely abandon his evangelical convictions however, particularly as it related to the religious education of slaves. It seems clear that he had reached an epistemological closed door when his more radical spiritual commitments and experiences could not gain traction in the temporal realm and that he was forced to reevaluate his religious worldview and his social relations accordingly. In particular, his penchant for mysticism and radical prophetic visions waned. However, he did not backtrack on his commitment to evangelical forms of Christian faith entirely. Instead, he crafted a more moderate form of a lived evangelical theology that was able to reconcile a personal, affective Christian experience with the realities of the colonial and slave environment. In the assembly's

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[72] *The South Carolina Gazette*, March 6, 1742.

[73] Alexander Garden, *Regeneration, and the Testimony of the Spirit: Being the Substance of Two Sermons Lately Preached In the Parish Church of St. Philip, Charles-Town, In South-Carolina. Occasioned by Some Erroneous Notions of Certain Men Who Call Themselves Methodists* (Charlestown: printed by Peter Timothy, 1740).

investigation of the Bryan affair, the committee reviewing the case made it clear that a master's jurisdiction extended only over the souls of his own slaves. Therefore, Bryan's activities were considered unlawful first and foremost because Bryan had improperly extended his spiritual jurisdiction beyond the bounds of his own household. As his spiritual evolution continued to unfold, he transitioned from a radical and egalitarian evangelicalism that aimed to more fully incorporate Africans into the corporate body religiously and socio-politically to an evangelically inspired Christian paternalism that incorporated enslaved Africans under terms of dependency and theological and social inferiority. The Bryans came to understand their relationship to their slaves as paternal stewards of their souls. They aimed to inhabit a role as spiritual fathers to enslaved Africans. Envisioning the relationship to their slaves through a familial model enabled evangelicals like Hugh and Jonathan Bryan to uphold and reinforce hierarchical notions of spiritual and social status, while still engaging enslaved Africans from a position of sincere religious devotion and an emotionally rooted theological framework.

As evangelicals like the Bryans and Whitefield embraced a more personal and affective faith, their changing understanding of the nature of religion and their relationship with the divine necessitated a parallel shift in their conceptualization of their theological relationship to their slaves, and therefore to the master-slave dynamic itself. In 1743, an anonymously published letter that historians have since attributed to Whitefield directly addressed the recently converted slaves on Jonathan Bryan's plantation.[74] In it, he relied on the metaphor of the household of God to convey to enslaved Africans the form that the spiritual realm takes on earth and their ordained place within that divine order. He addressed the letter to the enslaved as his "brethren in Christ,"

[74] See Stephen J. Stein, "George Whitefield on Slavery: Some New Evidence," *Church History* 42, no. 2 (1973): 243–56.

and described them and their masters as being together as part of "one fold" following "one shepherd."[75] Based on their evangelical conversion, blacks and whites were thus in "mutual fellowship" both "in this world, and in that to come."[76]

Whitefield's title and extended use of the metaphor "Household of God" in the body of his letter underscores this shift among evangelical Christians from this largely exclusive paradigm to one that envisioned the master-slave relationship in paternal or familial terms. The family, being the most inclusive relational model possible was a radical departure from the dominant model at the time. Bryan himself, had acknowledged that in his "unregenerate state" he had taken little care or concern for the spiritual needs of his black slaves. As Bryan had admitted, he, like many white Christian Carolinians, had previously "overlooked" his slaves' spiritual state and left them "in their ignorance" as it related to Christian salvation.

In his turn from a radical and socially prophetic evangelical faith to a more personal evangelical faith, he incorporated enslaved Africans into his worldview in a more paternal capacity. Subsequent passages in his diary written in the early 1750s offer evidence of how this spiritual awakening produced an attendant paradigm shift at the level of consciousness that resulted in subtle, but profound changes to the master-slave dynamic. When Bryan fully embraced the paternalist Christian framework, he simultaneously crafted and expressed bonds of intimacy and affection that shattered the previous boundaries of spiritual distance. As further excerpts from Bryan's journal reveal, he took his duty as "father" of his slaves to heart, particularly as it concerned their spiritual well being. Regarding them as members of his spiritual

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[75] *A Letter to the Negroes Lately Converted to Christ In America. And Particularly to Those, Lately Called Out of Darkness, Into God's Marvellous Light, At Mr. Jonathan Bryan's In South Carolina. Or A Welcome to the Believing Negroes, Into the Household of God* (London: Printed by J. Hart, 1743), 2-5.

[76] Ibid., 7.

household meant that he was keenly attentive to the fact that the state of their souls reflected directly on his own spiritual progress. Therefore, his writings reveal an anxiety about the state of his slaves' salvation, and he rejoiced when there was evidence of their Christian development. He wrote, I "was enabled, by the divine assistance, to speak with freedom to my poor *Negroes*, and to pray with them, with some enlargement of heart. Blessed be God for the gift of his quickening spirit to some of them. O that my *whole household* could be prevailed upon to embrace the offers of his grace!!" In contrast with his previous efforts to christianize his slaves using spelling books and primers or communing with them through more ecstatic forms of religious worship, his christianization methods adapted to fit his new theological outlook. Bryan employed unstructured conversations and heartfelt prayers as his ideal paternal modes of evangelization.

