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## EARLY ATTEMPTS AT INDIAN EDUCATION IN SOUTH CAROLINA, A DOCUMENTARY

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The journey of the Yamasee Prince to London, 1713-1715, and his studies there under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel belong not only to the history of the colorful beginnings of the Southern colonies but to the eighteenth-century records of visits from primitive peoples to London. Pocahontas in the seventeenth century was but the first of such visitors to be presented at court.

In the eighteenth century, the visits of the Iroquois chiefs,<sup>1</sup> of the Yamasee Prince, and later of Philip Quaque,<sup>2</sup> and of others, whetted the interest of that century in the "noble savage" and in the problems of all native peoples. Geographical and commercial expansion coincided with scientific development, led by Sir Isaac Newton and other intellectual leaders.

Dr. Francis Le Jau, pioneer historian as well as missionary, devoted himself to a study of the Indians, their customs and culture.<sup>3</sup> His interest was shared by contemporary missionaries and by Thomas Nairne, an Indian agent, who demanded that the Society accept precedence for the Indian over the Negro in its provision of men and funds.<sup>4</sup> Nairne wrote:

\* Professor Emeritus.

<sup>1</sup> An account of the visits of the Iroquois sachems in England and their appeal for the Christianization of their nations can be found in Earl of Sunderland to Archbishop of Canterbury, Whitehall, April 20, 1710, in S.P.G. MSS (L.C. Trans.), A 5, No. LXXXVI, p. 203; Indian Sachems to the Venerable Society [n.d.], *ibid.*, No. LXXXVIII, p. 205 and enclosed in Archbishop of Canterbury to John Chamberlayne, April 21, 1710, *ibid.*, No. LXXXV, p. 202.

See also an excellent account of the Mohawks from 1664 to 1807 and the visit of "King" Hendrick and other sachems at London in John Wolfe Lydekker, *The Faithful Mohawks* (New York, 1938).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of the work of Philip Quaque, see Frank J. Klingberg, "Philip Quaque: Pioneer Native Missionary on the Gold Coast, 1765-1816," *Journal of Negro Education*, VIII (October, 1939), 666-272.

<sup>3</sup> For Le Jau's correspondence with the Society, see Frank J. Klingberg (ed.), *The Carolina Chronicle of Dr. Francis Le Jau, 1706-1717* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1956).

<sup>4</sup> The first missionary to the Southern colonies was Samuel Thomas, who arrived in South Carolina on Christmas, 1702. Although Mr. Thomas was sent to minister to the Indians around Goose Creek, he devoted himself mainly to Negro work. Readers interested in Samuel Thomas may consult the documents printed in the *South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, IV (July and October, 1903), 221-230, 278-285; and *ibid.*, V (January and April, 1904), 21-55, 95-99. The most recent

You desired to know of me, whether the Yammase Indians had received any Present from any body upon Account of the Society for Propagating the Faith. I was not rash to give an Answer until I had positively informed myself both from them and the Traders among them, that they never did receive the least Thing upon that account. By a private Paper I received in Charles Towne containing an Acct. of the Societies Transactions, I pceive their good & charitable Intentions for those Indians are quite Pverted under the Notion of converting the Goosecreek Negroes as a work good and necessary. You know as well as I, that all Carolina laughs at that untruth wch. if it were really true, is an Action highly base & dishonorable for People who have the best Estates in this Country and such numerous Families of Negroes to employ that man & money designed for the poor Indians, to instruct their Slaves. If these Gentlemen, really wished the Salvation of their Negroes Souls, they would apply the Labour of one Slave in 12. yearly to raise a Sum for that purpose, which would amount to a very considerable quantity of money in their Neighbourhood, this would be more generous and Christianlike than using little Tricks & Spunging upon the Society whose Charity ought rather to be employed to help them who are not otherwise able to help themselves. I have wrote several letters allready, fill'd (as I think) with unreasonable [*sic*] Argumts. for endeavouring to convert the Indians of this Province so shall say nothing of it in this only that we have had a great Instance lately what mighty influence the Spanish Fryars had upon the Indians of St. James and Apalatia who thought they saw their Countries all fired & themselves dayly killed & carryed away Slaves by other Indians, yet they maintained their fidelity & friendship to the Spaniards to the very last, & nothing but downright force brought them over to our side. We have these two by past years been intirely kniving [*sic*] all the Indians towns in Florida wch. were subject to the Spaniards, and have even accomplished it, and by that means brought about 1600 Souls to settle among our Indians and be Subject to our Government, besides the great numbers killed and sold for slaves. These people have had Christian churches among them for an 100 yeares by past & wch. they did not leave untill absolutely forced. Now if we take not leave equal of their Salvation as the Spaniards always have done, what a good fight have we been fighting to bring so many people from something of Christianity to downright Barbarity and Heathenism. Everybody knows we have the

