
JOHN LOCKE, CHRISTIAN MISSION, AND COLONIAL AMERICA*

JACK TURNER

Department of Political Science, University of Washington

Email: jturner3@uw.edu

John Locke was considerably interested and actively involved in the promotion of Protestant Christianity among American Indians and African slaves, yet this fact goes largely unremarked in historical scholarship. The evidence of this interest and involvement deserves analysis—for it illuminates fascinating and understudied features of Locke’s theory of toleration and his thinking on American Indians, African slaves, and English colonialism. These features include (1) the compatibility between toleration and Christian mission, (2) the interconnection between Christian mission and English geopolitics, (3) the coexistence of ameliorative and exploitative strands within Locke’s stance on African slavery, and (4) the spiritual imperialism of Locke’s colonial vision. Analyzing evidence of Locke’s interest and involvement in Christian mission, this article brings fully to light a dimension of Locke’s career that has barely been noticed. In so doing, it also illustrates how the roots of toleration in the modern West were partly evangelical.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations . . .

Matthew 28:19

It is a strange jealousy for the honour of God, that looks not beyond . . . a mountain or river as divides a Christian and pagan country.

John Locke, *A Third Letter for Toleration* (1692)¹

* The Rufus B. Kellogg University Fellowship from Amherst College and a Resident Fellowship from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities funded this project. The penultimate version was presented at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney and a conference on Thinking the Human in the Era of Enlightenment at the Australian National University. I thank David Armitage, Lawrie Balfour, Cristina Beltrán, Charles Capper, Alexander Cook, Roberta Culbertson, Jillian Cutler, Christine Di Stefano, Denise Gagnon, Margaret Levi, Jamie Mayerfeld, Kirstie McClure, Sankar Muthu, Melvin Rogers, Rachel Sanders, and the editors and anonymous reviewers at *MIH* for their help, encouragement, and advice. Special thanks to Mark Goldie for his remarkable generosity as a teacher and scholar.

¹ John Locke, *A Third Letter for Toleration* (1692), in *The Works of John Locke*, new ed., 10 vols. (London: Thomas Tegg, 1823), 6: 235.

At several points in his life, John Locke was considerably interested and actively involved in the promotion of Protestant Christianity among American Indians and African slaves. Yet this fact goes largely unremarked in historical scholarship. The reason for this neglect is understandable: the evidence demonstrating Locke's interest and involvement in Christian mission is scattered and fragmentary. This evidence nevertheless deserves analysis—for when pieced together, it illuminates fascinating and understudied features of Locke's theory of religious toleration and his thinking on American Indians, African slaves, and English colonialism. Prime among these features are (1) the compatibility between Lockean toleration and Christian evangelization,² (2) the interconnection between Christian mission and the English geopolitics that Locke helped advance as a member of King William's Board of Trade, (3) the coexistence of ameliorative and exploitative strands within Locke's stance on African slavery, and (4) the spiritual imperialism of Locke's colonial vision.

Rich as recent scholarship has been, none of it has fully revealed the crucial role of Christian mission in either Locke's theory of toleration or his English colonialist pursuits. John Marshall's magisterial study of Lockean toleration and its historical context has refreshed our understanding of how Locke and his allies promoted toleration partly because they believed it was the best way to win the unorthodox to the Protestant Christian faith.³ But while Marshall briefly analyzes Locke's effort—as secretary to the Lords Proprietor of Carolina—to promote Christianity among Carolina's natives in the late 1660s,⁴ he does not attend at all to Locke's effort—as a member of William's Board of Trade—to advance Christian mission in Virginia and New York in the late 1690s. Marshall also neglects Locke's work to Christianize both Carolina's and Virginia's African slaves. As a result, he understates Locke's interest and involvement in Christian mission, misses an opportunity to expand on the ways Locke saw toleration and Christian mission as naturally allied, and fails to explore the complicated relationship between African slavery and Christian freedom in Locke's thought.

² I use the term “evangelization” and its variants (e.g. “evangelical”) in the generic sense of “spreading the Gospel and fostering conversion throughout the world,” not in any specific sectarian sense.