As part of this new model and framework, Bryan understood that as the patriarch of his Christian family unit and the paternal steward of the souls of all within it, he was exclusively responsible for their salvation. In fact, his own salvation was intimately tied to all of the members of this spiritual family. In his efforts to fully embrace and embody this new evangelical spiritual identity, Bryan appears to have felt this anxiety over the salvation of his slaves so acutely to the point that he would lay awake at night with the thought of it. In the same stream of consciousness as he petitioned for the spiritual salvation of his wife, who he referred to with affection as his "bosom partner," he similarly prayed fervently on behalf of his slaves:

> My dear bosom partner lay near my heart, and with strong fervor of soul I besought the Lord to manifest his glory in her heart, and fill her with the joys of his acceptance and love. My poor Negroes I presented as usual to the Lord, as a part of my charge for his acceptance and blessing. I did not forget his poor persecuted saints, and the success of the gospel. I lay down again and slept; awoke at day, arose to prayer; was filled with the fullness of my God[…] I presented the case of my bosom-partner again to the Lord, and he gave me an answer of acceptance. My Negroes also, I again recommended his

> blessing. My soul never more delighted in him, nor longed more to quit this earthly tabernacle, to be fixed with him in the perfection of holiness.[77]

In the private pages of his diary, Bryan recounted his most personal and intimate thoughts and desires. He expressed a deep piety and longing to be reunited with his God and achieve spiritual ascendance. Yet, he mediated his own spiritual self-actualization through this paternalistic metaphor of his "household." The black souls of his slaves could no longer be invisible or excluded from his theological imagination as he now understood their Christian redemption to be intimately bound up with his own. As Bryan lay awake at night and arose in the morning, concerned for his own salvation, black souls were front and center in his consciousness and he beseeched the Lord for their deliverance.

This evangelically rooted familial bond did not produce earthly equality, however. Protestant evangelicals' framework of Christian paternalism similarly drew from longstanding notions of Africans' innate moral and spiritual inferiority and was based on fundamental assumptions about their limited spiritual capacities. Whitefield's letter to recently converted slaves made explicit the connection between Africans' spiritual backwardness and the need for a paternalistic system in which white Christians provided a moral example for Africans who were being called out of "the darkness of [their] nature-state, into God's marvelous light."[78] Based on these moral defects, Whitefield suggested that Africans had been pre-ordained by God to suffer in a servile role on earth as part of a spiritual penance:

> And whereas your Station in the World, is mean and servile: care not much for it; for he that is called in the Lord, being a Servant, is the Lord's Free-Man. Let me beseech you therefore, my beloved Brethren, to abide with God, in the same Calling wherein you are called. It is God, that by his all-wise Providence, hath made you Servants of Men. And though he hath now called you into his *own Family*, to be his *own Children and Servants;* he doth not call you hereby from the *Service of*

[77] Bryan, *Living Christianity Delineated,* 101-2.
[78] *A Letter to the Negroes Lately Converted*, 15.

> *your Masters according to the Flesh; but to serve him* in *serving them,* in obeying all their lawful Commands, and submitting to the yoke his Providence has placed you under.[79]

According to those that embraced this paternalistic ethos, obedience and suffering were a part of the spiritual duty that God required of enslaved blacks that they might receive their spiritual reward in the afterlife. If they performed their earthly role with diligence and deference in the "Household of God below," they would thus be welcomed properly "into his Family above."[80]

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Conclusions

We see that for Hugh Bryan, a transition to evangelicalism, a more affective and personal faith, led to new forms of religious subjectivity and epistemology that influenced his spiritual and social identity and his understanding of his spiritual relationship to his African slaves. Through Bryan's extreme spiritual evolution, it is possible to track his transition to become an early advocate of a form of Christian paternalism that would later become the defining southern ethos. Bryan crafted a proslavery paternalism that sincerely aligned with foundational tenets of evangelical religion, but did not challenge the very foundations of the religious, social, and economic colonial project of which he was a part.

In the historiography of the antebellum South, paternalism has been interpreted largely as an accommodation to the pressures of the slave society that pious white Christians could not resist. However, it is my contention that this interpretation misses an important piece of the puzzle, in that it obscures the many willing white evangelicals that embraced paternalism

[79] Ibid., 21.
[80] Ibid, 32.

organically as a theology that reconciled their theological commitments and their role as slave masters in light of circulating beliefs about limited black spiritual capacities.

There has been a degree of skepticism among scholars however, about the degree to which that ideology infiltrated the religious lives of slaveholders themselves, and thereby truly influenced their treatment of the enslaved. The question of to what degree these notions of paternalism accurately reflect the internal psychological and theological processes of slave masters is a difficult one to answer, and is made more challenging by the paucity of sources that give us access to this realm of slave master's interiority. Analysis of Bryan's letters and diary suggest however, that some paternalistic masters *did* in fact internalize these theological identities at the most intimate levels of consciousness. The fact that the spread of paternalist theologies followed the general pattern of religious awakening in the South suggests that there was a theological transformation that provided the underpinning of the slave owners' embrace of the paternalistic master-slave relationship that had robust roots in a real piety—distorted though it may have been—that must be accounted for. Though this form of evangelically rooted Christian paternalism did not spread widely in the U.S. South until the nineteenth century, Bryan and his contemporaries put forth and developed an ideological vision of a utopic master-slave dynamic that harmonized the spiritual identities of blacks with a white Protestant society becoming more deeply entrenched in its identity as a plantation society.