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study of Thomas is by Albert Sidney Thomas, "The Reverend Samuel Thomas and His 'Account of the Church in South Carolina,' 1702-1706," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, XXIII (September, 1954), 219-257.

greatest quantity of Indians Subject to this Government of any in all America, and almost as many as all other English Governments put together & those for the most part a tame peaceable people wth. whom [t]here hath never been any wrangle or war from the first Settlement of this Province untill this time who are so very Subject to the Government, that they are ready to obey any fellow who trades among them. All this makes it easier for us to undertake propagating the Christian faith among them, than it is for the Northern Colonies, besides that their Language is inricht with abundance of Spanish words pticularly those ptaining to Religion, the want of which often troubles Missionaries. Besides the Spiritual Benefit, the Indians would reap by these means, it would conduce much to their Ease and Satisfaction to have a good man live among them disinterested from all the wrangles of Trade, who would be a Protector to represent their Grievances to. The government might then likewise rely upon having good intelligence of what passed among the Indians. I should never have done were I to write all the apparent Advantages of this good Work, so shall only give the Rt. Reverend & Right Honble. Society this following Advice, vizt. That it will be in vain to attempt anything of this Nature without the hearty concurrence of the Governmt. & it would do very well if Letters could be p'cured both from our Lords Proprietors and from one of the Secretaryes of State in the Queen's name to the Governor and Council here, with some Threatning of Displeasure if they were not cordial in begining and going forward with so good a Work. That the Missionaries they send must not be a nice delicate sort of People but such who are willing to bear some hardship & Troubles in bringing about so good a Design; that they be told before they come, that they are to live among an unciviliz'd People, who have nothing of the neatness and Delicacy which is in England, that they must first apply themselves to learn their Language and come with a pure Design of encreasing the Christian church without any extraordinary hopes of Riches or Profit, that in the Towns where they are to live, there are not above two or three English, that is the worst. If they are resolved to suffer these things, they may come in the Will of God. That before they come over Methods may be settled for their Maintenances, that there be no Rub in the way on Acct. of subsistances, this is the Principal thing to be taken care of, & if they be duely & solidly settled, all things will move evenly & well. Pope Alexander the 6th obliged the Kings of Spain when he gave them the W. Indies to maintain Missionaries in all Places of their territoryes there, which they have always and still do with very good Success tho' they find a way now to make it come

out of the Indians pocket. We have not the Advantage so must Substitute something in the room of it, which I propose to be thus—That the Queen be Prvailed with, to allow & settle for ever 100 £ P ann, out of her Dues in this province, and that her Collector be Ordered to pay it, and that the Lords Proprietors be pswaded to allow for the same end, 80 £ P ann, and order their Receiver to pay it duely & that their Lops. use their Authority with the Governmt. here to get an Act passed that every man who hath Traded with the Indians the space of 3. years shall pay yearly a tax of 4 £ for this use as long as he shall continue to Trade, and every one else, 50 s. P ann until they have been trading 3 yeares & then 4 £ for ever after while they continue their Trade. There are in Carolina at least 50. men employed in Trading who paying one with the other 3 £ by the year would raise a Sum of 150 £ yearly Revenue, & this added to the former Sums makes 330 £ wch. at 55 P. ann would maintain 6. Missionaries, all these 3 Articles seem very reasonable first for the Crown, it receives the Advantages by the Taxes laid in England on the Skins and Furr's bought of those People, and as to the Lords Proprietors it is known that this Province owed for a long time its Subsistance to the Indian Trade, wch. is now the main Branch of its Traffick, So that their Lordships may allow something towards the making a People the more useful to their Country who have been hitherto at least one of the main Stayes of it. Every one will Presently agree that it is reasonable the Indian Traders should help towards converting and civilizing a People among whom they have got good Estates, and to whom they have hitherto shown none of the best Examples. These Sparkes make little of drinking 15. or 16. £ at one Bout in Towne, they may spare so much from the Punch keepers for this end, and they are no poorer at the years end.