³ John Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and “Early Enlightenment” Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 601–4, 613. See also Nabil I. Matar, “John Locke and the Jews,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44/1 (1993), 45–62, and Richard H. Popkin and Mark Goldie, “Skepticism, Priestcraft, and Toleration,” in Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler, eds., *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 98–100.

⁴ Marshall, *Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture*, 593–5, 599–600.

The work of James Farr,⁵ James Tully,⁶ Barbara Arneil,⁷ David Armitage,⁸ and Vicki Hsueh⁹ has greatly enhanced our understanding of Locke's views of Africans and Indians in relation to England's colonial project. But though three of the five briefly discuss Locke's interest in the Christianization of African slaves and American Indians,¹⁰ none adequately contextualizes this interest within the landscape of Locke's thinking on toleration and his Protestant Christian commitments. As a result, they miss many of the most interesting contours of Locke's views of African slaves and American Indians—such as his recognition of slaves' mental and spiritual volition within the process of Christian conversion, and his belief that Indians were rationally disposed to accept the Gospel.

Compensating for scholarly neglect, this essay makes Locke's interest and involvement in colonial Christian mission a central rather than peripheral object of inquiry. First, it paints a portrait of the Christian missionary milieu in Locke's

⁵ James Farr, "'So Vile and Miserable an Estate': The Problem of Slavery in Locke's Political Thought," *Political Theory* 14/2 (1986), 263–289; *idem*, "Locke, Natural Law, and New World Slavery," *Political Theory* 36/4 (2008), 495–522; *idem*, "Locke, 'Some Americans', and the Discourse on 'Carolina,'" *Locke Studies* 9 (2009), 19–96.

⁶ James Tully, "Placing the *Two Treatises*," in Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 266–80; *idem*, "Rediscovering America: The *Two Treatises* and Aboriginal Rights," in *idem*, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 137–77; *idem*, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 70–78.

⁷ Barbara Arneil, *John Locke and America: The Defence of English Colonialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); *idem*, "Citizens, Wives, Latent Citizens and Non-Citizens in the *Two Treatises*: A Legacy of Inclusion, Exclusion, and Assimilation," *Eighteenth-Century Thought* 3 (2007), 207–33.

⁸ David Armitage, "John Locke, Carolina, and the *Two Treatises of Government*," *Political Theory* 32/5 (2004), 602–27; *idem*, "John Locke, Theorist of Empire?," in Sankar Muthu, ed., *Empire and Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

⁹ Vicki Hsueh, "Giving Orders: Theory and Practice in the *Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 63/3 (2002), 425–46; *idem*, "Cultivating and Challenging the Common: Lockean Property, Indigenous Traditionalisms, and the Problem of Exclusion," *Contemporary Political Theory* 5/2 (2006), 193–214; *idem*, "Unsettling Colonies: Locke, 'Atlantis,' and New World Knowledges," *History of Political Thought* 58/1 (2008), 295–319; *idem*, *Hybrid Constitutions: Challenging Legacies of Law, Privilege, and Culture in Colonial America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), chap. 3.

¹⁰ Farr, "So Vile and Miserable an Estate," 265–6; Armitage, "Locke, Carolina, and the *Two Treatises*," 609, 618–19; Hsueh, *Hybrid Constitutions*, 74, 78. See also Robert Bernasconi and Anika Maaza Mann, "The Contradictions of Racism: Locke, Slavery, and the *Two Treatises*," in Andrew Valls, ed., *Race and Racism in Modern Philosophy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 93–4.

England, providing a historical backdrop against which to analyze Locke's interest and involvement. Second, it surveys evidence of his interest and involvement, marshaling both old and newly discovered English colonial documents, and analyzing crucial but largely overlooked passages from Locke's *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689), *A Second Letter Concerning Toleration* (1690), and *A Third Letter for Toleration* (1692). This evidence demonstrates that Locke both supported organized efforts to spread Christianity among New World slaves and Indians and used his influence within King William's Board of Trade to advance these efforts. Third, the essay sets the evidence of Locke's interest and involvement in Christian mission within the context of his larger life, work, and world, to show that (1) Locke believed that religious toleration and Christian evangelization were compatible; (2) Locke saw Protestant Christian mission in colonial New York as not only a religious end, but also a geopolitical means of securing English advantage against the Catholic French; (3) Locke understood the semi-coercive Christianization of African slaves as a benign effort to improve their lot; and (4) Locke's colonial vision was spiritually imperialistic, though imperialistic in a softer sense than we usually impute to that word.