Conclusions

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On April 3, 1622, at the age of forty-two, Peter Claver professed his four vows—poverty, chastity, obedience, and obedience to the will of the pope with regard to missions—and formally entered the Society of Jesus in Cartagena de Indias. Preceding his signature on the documents for his ordination, he included a dedication writing, "Love, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Ignatius, Peter, my own Alonso, Thomas, Laurence, Bartholomew, my saints, patrons and my intercessors and *those of my beloved negroes*, hear me." He then signed his name, "Petrus Claver," followed by three words that would come to define his legacy: "*aethiopum semper servus*"—"slave of the negroes forever."[1] For the next thirty years of his life, he committed himself to living out his vision of that apostolic mission. Reports collected a few years after Claver's death to contribute to a campaign for his beatification emphasize Claver's humility in serving the slaves in Cartagena. They report how he brought enslaved Africans gifts, tended to the sick, and prioritized their baptism and catechization above all. Some of the descriptions are harrowingly vivid. They describe Claver covering bodies of the deceased, wiping away human waste with his cloak, tending to lepers with compassion, and even licking their wounds. Claver's reputation for saintliness continued long after his death. He has been memorialized in the history of Colombia, the Jesuit Order, and the Catholic Church as a symbol of Christian charity and an early defender of the rights of blacks. He was formally canonized in the Catholic Church in 1888. In Colombia, Claver's feast day—September 9th—is celebrated also as the national day of Human Rights in his honor. A museum and cathedral in Cartagena de Indias celebrates his legacy and commitment to an inclusive Christian vision.

[1] Ángel Valtierra, *Peter Claver: Saint of the Slaves* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press), 71.

Like Claver, in some form or another, the subjects of this study have been recognized for the progressiveness of their beliefs and actions as it relates to their treatment and christianization of enslaved Africans. Alonso de Sandoval's treatise was the first and only book-length account dedicated exclusively to the condition of enslaved Africans and methods for their christianization in the Iberian Americas. Antônio Vieira adamantly defended the right and necessity for the christianization of enslaved Africans and American Indians throughout his career, leading many to describe him as an early promoter of human rights. Hugh Bryan and George Whitefield were among the most vocal critics of the brutality and inhumanity of the system of slavery in their time. Through their pleas to their contemporaries and their own efforts toward the christianization of blacks in their colonial environments, each of these figures simultaneously articulated a vision for more humane treatment of enslaved Africans. They insisted upon Africans' humanity, their ability to be spiritually redeemed, and their inclusion in Christian communities. These figures protested the excesses and extreme violence of emergent slave systems and made impassioned calls for the implementation of forms of "Christian slavery"—ranging from encouraging moderate amelioration of the developing systems to articulating more radical visions of reform. They were not abolitionists in any substantive sense of the term, as none of them outright denied the validity of slavery on religious, ethical, or legal grounds. Yet, they have been variously characterized as proto-abolitionsts given that their religious commitments inspired them to elaborate ideologies of common humanity between Europeans and Africans that, in some sense, laid the ideological groundwork for religiously-rooted abolitionist sentiments that would emerge more substantively in the nineteenth century.

The goal of this study is not to wholesale refute these legacies or even to undermine the possibility that these men's ideas and practices were at the forefront of broader ideological

movements toward human rights long before the rest of their contemporaries. Nor is the aim to argue that Christianity and the religion of European colonizers largely served as *a posteriori* justifications, rationalizations, or smokescreens for the broader political and economic forces of their day. It has been a fairly standard historical and historiographical assessment that through the colonization of the Americas and the emergence of the slave trade, European Christian colonizers utilized Christian doctrine as a means to justify the domination of foreign peoples to satisfy their own aims of power, greed, and ambition. There are no shortage of scholarly accounts that describe how carefully chosen scripture passages, otherworldly theologies, and myths of divine curses placed on the peoples of Africa were deployed to these ends. Certainly, even faithful Christians like Acosta, Sandoval, Claver, Vieira, and Bryan were not immune to the effects of larger societal forces and pressures, but it is far too simple to turn to economic and political motivations as the "real" forces at work behind their efforts to articulate the bounds of a theological and religious system that aligned with the colonial order given what we know about their theological commitments. These men are well known to historians and scholars of religious history as thoughtful Christians, who were engaged in complex theological thinking at a critical time in the history of the evolution of the Christian faith. And it would similarly be an anachronism to imagine that for colonial subjects writ-large, social and political motivations were devoid of theological meaning or were deployed solely in an instrumental fashion in the early modern period. Instead, this study holds those seeming paradoxes in a productive historical and theoretical tension. It suggests that concepts that may appear to the modern analytical eye to be paradoxical— namely Christianity, racialization, and enslavement—in fact were readily reconciled and even promoted as theologically harmonious by leading religious authorities, evangelizers, and theologians of their day. It embraces the complicated nature of the legacies of

these figures as it explores the broader significance of their ideologies, beliefs, and practices in the history of Christianity, racialization, and enslavement in the Americas.