Sir, this is the most easy method I can invent for the Design, and if the Society will be pleased to use their Interest with the Court & our Lords Proprietors they may doubtless bring their friends to bear. It's very well that they yearly print their Transactions by that means they will not fail of Intelligence from all Parts whether their Charity be pverted or not.<sup>5</sup>

As time went on, planters offered cooperation. One, named John Norris, wrote the Society at length:

Now Providence having so Ordd. that I am settled in this province within 20 Miles of a Smal Nation of Indians called Yamousees contain-

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Nairne to the Reverend Edward Marston, St. Helens, South Carolina, August 20, 1705, enclosed with Robert Stevens to the Society, Goose Creek, South Carolina [n.d.], in S.P.G. MSS (L.C. Trans. ), A 2, No. CLVI, pp. 347-357.

ing about 5000. People, as yet Heathens without Learning my full and Constant Resolution is if God preserve us life and health to settle my Sonn shortly among the said Indians not only to Compleat him in attain[in]g their Language of which he hath already a part but also according to his Capacity publickly to Incourage and Instruct the Younger Sort of them in Learning in our Tongue, which may I hope be one step towards their attaining knowledge in the Christian Religion, and afterwards if this beginning has good success among them, I hope God will bless me with Ability to enable him, and he with a ready chearfulness to continue their Instructor, towards the attainment of Knowledge for their future Welfare & Gods glory; And if it please God to prosper these endeavours with good Success I hope that hereafter from the Society may be sent a supply of Books for learning and Instruction to them as may be necessary therein.

There lives near me a Schoolmaster in the English Tongue by name Ross Reynolds that hath lately encouraged and undertaken to Instruct gratis these young Indians that wou'd frequent his School, tho' some Men blame him for doing it using temporal Arguments and reasons to dissuade him from it; but I fear the distance of his School from their habitations will prove a discouragement and hinder the good success I wish them.<sup>6</sup>

The members of the Society approved of the project and offered to assist with a small library.<sup>7</sup>

Mr. Norris repeated in a later letter the case of Ross Reynolds, schoolmaster of St. Bartholomew's parish in Colleton County:

I return my humble thanks for your Letter of the 6th Febr'y past. which came not to my hands till now by reason of my Absence from hence in Wales; I will take particular Care at my return to Carolina to send you the Lords prayer in the Yamousee Language as directed, but I suppose I shall not leave England near these three Months. I presume to trouble You yet farther, to acquaint You (and if you please and think convenient to acquaint the Society) that there lives near me a Schoolmaster, that hath for a Year past or more encouraged and undertaken to teach gratis reading and writing in the English Tongue such Young Indians as wou'd frequent his School, which I thought Commendable in him, but he was blamed by many who used temporal reasons or Arguments to diswade him, he being the first Man

<sup>6</sup> John Norris to Sir John Philips, January 13, 1711, in S.P.G. MSS (L.C. Trans.), A 6, No. X, pp. 32-35.