Providing the fullest description and contextualization yet of Locke's Christian missionary interests, this essay also advances the larger interpretive project of "desecularizing" the history of religious toleration. The idea that the rise of religious toleration in seventeenth-century Europe was inextricably tied to a larger process of "secularization" is still commonplace.¹¹ By establishing that Locke promoted toleration partly because he thought it was a more effective means of Christianizing Pagan souls, this essay shows that some of the motivations behind the rise of toleration were deeply religious. Distinguishing between *religious toleration* and *religious disestablishment* is essential to understanding Locke's theory. Contrary to recent accounts of Lockean toleration which suggest that the former entailed the latter,¹² Locke envisioned toleration coexisting with an ecumenical but publicly sponsored national Protestantism.¹³ Locke prohibited the magistrate's use of coercion to effect conversion, but not his use of persuasion. Firm belief in the truth of Protestant Christianity and firm conviction that all

¹¹ For an important recent statement of the "secularization" position see Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007). For an important recent critique of it see Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

¹² See, for example, Lilla, *Stillborn God*, 96–7, 101.

¹³ See Matar, "John Locke and the Jews"; William Walker, "The Limits of Locke's Toleration," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 332 (1995), 136–8, 145–6; David McCabe, "John Locke and the Argument against Strict Separation," *Review of Politics* 59/2 (1997), 248–52; and Nelson, *Hebrew Republic*, 136, 198 n. 232.

should embrace it contained the radicalism of Lockean toleration.¹⁴ Locke's commitment to Christian mission undermines characterizations of him as a founding father of secularism.¹⁵

I. CHRISTIAN MISSION IN LOCKE'S ENGLAND

Christian mission played a central role in English colonialism from the turn of the seventeenth century. Early English promoters of colonialism such as Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas argued that a principal benefit of establishing New World colonies would be "the inlargemente of the gospell of Christe, whereunto the Princes of the reformed Relligion are chefully bounde."¹⁶ In 1609, sponsors of England's first successful American colonial venture—the Virginia Company—declared that the first aim of colonial settlement was "to preach and baptize into Christian Religion, and by propagation of the Gospell, to recover out of the armes of the Divell, a number of poore and miserable soules."¹⁷ American Indians were the main objects of early English Christian missionary concern, but, at the Restoration, Charles II expanded the scope of that concern to include African slaves, ordering his Council for Foreign Plantations in 1660

to consider how such of the Natives or such as are purchased by you from other parts to be servants or slaves may best be invited to the Christian Faith, and be made capable of being baptized thereunto, it being to the honor of our Crowne 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 misteries of Salvation.¹⁸

One of the members of Charles II's Council for Foreign Plantations was Robert Boyle, who in addition to being one of the preeminent scientists of his age was an enthusiastic promoter of Christian mission and a lifelong associate of Locke.¹⁹ In 1662, Boyle became the first governor of the Company for the

¹⁴ A fact mourned by Jonathan Israel in *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 138–43.

¹⁵ See, for example, George Kateb, "Locke and the Political Origins of Secularism," *Social Research* 76/4 (2009), 1001–34.

¹⁶ Quoted in Andrew Fitzmaurice, *Humanism and America: An Intellectual History of English Colonisation, 1500–1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 138.

¹⁷ Quoted in W. Stitt Robinson Jr, "Indian Education and Missions in Colonial Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 18/2 (1952), 153.

¹⁸ Quoted in M. W. Jernegan, "Slavery and Conversion in the American Colonies," *American Historical Review* 21/3 (1916), 508.

¹⁹ J. R. Jacob, *Robert Boyle and the English Revolution: A Study in Social and Intellectual Change* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1977), 144; Roger Woolhouse, *John Locke: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 34–35 and *passim*.