This project suggests that a fuller picture of the cooperation of religious meanings and racializing ideologies and practices emerges when theological ideas, religious practice, economic ambition, and political strategy are not seen as mutually exclusive. What has been missing from the scholarship of these processes is a sustained effort to situate early modern religious authorities and evangelizers at the forefront of conversion efforts and colonial governance within their broader theological and epistemological milieus. Such a move requires that we take the theological imaginary of these early modern actors seriously on their own terms. As Luis N. Rivera reminds us regarding Spanish colonialism, which rings true for Europeans in the early modern period more generally:

> The sixteenth-century Spanish debates had a peculiarity that the historian has to understand and respect, if they are not to be distorted. They were engaged principally in theological and religious conceptuality. Perhaps the main defect of modern studies of the age consists in not recognizing the primacy of the theological discourse in sixteenth-century ideological production.[2]

Following this call, this study begins with the premise that the foundation of the worldviews of colonial evangelizers emerged from particular theological and intellectual traditions. Therefore, their impulses and motivations stemmed from those influences and dictated the bounds of what was thinkable as they set about fulfilling their apostolic mission in various colonial contexts.

The dissertation has specifically analyzed the theological motivations and missionary practices of evangelizers devoted to the christianization of enslaved Africans in the early colonial Spanish, Portuguese, and British Americas. It identified and examined how these influential

[2] Luis A. Rivera, *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), xv.

figures metabolized conceptions of difference that emerged from their encounters with new people groups and the colonization of new territories. A closer look at the missionary texts, discourses, methods, and practices of black christianization in the early modern period reveals a complicated world in which evangelizers, religious authorities, and slave owners assessed and evaluated in theological terms the spiritual nature and varying spiritual capacities of Africans. The challenges that evangelizers confronted in the christianization process influenced emergent beliefs that different populations of the world had limited spiritual capacities for Christianity, and therefore likely possessed different spiritual constitutions. Through this process, early modern European Christians assessed and categorized essential difference at the level of the soul. Individual and communal salvation depended on having answers to these questions about the redemptive potential of different populations, and the conclusions that European Christians reached had profound effects on the emergent structures, systems, and categories of colonial environments. While those at the forefront of evangelization projects remained resolute that all populations of the world could be among God's chosen, many came to the conclusion that not all had to be considered equally within the earthly social and religious systems. In fact, for effective christianization to occur, they determined that it was essential that Africans inhabit a social and spiritual station that matched what they deemed to be their particular spiritual condition and limited capacities. They employed evangelization strategies that they likewise targeted to the perceived diminished capacities of their catechumens and that further circumscribed them in a position of spiritual dependency and inferiority. They advocated that the colonial environment should be structured to accommodate and compensate for these spiritual differences.

The dissertation examined this process connectively, beginning with a broader Atlantic World scope before exploring how this process manifested in the evangelization projects of some

of the most influential evangelizers of enslaved Africans in the Spanish, Portuguese, and British Americas. Despite the differences in time period, location, theological background, and colonial environment, the broad contours of this process of spiritual racialization can be evidenced in each case. Each of these figures was resolute in their intention to bring non-Christian populations into the faith and believed unequivocally that they had sufficient capacity for christianization. They were similarly vocal in their criticisms of the spiritual neglect of Africans and some of the dehumanizing excesses of the current slave system. Nevertheless, in elaborating the terms of a system of christianization that was constructed on notions of limited black spiritual capacity, they defined the terms for and constructed religious and social systems of spiritual racialization in each of their colonial contexts.

In these cases, Sandoval, Claver, Vieira, and Bryan utilized methods of evangelization and catechization that reinforced the spiritual inferiority of their catechumens. Through their discourses and missionary practice, they relied upon the material and affective experiences of enslavement to "translate" Christian religious and theological concepts. In doing so, they constructed systems of colonial Christianity and a particular black colonial Christian subjectivity in which Africans' identity as Christians was construed as fundamentally inextricable with their experiences as enslaved subjects. These evangelizers defined enslavement as theologically necessary, divinely ordained, and spiritually redemptive. They sacralized the elements of New World slave systems that most intimately impacted enslaved people. They sanctioned methods of surveillance, obedience, discipline, and punishment and believed that they offered spiritual atonement and refinement that would enable Africans to overcome their supposed deficiencies and immoral proclivities. The foundations of these theological-colonial systems required

Africans to exist in a state of spiritual dependency for their salvation to occur. The result was that white Christians were called to inhabit a relationship of Christian guardianship and stewardship.