<sup>7</sup> Report of Committee, February 1, 1711, in Journal of S.P.G. (L.C. Trans.), I, February 1, 1711.

that I know there, that hath been of that Christian Generosity, to take the trouble to encourage and Instruct them in Learning; but the distance of his School from their habitations was such an inconveniency for them, that there resorted but few to learn, unless he had been capable of giving them dyet, as well as Learning, so that I cou'd heartily Wish an encouragmt. cou'd be given him to remove his School (tho' to the loss of some English Scholars) some convenient place in or near an Indian Town which doubtless wou'd be a Means to encourage many in Learning for I find they seem generally well pleased & Admire that We make Paper speak (as they term it) and are very sensible and apprehensive of what they are Instructed in: I know not but I may have occasion to be in London before my return, if so I shall presume to wait on you, if You please yet to take the trouble to write to me again, whether you think it proper to acquaint the Society herewith or whether any encouragement might be obtained to the purpose aforesaid from the Society for the said Schoolmaster, by name Ross Reynolds of St. Bartholomew's Parish in Colleton County.<sup>8</sup>

Another school was kept at Sarve, on the frontier of Virginia, by a Mr. Washburn, between the two governments and near two Indian towns. The pupils could read and write, and a Mr. Giles Rainsford of South Carolina recommended that the Society encourage the teacher and give him a salary.<sup>9</sup>

Another resident of South Carolina, the Reverend Mr. James de Gignillat, also had a plan for Indian education:

But Most Illustrious Lords after having endeavour'd to bring these Christians to an intire conformity to our excellent Church; it will not be useless, nay I say it is very necessary and even our duty to work about the means to bring these Infidels, these poor ignorant Indians to the knowledge of Our Lord and Saviour, and of his Holy Gospel, that like we they may be partakers of that great Salvation he hath promised to all believers. Now, I think this can be done only these two Ways; in sending Young Ministers amongst them that they may learn their Language or in erecting a Free School in Town or in the Chief Place amongst them furnished with a good honest & learned Schoolmaster; the first of this Means is attended with this difficulty, that it will be

<sup>8</sup> John Norris to John Chamberlayne, Taunton, England, March 20, 1711, in S.P.G. MSS (L.C. Trans.), A 6, No. XXXIX, pp. 92-93. The Governor of South Carolina, the Commissary, and the Society's missionary in the parish were consulted with about the feasibility of Mr. Norris' plan. See Journal of S.P.G. (L.C. Trans.), II, June 15, 1711.

<sup>9</sup> See a letter from Giles Rainsford, July 20, 1712, in Journal of S.P.G. (L.C. Trans.), II, October 10, 1712.

a long and most endless Work to go about, they cannot learn their Language before five or six Years time, which time would be most the end of the Period of their life, and so the Work shall never be at an end; but as to the last the only Objection I find against it, is that it will cost much Money for the building of a College and for the entertainment of the Children, which is a very weak Objection, considering the great Importance of the matter, which is above all price, and I am confident that two hundred pounds yearly will be sufficient to that purpose; I dare engage myself and my estate to do it with that Sum of Money, and if there is not enough I shall make up the rest; I dare say further that before 7 or 8 Years time you would be quite discharged of paying that Sum of Money, and perhaps for the 7 or 8 Years one hundred and fifty pounds Yearly will be enough; considering how the Gentlemen of this Province are charitable to that purpose; Some have given gifts already for that use and many more are very desirous that that great [blank space] should be perform'd, being in the same Opinion with me, that it lying in some manner in our power to Instruct the poor People, we shall be answerable at that great day before the dreadful Tribunal of God for not having done what we cou'd towards it.

God may forgive our want of Zeal for his glory, and our Negligencys for the good of the Souls of our brethren. I offer Most Illustrious Lords and Gentlemen my Person, my care, and all what lyes in my power to bring about this great Work, and am confident by the Assistance of God Almighty which I beg from the bottom of my heart for the blessing and effectuating of this glorious and Charitable enterprize, that all our good and honest and sincere undertaking about this great Work shall not be useless or unprofitable.<sup>10</sup>

In this same year, 1711, an interesting letter was written to the Society by the Reverend Mr. Robert Maule, relating his observations of the Indians. He wrote:

I Promised in one of my former Lres to give you some account of our Indians here. They appear to be by what I can Learn from such Opportunitys as I have had of Conversing with them a very strange kind of People, little Concerning themselves wth the future, if they can but find wherewithall to Live for the presnt. They ar much Inclined to Idleness, and have generaly consumed what little Corne they make before halfe the year be over and then they content themselves to fed upon fruites Rootes and such other Eatables as the Wood can

<sup>10</sup> James de Gignillat to John Chamberlayne, Goose Creek, South Carolina, July 15, 1711, in S.P.G. MSS (L.C. Trans.), A 6, No. CV, p. 324, 311-314.

afford them. They are for the most part great Lovers of Justice and Equity in their dealing and cant endure either to Cheat or be Cheated, they have some Customs among them, that look as if they had been derived by Tradition from the Jews, they all of them shew great Joy and Thankfulness at the gatherings of their first fruites, which they express by their publick Feastings Danceings and other Indications of Rejoyceings. The Heads of their Familys have great deference and respect paid them by their Children and Relations who dare scarce so much as speak in their presence without their Particular leave and approbation. They are Extreemly fond of a numerous Issue, and reckon it a great virtue among them to have killed and destroyed many of their Enemys Some Nations of 'em do this day Circumcize their Children and have still remaining amongst them Some Imperfect Notions of a Deluge. I have in my Conversation with some of their old men Clearly discovered their believe of a God, and of future rewards and punishments. When I have asked who it was that made 'em, and who it is that still provides for them, they have pointed upwards with their Finger and told me it was God, when I have further asked whether they know what would become of them when they were dead they have told me in such broken English as they usually Express themselves, that if they be good and Just, and have many Pickininnies (that is many Children) and killy their Enemys Grandy (That is to destroy a great many of them) and worky Grandy, then they will goe yonder (pointing upwards with their Finger) and there Sitt down and rest and worky no more. But if they no be good now, no be Just no worky &c then they must go there and pointing at the same time downwards where they shall be sick still still worky, worky, and never have don.—I likewise asked them what they thought would become of the Backararas so they call the white men when they dye, and they have answered me Indian and Backarara all one then God make Backarara too. I have had a great many such answers from them (which it would be too tedious here to mention) from whence I might Evidently Conclude their belief of those two great Articles of Naturall Religion the being of God and Imorality of the Soul.

They have indeed been otherwise Represented to us by Some of our Indian Traders who would Endeavour to pswade us that the remoter Indians have no such notions among them. But when I consider their scandalously wicked and debauched Lives their notoriously lewd and Imorall Practices, I am Inclined to think they they give us this Account, rather out of a malicious designe to doe disservice to Religion in general than upon any Just Grounds they have for such a Relation

—I am sure if it were not for the vile and unjust behaviour of these and some others who call themselves Christians we might have farr greater hopes of gaining over these poor Infidels to the Christian Faith, but that alas is the main obstacles agt. this that (I verily believe is) the only reason of their being so backward to Embrace our most Excellent and our most Holy Religion.

This I can assert from my own Experience; For when I have asked some of them, whether they would learn to be, or had any desire to become of the White men's Religion—they have plainly told me no:—whats the matter sayd I, why so?—Because Reply'd they, Backarara no good, Backarara Cheat, Backarara Lye, Backrara Drunk Grandy; me no Lovy that—So that we who are sent Missionarys into those parts must Certainly Endeavr. after this, as the Chief thing to be gain'd in ordr. to the Conversion of these Heathens, to do all that in us lyes, to pswade and Engage the White men to live a more moral and regular life than the generality of them have hitherto done—And if we can but obtain this end we need not fear in Gods good time the obtaining of the other allso.<sup>11</sup>

As a result of these and other requests, and in line with the objectives of the Society, schoolmasters were sent to the Indians.<sup>12</sup> Mr. Benjamin Dennis took over the charge of the Indians in Goose Creek. His first letter to the Society told, in part, of his reception:

The 24 went to see a Nation of Indians with one Capt Davis (at whose house I am to teach) who informing their King that I was sent hither as a Schoolmaster, he seem'd well pleas'd, which oppertunity I made use of and told him that in Case he would send his Sons to me, I would teach 'em to read and write for nothing & would be very kind to 'em: which proposal he seem'd to like, & told me he would consider of it wch God grant, & then am in hopes I shall be able to give a good Acct of my proceedings, & that my Labour won't be in vain.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Robert Maule to John Chamberlayne [St. John's], South Carolina, August 2, 1711, in S.P.G. MSS (L.C. Trans.), A 7, pp. 448-453.