Propagation of the Gospel in New England.²⁰ The company's purpose was to raise money to pay Christian missionaries to spread the gospel among New England Indians.²¹ One of Boyle's most significant accomplishments as governor was overseeing John Eliot's translation of the Bible into Algonquian. "Not only was it the first Bible in Algonquian," writes William Kellaway, "but it was also the first Bible printed in any language on the North American continent." Boyle also financed the translation and publication of "the Bible in Irish and Welsh, the New Testament in Turkish and the Gospels and Acts in Malayan."²² Boyle resigned the governorship of the New England company in 1689 and died two years later; his will directed that most of his estate go to Christian missionary causes.²³ Though none of the extant correspondence between Locke and Boyle mentions Christian mission (most of it concerns natural science), chances are that they discussed the subject during their thirty-year friendship.

Morgan Godwyn was another associate of Locke who fervently promoted Christian mission. Godwyn studied under Locke at Oxford before becoming an Anglican minister and migrating to Virginia in 1666.²⁴ As a colonial pastor, Godwyn baptized slaves and evangelized Indians, which made him a target of scorn and ridicule among white Virginians hostile to both populations. Virginia became so inhospitable to Godwyn that he migrated to Barbados.²⁵ Godwyn's time in Barbados exposed him to Quakers' aggressive efforts to preach the gospel to Africans and Indians over the strenuous objection of white planters. There he first read George Fox's radical question to Christian ministers: "*Who made you Ministers of the Gospel to the White People only, and not to the Tawneys and Blacks also?*"²⁶ Godwyn's encounter with Quaker evangelization deepened his conviction that Christians were duty-bound to seek the conversion and Christian baptism of Africans and Indians. After returning to England in the late 1670s, he published *The Negro's & Indian's Advocate, Suing for their Admission into the Church* (1680).²⁷ Though we do not know if Locke interacted with Godwyn

²⁰ Jacob, *Robert Boyle*, 148; William Kellaway, *The New England Company, 1649–1776* (London: Longmans, 1961), 45.

²¹ Kellaway, *New England Company*, 1.

²² *Ibid.*, 133, 47.

²³ *Ibid.*, 173–4.

²⁴ J. R. Milton, "Locke's Pupils," *Locke Newsletter* 26 (1995), 106; Alden T. Vaughan, "Slaveholders' 'Hellish Principles': A Seventeenth-Century Critique," in *idem*, *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 58.

²⁵ Vaughan, "Slaveholders' 'Hellish Principles,'" 58–62.

²⁶ Morgan Godwyn, *The Negro's and Indian's Advocate, Suing for Their Admission to the Church* (London: J.D., 1680), 4; Vaughan, "Slaveholders' 'Hellish Principles,'" 56, 62.

²⁷ Vaughan, "Slaveholders' 'Hellish Principles,'" 62.

during this period, we do know that Locke owned Godwyn's book, as well as its supplement of 1681.²⁸

Godwyn's *Negro's & Indian's Advocate* is an impassioned plea to Englishmen to intensify Christian evangelization in the American colonies. Though he gives equal billing to Negroes and Indians in the title, Godwyn argues most strenuously on behalf of the former, defending two claims which seem obvious to him but are not obvious to his fellow Englishmen: (1) Negroes are human, and (2) slavery does not deprive men of their right to religion. Godwyn portrays the idea that Negroes are not human as the self-serving fiction of slave traders and slave owners—one which frees them from "importunate Scruples, which Conscience and better Advice might at any time happen to inject into their unsteadie Minds."²⁹ Godwyn also argues sardonically that if Negroes are beasts, those who "make use of them for their *unnatural* Pleasures and Lusts" are guilty of sodomy and should be prosecuted.³⁰

Notwithstanding his insistence on Negroes' humanity, Godwyn does not characterize their enslavement as unjust. *The Negro's & Indian's Advocate* takes for granted that African slavery will continue indefinitely. Godwyn even recommends in *A Supplement to the Negro's & Indian's Advocate* that colonial assemblies pass laws stipulating that baptism in no way alters slaves' civil status as property; this way, owners have no financial incentive to prevent slaves' baptism.³¹

Godwyn also argues eloquently that slavery does not deprive men of the right to religion: "An adverse Fortune may deprive us of our Goods and Liberty, but not of our Souls and Reason . . . If Slavery had that force or power so as to unsoul Men, it must needs follow, that every great Conqueror might at his pleasure, make and unmake Souls."³² Godwyn concludes that the slave's right to religion should be positively accommodated: slaves should have time for worship and access to ministers. It is crucial to note, however, that Godwyn's argument on behalf of the slave's right to worship covers only Protestant Christian worship. His is a defense of the right to practice not any religion, but only *true* religion. That Protestant Christianity is the only true religion goes without saying.