This conceptualization took form in what I have termed an Atlantic World economy of salvation that ultimately authorized forms of Christian paternalism. Christian paternalism, of which we can find many instantiations throughout the Atlantic World, further reinforced assumptions about the limited capacities of colonized populations and notions of an implicit and explicit hierarchy of spiritual, moral, and civic capacity. It functioned, at least ideologically, as a system of mutual obligation and white stewardship over black and native bodies and souls. This system justified their exclusion from full civic membership and, in the case of blacks, often rationalized the rapidly expanding system of perpetual slavery. It likewise offered a paradigm that enabled the alignment of the divine economy and the temporal economy. Within the paradigm of paternalism, notions of Christian brotherhood, care, charity, concern, and even intimacy and affection coexisted seamlessly with systems of colonial control and domination.

This analysis of the theologies and practices of these evangelizers illustrates that processes of spiritual racialization functioned on two registers in colonial environments in the Americas. Not only did debates and discourses exist that questioned or outright denied the capacities of Africans to successfully convert or reach the heights of the Christian faith, but even those who saw Africans and Indians as possessing spiritual potential for Christianity often still articulated a theological vision in which their only way of achieving redemption was through a subordinated role in the religio-social and economic environment that had profoundly racializing effects.

It is easier to identify and imagine European Christians that outright denied the humanity of Africans or completely rejected the notion that they could or should be converted to

Christianity as engaging in a kind of spiritual racialization. It has not been as immediately transparent to identify the ways that evangelizers like the subjects of this study—those that were often the most vocal in defending the humanity of enslaved Africans, demanded that colonists should attend to their spiritual lives and conversion, and critiqued the brutalities of slave treatment under some manifestations of the slave system—were also engaged in generating ideologies and practices of spiritual racialization. However, a more substantive engagement with their ideas and writings suggests that they were often the prime architects and proponents of a complex form of spiritual racialization that, in many cases, was far more pervasive and foundational to the religious-colonial complexes that defined these societies.

What might it do to our accounting of racialization to acknowledge that a significant foundation for racializing ideologies and practices emerged from the theological imaginaries of white Christians—from their sincere acts of devotion and piety, their efforts to spread the gospel and christianize black slaves with sincere concern for their spiritual salvation, and even through acts or relationships that they conceived of and described as intimate and loving? As José Rabasa argues, colonialism built its foundation as much on the "hate speech of conquest" as on the "love speech of peaceful colonization, evangelization and protection." He notes that

> Hate speech is pervasive, indeed, constitutive of colonial situations, but the implantation of colonial rule and the subordination of colonial subjects cannot be reduced to a modality of hate speech. 'Love speech' is as central to colonization as spurting offensive yet injurious stereotypes. The challenge is to understand love speech as a powerful mode of subjection and effective violence.[3]

And, as Daniel Nemser reminds us, both hate speech and love speech are discourses that "involve racial ideologies and give rise to racializing projects of ascription and

[3] As cited in Daniel Nemser, *Infrastructures of Race: Concentration and Biopolitics In Colonial Mexico* (Austin, Tx.: University of Texas Press), 63-64, 12.

subjectification."[4] We have been trained to think of race, racialization, and racism, in terms of hatred or fear of the "other" that resulted in exclusion, segregation, and dehumanization. It can be far more instructive however, to uncover and grapple with the more nuanced, often ambivalent, and seemingly inclusive processes and practices by which European colonizers constructed notions of essential difference and to trace those ideological and social effects. In doing so, we begin to identify racialization in love speech as well as hate speech and in inclusive practices as well as exclusive ones.

Narrating the history of the encounter and colonization of the Americas through this theological lens that reflects more accurately the worldview of the Europeans engaged in these "New World"-making enterprises gives us tools to radically reformulate our conceptions of early American societies and systems of colonial governance in terms of their relationships with the "others" in their midst and the rise of the slave regimes. In this pursuit, sites of evangelization are central locations for more sustained historical and theoretical analysis. As vocal religious authorities in their respective colonial contexts, figures like Jesuit and SPG missionaries, Catholic and Anglican bishops, evangelical preachers, and pious slave owners provided the theological and ideological foundations for conceptions of essential difference and promoted some of the most defining elements of racializing colonial systems. Conditions of servitude, constant vigilance over the bodies and souls of native and black peoples, paternalistic ideologies, control tactics utilizing intimidation, fear, and extreme methods of discipline emerged as reasonably and arguably necessary within the theological logic that structured the thinking of the age.

[4] Ibid.

There is no doubt that ideologies casting broad parallels between the spiritual condition and slave status and asserting that Africans' enslavement was divinely ordained served the needs of white colonists. European Christians benefitted tremendously from the transatlantic slave trade and an economy built on the backs of free African labor. However, without requisite attention to the theological foundations undergirding the colonial enterprise we cannot fully grasp the power of the racial ideologies that imagined Africans as divinely conditioned to labor and serve. In these early phases of colonization, the practice of racial slavery grew as much out of the logic of the theological system as the theological system was molded and stretched to fit the practice of racial slavery. As such, a more comprehensive analysis of the white theological imaginary from which notions of spiritual essential difference emerged can deepen our understandings of the roots of modern racialization.

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This project contends that spiritual racialization, through various forms and modes, was a pervasive form of racial difference in the early colonial Americas. In making such a claim, the goal is not to deny or negate other modes and methods of racialization that simultaneously coexisted, emerged from, or cooperated with this process. It merely aims to draw scholarly attention to a theology, ideology, and practice of racial difference that heretofore has largely escaped scholarly attention.