<sup>12</sup> The education and Christianization of the Indians was early stressed by the Society in its annual Sermons. Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Sarum, in 1704, stated that the natives should be shown how much more preferable the English religion is than their own, and how much purer and simpler. Charles Trimmell, Bishop of Norwich, in 1710, emphasized the fact that the whites should exhibit better religion among themselves, then the Indians could be won over; this same idea was expressed by St. George Ashe, Bishop of Clogher, in 1714. For an analysis of these sermons, see Frank J. Klingberg, *Anglican Humanitarianism in Colonial New York* (Philadelphia, 1940).

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Dennis to John Chamberlayne, Goose Creek, South Carolina, September 3, 1711, in S.P.G. MSS (L.C. Trans.), A 6, No. CXLIII, pp. 452-458.

In less than a year, Mr. Dennis had two Indian scholars.<sup>14</sup> This number continued to 1713, and in 1714, he taught "two mustees, or half Indians."<sup>15</sup> This school, as well as many other promising projects of the Society, was discontinued because of the Indian war which broke out in 1715. Mr. Dennis asked for his own recall because he was confined in a garrison and forced to stand watch half of every night.<sup>16</sup>

At the outbreak of hostilities, a Captain Cochran, who was interested in Indian education, took the son of the emperor of the Yamassees to instruct in the Creed, Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commandments.<sup>17</sup>

The policy of the conservation of native peoples was a major part of the program of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. It was, therefore, an imperial policy as well as one of the individual colony. These letters show that the triple program for the Whites, Negroes, and Indians was pursued with great tenacity by the missionaries and teachers from the beginning.

However, the native Indian had a continent to lose whereas the white men and the Negroes, both immigrants, had a continent to gain. Inevitably, as the Indians dwindled and vanished westward, the S.P.G. gave increasing attention to the multiplying Negroes. The Society was determined to Christianize the black man and maintained that Christianization was not emancipation. Consequently, the Negro gained religious rights long before he secured his freedom and civil rights.

The Indian traders and the missionaries were ever at sword's point. Imperial policy set itself the goal of converting the Indians as far west as the Mississippi to Protestantism rather than have the Jesuits make them allies of France in the struggle for the continent. But traders not only cheated but also destroyed many Indians and thereby made whole Indian tribes vulnerable to French propaganda.

These documents show the varied problems of South Carolina as the pioneer missionaries outlined and reported their plans, successes, and failures.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin Dennis to John Chamberlayne, Boochaw near Goose Creek, South Carolina, July 24, 1712, in S.P.G. MSS (L.C. Trans.), A 7, pp. 535-536.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Dennis to William Taylor, Boochaw near Goose Creek, South Carolina, April 22, 1714, in S.P.G. MSS (L.C. Trans.), A 9, pp. 337-339.

<sup>16</sup> Mr. Dennis evidently did not return to England because he wrote to the Society in 1716 from South Carolina, saying that he was teaching a Cherokee Indian boy. See Benjamin Dennis to William Taylor, Boochaw near Goose Creek, South Carolina, June 20, 1716, in S.P.G. MSS (L.C. Trans.), B 4, Pt. 1, No. 72, p. 267.

<sup>17</sup> William Guy to [Secretary], Port Royal, South Carolina, January 10, 1715, in S.P.G. MSS (L.C. Trans.), A 10, pp. 102-104.

The Yamassees were a relatively small warlike tribe, who, after their defeat in 1715 dispersed, some going to Florida to rejoin others living there. Other remnants were lost and they are now practically extinct.