Locke also owned Thomas Bray's *Apostolick Charity, Its Nature and Excellence Consider'd* (1698).³³ An Oxford-educated Anglican deacon, Bray was the bishop of London's Commissary in Maryland and a tireless crusader for the establishment

²⁸ John Harrison and Peter Laslett, *The Library of John Locke* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 1965), nos. 1279 and 1280.

²⁹ Godwyn, *Negro's and Indian's Advocate*, 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

³¹ Godwyn, *A Supplement to the Negro's & Indian's Advocate* (London: J.D., 1681), 7.

³² Godwyn, *Negro's and Indian's Advocate*, 28.

³³ Harrison and Laslett, *Library of John Locke*, no. 481.

of well-stocked religious libraries in North American Anglican parishes. Bray reasoned that one of the main obstacles to the evangelization of slaves and Indians was an insufficient number of well-qualified colonial ministers, and that well-stocked religious libraries would help attract and equip such ministers.³⁴ Based on a sermon Bray delivered at St Paul's Cathedral in London in 1697,³⁵ *Apostolick Charity* called on Anglicans to give more of themselves to the Christian missionary project. Bray explained that contributing to his library project was one sure way to “*be most industrious in the Instruction and Conversion of Men . . . [and] lay the Foundation of Christian Knowledge*”: “Persons will most effectually [assure] their future Happiness and provide best for an Exalted Glory, who shall expend most in fixing Libraries of necessary and useful books in Divinity.” By donating to Bray's American libraries, parishioners could become “*Apostles to those Parts of the World*.”³⁶ Locke would have learned of Bray's Christian missionary work not only from his copy of *Apostolick Charity* but also from his co-supervision of Maryland affairs on the Board of Trade.³⁷ During Locke's time on the Board, numerous memoranda from Maryland officials crossed his desk praising the commissary's efforts to recruit ministers and build libraries.³⁸ In addition, the Board sometimes used Bray as an emissary between itself and the colonies.³⁹ These connections between Locke and Bray, though largely indirect, are noteworthy, for Bray eventually became one of the most prominent Christian missionaries in English history: in 1699 Bray founded the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), arguably the most important Protestant Christian missionary society of the eighteenth century.⁴⁰

³⁴ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Bray, Thomas (bap. 1658, d. 1730)” (by Leonard W. Cowie), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3296/>, accessed 10 May 2010.

³⁵ H. P. Thompson, *Thomas Bray* (London: S.P.C.K., 1954), 20.

³⁶ Thomas Bray, *Apostolick Charity, Its Nature and Excellence Consider'd in a Discourse Upon Dan. 12.3* (London: W. Downing, for William Hawes, 1698), 24–6.

³⁷ H. R. Fox Bourne, *The Life of John Locke*, 2 vols. (London: Henry S. King and Co., 1876), 2: 356; Maurice Cranston, *John Locke: A Biography* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), 419–20; Michael Kammen, “Virginia at the Close of the Seventeenth Century: An Appraisal by James Blair and John Locke,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 74/2 (1966), 144.

³⁸ *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1696–97, Preserved in the Public Records Office*, ed. John W. Fortescue (London: His Majesty's Stationer's Office, 1904), nos. 268, 269, 858, 1050; *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies, 1697–98*, nos. 756, 976. *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and the West Indies* will hereafter be referred to as CSP, followed by the year(s) and document number(s).

³⁹ CSP 1699, nos. 1014, 1025.

⁴⁰ H. P. Thompson, *Into All Lands: The History of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701–1950* (London: SPCK, 1951).