The hemispheric and Atlantic World scope of the project made visible insights regarding the co-constituting nature of race and religion that could only have emerged through analysis from that perspective. Studies on conversion and colonialism in the early Americas in the Iberian-Catholic Americas and the Anglo-Protestant Americas have tended to remain circumscribed by colonial boundaries, and an even greater chasm has existed between the

scholarship on racialization across colonial lines. The scholarship on the history of modern racism has been heavily influenced by a Northern European, late modern philosophy of racialization in which "race" was described as something fixed, unchangeable, and rooted in bodies. According to these accounts, racialization relied on phenotypic and somatic descriptors to classify and create hierarchies among people groups.[5] In this sense, race seemed to glean its power from its essential nature—its fixity, or at least the illusion thereof. Given this prevailing understanding of the genealogy of racialization, scholars of colonial Latin America have been cautious to label the systems and structures of discrimination that oriented those societies as "race." By contrast, early forms of religiously rooted intolerance that were ubiquitous in the early modern period and that were particularly pervasive in Latin America and the broader Iberian Atlantic World have been dismissed as having little direct tie to emergent ideologies and practices of modern racialization. When historians of Latin America have used the term at all, they have tended to qualify its meaning to indicate that the distinctly religious and fluid character of early modern Iberian ideologies and systems of difference distinguish them from the purportedly more rigid, secular manifestations of racialization that emerged in the British Atlantic World. Nevertheless, by interrogating these assumptions about what constituted racialization and tracking and attending to similar dynamics of articulating and enacting systems

[5] For examples of this dominant scholarly interpretation see: Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation In the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Audrey Smedley, *Race In North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview* (Boulder: Westview, 1993); and George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002). For additional analysis on the limitations of this scholarly approach to the study of race see Sylvester A. Johnson, *African American Religions, 1500-2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom* (New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2015), 391-393.

of difference across colonial lines in the early colonial Americas, this less explicit process of racialization can be more clearly evidenced.

Historians and theorists have contended that religious forms of naturalizing difference likewise should remain distinct from accounts of modern racism. Following this line of thinking, "religion" is a cultural trait that is subject to individual choice or will. Because of its purportedly "mutable" nature, categories of religious difference could not have had the same racializing influence as subsequent forms of difference—rooted in the body—that could not be changed. Historical emphasis on conversion would seem to bolster those claims. If the possibility of conversion existed, then any religiously rooted articulations of difference could be erased through processes of conversion and christianization. However, the groundbreaking historical work of Martínez, Goetz, and Kopelson that demonstrated the myriad of ways that European Christians perceived religious differences to be inscribed upon bodies and passed along genealogical lines fundamentally challenges this interpretation. The rise of ideologies and practices that sought to track spiritual differences that new Christians retained in their physical bodies and passed genealogically, such as *limpieza de sangre* statutes and notions of hereditary heathenism, reveal that for early modern Christians conversion did not result in a complete transformation at the level of the soul or the body. They believed instead that some residue of religious difference persisted in the body beyond baptism and conversion.

Nevertheless, as this project demonstrated, early modern Christians classified souls as well as bodies, and their efforts to account for perceived differences among the populations of the world had as much of an emphasis on the spiritual capacities of racialized populations as on their physical characteristics. The evangelizers and colonial actors in this study recognized physical differences and did articulate a desire to understand and account for phenotypic

distinctions in some cases. However, their primary concern centered on ontological questions about spiritual capacity and salvific potential that evaluated ethnic others first and foremost at the level of the soul. Examined more closely, for them, conversion did not operate as a total transformation to a white spiritual ideal, which they ultimately conceived of as unattainable for black souls. Instead, they constructed the conversion process as a reconstitution of the subjectivity of their catechumens. Conversion—through a series of processes, discourses, and rituals—would transition black converts to a particular black Christian subjectivity in which their identity as Christian was intimately bound up with their subjectivity as enslaved persons and the particularities of their experiences of enslavement.

This dissertation underscores this process of racialization that occurred on a spiritual level that largely evaded somatic evaluations. Ultimately, however, rather than reifying the binary between bodies and souls, future versions of this project will explore the ways that early modern Christians did not conceive the body and soul as having such a rigid distinction. In many cases, they connected these ideologies of limited spiritual capacities and spiritual stains to the physical bodies of non-European peoples and articulated theologically rooted philosophies in which bodies were exterior reflections of the capacities or nature of the soul. Early modern Europeans sought biblical explanations for perceived differentials in redemptive potential that had somatic components. The Curses of Ham and Cain increasingly served to explain this problematic in a theological framework. The notion of a spiritual curse or inheritance manifested physically corresponded with co-existing ideologies of purity of blood or hereditary heathenism in which stains of lineage could be passed through generations. In this sense, the body was understood to be both representative of and a literal conduit for a presumed spiritually deficient inner character. Rather than operating as the sole or even primary metonym for

discourses of essential difference however, the body represented exterior reflections of the soteriological state of the soul. The somatic, then, is better understood as a cultural symbol for other less tangible qualities and processes constituting difference, rather than continuing to regard the phenotypic as the source of racial difference itself.

Spiritual racialization has not been identified as a form of racialization thus far in scholarly accounts in part because, as a process, it belies many of the fundamental indicators scholars have employed to identify racialization historically. It did not necessarily reference bodies or phenotype, it was often ambivalent, it did not always manifest as "essential" or "fixed" in nature, and it operated both exclusively and inclusively. According to those metrics, it would hardly qualify as a form of racialization at all. However, an increasing group of historians and theorists of racial formations have challenged and sought to redefine the metrics by which racialization is identified historically. Geraldine Heng, for example, has fundamentally challenged somato-centric approach to analyzing racialization. She writes:

> So tenacious has been scientific racism's account of race, with its entrenchment of high modernist racism as the template of *all* racisms, that it is still routinely understood, in everyday life and much of scholarship, that *properly* racial logic and behavior *must* reference biology and the body as their referent.[6]

Like Heng, Barnor Hesse, María Elena Martínez, and others have systematically rejected much of the previous scholarly consensus around what race is and how it operates. Instead, they have called for an interrogation of the way racialization operated historically in a more nuanced way. In doing so, they have not only dismissed the primacy of phenotypic evaluations, but have also called for a move away from identifications of discourse, ideology, and modes of thinking as the essence of race and racial operation. Heng identifies race as a "structural relationship;" Hesse

[6] Geraldine Heng, "The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages," *Literature Compass* 8, no.5 (2011): 319.

defines it as a "system of governing through a colonial relation of power;" and Martínez undertakes a historical exposition of the theological and juridical system of *limpieza de sangre* as a "system of race."[7]

Sylvester Johnson's recent work *African American Religions, 1500-2000: Colonialism, Democracy and Freedom*, effectively summarizes the contributions of these scholars and their new accounting for the history of racialization.[8] He, too, indicates that for contemporary scholars to effectively identify and analyze historical racial formations, they must undertake the more rigorous work of identifying race, not through the traditional metrics, but instead through an analysis of "*what race is* and w*hat work it performs.*" [9] His analysis defines race as a "colonial form of power." Colonial relations and colonial governance are central to how these scholars define and locate racializing practices. As Johnson stated succinctly, for the purposes of his study "colonialism is the essential matrix of racialization. It is what makes race."[10]

These scholars all effectively demonstrate that race is made in the *doing, acting, constructing*, and, in that sense, historians and theorists of race must identify it by its effects. As Johnson summarizes, Martínez's work reminds us that studies of racialization have long been hindered through the tendency to only identify race in discourse and rhetoric or to consider it operating historically "when attested by a specific grammar that names race as "*race*" or a

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[7] See Geraldine Heng, "The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages," *Literature Compass* 8, no. 5 (2011): 315-331; Barnor Hesse, "Racialized Modernity: An Analytics of White Mythologies," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30, No. 4, (2007): 643-663; and María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza De Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008).
[8] Sylvester A. Johnson, *African American Religions, 1500-2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 391-394.
[9] Sylvester Johnson, "The Racialization of Islam in the US Empire," (presentation, Race and Religion in American History Conference, Princeton University, March 7-8, 2014).
[10] Johnson, *African American Religions,* 2.

cognate term and is thus linguistically recognizable as such to professional researchers." Ultimately this approach has led to a neglect of the "actual work that race performs."[11]

The questions that have animated my dissertation owe much to the historical and theoretical insights of the aforementioned scholarship. The theologically rooted notions of essential difference that this project describes unequivocally produced racial effects. For this reason, I sought to move beyond missionary ideology in this dissertation to link the philosophies of spiritual racialization—racializing theologies and ideologies—to the influence that it had on missionary *practice* and colonial systems and forms. The previous chapters begin to demonstrate the ways that notions of spiritual difference and limited spiritual capacity were intimately tied with colonial relations of power and systems of colonial governance. To deny these processes the classification of "racialization" would fundamentally obscure a key way that racialization has operated historically and would perpetuate the profound myopia that studies of race have had to the spiritual component of racial operation.

This project and the future work that will stem from this dissertation aim to substantively link theology, ideology, discourse, practice, and colonial governance to account for this larger process of spiritual racialization. Each of those elements is central to racializing processes and therefore must be accounted for in historical analysis of race's operation. Work like Johnson's in *African American Religions* is essential for revealing what he calls the "political order of governing through the colonial relation of power" that has undeniably racializing effects. His awareness that "race is politics or, more precisely, biopolitics" has unearthed a critical new paradigm for understanding racial operations. However, that approach leaves out of its purview the interplay between creed and colonial system. Systems of colonial of governance reached full

[11] Ibid., 393.

manifestation in conjunction with simultaneous racializing ideologies and theologies. In the case of the spiritual racialization of early modern Christians in the Americas that this study traces, requisite attention to the underlying logic and theology of spiritual difference is equally necessary to account more comprehensively for the religious and colonial systems that emerged in its wake.