By themselves, neither Locke's direct nor indirect connections to prominent Christian missionaries establish his own interest and involvement in Christian mission. They do, however, show that he lived in an environment where the question of how best to convert African slaves and American Indians to Christianity was a current and controversial subject. Furthermore, they suggest the high probability of his exposure to arguments about the issue. Against this background, we can make better sense of the primary evidence of Locke's interest and involvement in Christian mission.

II. LOCKE'S INTEREST AND INVOLVEMENT IN CHRISTIAN MISSION

Two types of evidence together demonstrate Locke's interest and involvement in Christian mission. The first are documents from his tenures as secretary to the Lords Proprietor of Carolina from 1669 to 1675 and as a leading member of William's Board of Trade from 1696 to 1700. The second are largely neglected passages from his work on toleration, especially from the understudied *Second Letter Concerning Toleration* and *Third Letter for Toleration*. The first type of evidence suggests his interest and involvement in Christian mission, but because nearly all of the key documents are co-authored and reflect not Locke the solitary philosopher but Locke the collaborative policy maker, they are insufficient to establish his independent interest and involvement in Christian mission. But when viewed in light of the second type of evidence—solely authored philosophical work that convincingly shows Locke's independent interest—it becomes more plausible to make strong inferences from the first type. In other words, it becomes more plausible to read the first type of evidence as expressing philosophical and political commitments.

Pursuing this strategy, this section first surveys the colonial documents, detailing the conditions of co-authorship as much as possible but also drawing parallels between key passages from those documents and Locke's philosophical writings to identify resonances between them. The section then analyzes Locke's discussion of Christian missionary imperatives in his late work on toleration, especially the *Second* and *Third Letter*. Establishing Locke's independent interest in Christian mission, the writings on toleration vouch for earlier inferences drawn from the colonial documents. Together the two types of evidence demonstrate Locke's interest and involvement in Christian mission.

A. *The colonial documents*

As a colonial administrator, Locke advanced Christian mission in three American colonies: Carolina, Virginia, and New York. His efforts in Carolina

are best known, those in Virginia second-best known, and those in New York not previously known.

Carolina The most important evidence of Locke's promotion of Christian mission in the first colony is *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* (1669).⁴¹ Though ostensibly the work of the eight proprietors for whom Locke was secretary—the most prominent of them being Locke's patron, Anthony Ashley Cooper, later the First Earl of Shaftesbury⁴²—a scholarly consensus has emerged that though Locke did not compose it entirely, he contributed to it substantially.⁴³ In a 1673 letter to Locke, Carolina proprietor Sir Peter Colleton referred to the *Fundamental Constitutions* as “that excellent forme of Government in the composure of which you had so great a hand.”⁴⁴ Locke lent copies of the document to friends; his correspondents also referred to it as “your laws” and “your constitutions.”⁴⁵ In 1682, Locke collaborated with Colleton and Shaftesbury to revise the *Constitutions* extensively.⁴⁶ Based on striking linguistic parallels between Locke's single-authored texts and the *Fundamental Constitutions*, Marshall suspects that Locke was the primary author of the document's provisions on religion and toleration.⁴⁷

The *Constitutions* prohibit atheists from settling in Carolina;⁴⁸ in 1670, the proprietors added an amendment establishing Anglicanism as Carolina's official religion (though Locke is said to have opposed the amendment).⁴⁹ The *Constitutions* also grant religious toleration to “heathens, Jews, and other

⁴¹ *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* (1669), in *Locke: Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Hereafter FCC.

⁴² K. H. D. Haley, *The First Earl of Shaftesbury* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 242; J. R. Milton, “John Locke and the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina,” *Locke Newsletter* 21 (1990), 111, 117, 127; Hsueh, “Giving Orders,” 427; Armitage, “Locke, Carolina, and the *Two Treatises*,” 607.

⁴³ Goldie, *Locke: Political Essays*, 160–61; Armitage, “Locke, Carolina, and the *Two Treatises*,” 602–27; Woolhouse, *John Locke*, 90–91.

⁴⁴ *The Correspondence of John Locke*, 8 vols., ed. E. S. de Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 1: no. 279.