Many of the practices of racializing colonial governance that scholars identify and track have a root in the white theological imaginary that must be more thoroughly examined.[12] These theologically based perceptions of essential difference were foundational to the emergence of

[12] Willie James Jennings' *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* and J. Kameron Carter's *Race a Theological Account* are important examples of this movement in the scholarship to account for the relationship between theology and racialization processes. Nonetheless, they each note the limitations of their approach and call for further historical excavation of their subject matter. For example, Carter writes: "It is worth reiterating that what I engage here is a moment within initial maturing of modernity's racial-theological vision of the human. I do not discuss the early colonialist vision that took hold just about three centuries prior to the Kantian, essentially Protestant, Enlightenment-racial vision in the late eighteenth century. This earlier moment had a Roman Catholic, essentially Southern European, infancy. Constituting a "dark Atlantic" triangulated between Europe, the coast of Africa, and the Americas, this colonialist vision is symbolically positioned and historically datable between 1442, the year the Portuguese first landed their vessels with the human cargo of African slaves to be exported back to Europe and 1492, the year Christopher Columbus came upon "the Indies" and commenced his "India" and "Jerusalem" mission and the conquest of the Americas (with other European competitors soon to follow). The Kantian racial-cosmopolitical vision, which was also a theological vision predicated on the extirpation of Jewish flesh, is unintelligible apart from these prior events. Stated differently, the Kantian outlook is only the discursive maturing of the racial colonialism inaugurated in the mid-to-late fifteenth century. And again it must be said that in the middle of it all was a theological discourse, mainly of a Thomist-Aristotelian sort, coupled with the discourse of canon and civil law, which also functioned in relationship to theology. I was unable to engage these important pre-Enlightenment matters here without ballooning even further an already big book. Their theological consideration must therefore await another, not too far off day." See Carter, *Race,* 6. Likewise, Jennings, whose work does engage more directly with colonial actors and historical events, states: "This book is not a historical account that moves through all the complex realities of churches and colonialist nations, indigenes and slaves, land and commodity forms, racial formation and social imagination, nation and ecclesial dispute, all from the fifteenth century to the twentieth. Such a multivolume project would be a welcome addition to what I have done here." See Jennings, *The Christian Imagination,* 9.

racializing ideologies and practices far beyond the formal sites of christianization and evangelization. Delineations of racially rooted spiritual status had a profound impact on colonial religious, social and economic relationships and structures. While this project only scratched the surface of analysis of the colonial practice of spiritual racialization, future research that emerges from it will examine the ways that theological notions of spiritual difference were reinforced religiously, ritually, and spatially in colonial environments in the Americas. They served to create and reinforce social boundaries, regulate interpersonal relations, shape the organization of space, circumscribe economic roles and potential, and determine individual and group relationships with the colonial administration. There were very real spiritual, social, and material consequences that emerged from this system of spiritual racialization in which Africans were deemed to be of lesser spiritual ability, received a watered-down version of the faith, and were relegated to an inferior spiritual status within the religious fold. Understandings about Africans' limited spiritual potential continued to define their engagement with Christian religion and colonial societies long after their first exposure and indoctrination.

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This project detailed and delineated processes of spiritual racialization and their influence on colonial systems from the perspective of European colonizers. It focused on the dynamics and authorizations of power generated from the white European Christian theo-colonial imagination and attendant religio-social order. However, it is essential to remember also that the processes of christianization, colonialism, and even relationships of enslavement, were always already dialectical processes by their very nature. European evangelizers and colonizers responded to and engaged with racialized others even as they sought to objectify, label, and categorize them. And, as Christina Shape reminds us, even as descendants of Africans in the Americas

"experienced, recognized, and lived in subjection," they did not "*simply* or *only* live *in* subjection and as the subjected."[13] Though forces of domination and oppression were real and pervasive, black subjects were agents and actors within these colonial worlds. Enslaved Africans and Afro-Americans hardly accepted this form of christianization as presented, as many historical sources reveal. Laying the particular historical and theoretical groundwork that this dissertation has offered opens up further avenues through which to consider and engage how Africans and their descendants in the Americas spoke back to these paradigms and constructs—theologically, spiritually, and ritually. The lived theologies that were imagined and enacted in the early Americas were hardly one-sided. And, as James Sweet and Sabine MacCormack have recognized in their scholarship, conflicts between Europeans and non-Europeans in the Americas were regularly conceived of in terms of "cosmic" wars, with each group taking seriously the spiritual connections, powers, and theologies of the other.[14] In the endless search by scholars of Africana studies for the agency of the enslaved or for their efforts at resistance, there is room for much more sustained analysis and attention to the ways that early modern populations took seriously the immanence of the spirit realm. Much of the encounter and conflict between Europeans, Indians, and Africans simultaneously took place on that register. Enslaved Africans encountered European Christians with their own theological worldviews and imaginaries that were retained, hybridized, and substantively changed through these very spiritual and colonial

[13] Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 4.

[14] See James Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion In the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) and Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes: Vision and Imagination in Early Colonial Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). See also Jared Hickman, "Globalization and the Gods, or the Political Theology of 'Race,' *Early American Literature* 45, no. 1, (2010): 147-148.

processes. These questions and avenues for further interrogation motivated this study, remained with me through the research and writing of it, and will be taken up directly in future projects.

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