⁴⁵ Goldie, *Locke: Political Essays*, 161.

⁴⁶ Armitage, “Locke, Carolina, and the *Two Treatises*,” 612–14.

⁴⁷ Marshall, *Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture*, 595, 600.

⁴⁸ FCC, 177.

⁴⁹ Langdon Cheves, *The Shaftesbury Papers* (Charleston: South Carolina Historical Society, 2000; first published 1897), 312 n. 2; Haley, *First Earl of Shaftesbury*, 245–6; Goldie, *Locke: Political Essays*, 160; Armitage, “Locke, Carolina, and the *Two Treatises*,” 607–8; Woolhouse, *John Locke*, 91. Locke's opposition to establishing Anglicanism as Carolina's official religion might tell against my interpretation of Locke as supporting both toleration and an ecumenical form of religious establishment. But opposition to establishing Anglicanism does not necessarily entail opposition to establishing non-sectarian Protestantism. Locke's

dissenters from the purity of Christian religion” with the stated aim of facilitating their Christian conversion:

But since the natives of that place, who will be concerned in our plantations, are utterly strangers to Christianity, whose idolatry, ignorance, or mistake gives us no right to expel them or use them ill . . . may not be scared and kept at a distance from [the Christian religion], but, by having an opportunity of acquainting themselves with the truth and reasonableness of its doctrines, and the peaceableness and inoffensiveness of its professors, may, by good usage and persuasion, and all those convincing methods of gentleness and meekness suitable to the rules and design of the Gospel, be won over to embrace and unfeignedly receive the truth: therefore, any seven or more persons agreeing in any religion shall constitute a church or profession, to which they shall give some name to distinguish it from others.⁵⁰

This provision resonates with Locke’s early conviction that force is a futile means of religious persuasion. Locke wrote in his 1667 “Essay on Toleration” that “compelling men to your opinion, any other way than by convincing them of the truth of it, makes them no more your friends than forcing the poor Indians by droves into the rivers to be baptised made them Christians.”⁵¹ Locke implies toleration’s superiority to coercion as a means of Christian mission two years before the composition of the *Fundamental Constitutions*. Marshall thus has good reason to suspect that the provision on toleration in the *Constitutions* was partly—if not wholly—authored by Locke.⁵²

opposition to establishing Anglicanism, in fact, might have been an attempt to make Carolina more attractive to non-Anglican Protestants.

⁵⁰ FCC, 178.

⁵¹ Locke, “An Essay on Toleration” (1667), in *Locke: Political Essays*, 156. It is also crucial to note the practical reasons why Locke and the proprietors extended religious toleration to Carolina’s natives. Early English settlers in Carolina relied on Indians for geographical knowledge, military intelligence, and food and supplies. English awareness of the importance of Indian friendship is evident in documents preceding the composition of the *Fundamental Constitutions*. See “Second Charter Granted by King Charles the Second to the Proprietors of Carolina” (1665), in *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, vol. 1, ed. William L. Saunders (New York: AMS Press, 1968), 75–92; “A True Relation of a Voyage upon discovery of part of the Coast of Florida” (1665), in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 18–25; “The Port Royal Discovery” (1666), in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 57–82. There are also abundant memoranda written by Locke recording instances of Indian assistance to English settlers in Carolina. See “Locke’s Carolina Memoranda” (1670–72), in *Shaftesbury Papers*, 223–4, 245, 263, 349, 388. For penetrating analysis of these memoranda see Hsueh, “Giving Orders”; *idem*, “Cultivating and Challenging the Common”; *idem*, “Unsettling Colonies”; *idem*, *Hybrid Constitutions*; and Farr, “Locke, ‘Some Americans’, and the Discourse on ‘Carolina’.”

⁵² Another reason to suspect that Locke wrote the provision on toleration in the *Constitutions* is the striking parallel between its language of “good usage and persuasion, and all those

The Fundamental Constitutions also provide for the promotion of Christianity among African slaves:

Since charity obliges us to wish well to the souls of all men, and religion ought to alter nothing in any man's civil estate or right, it shall be lawful for slaves, as all others, to enter themselves and be of what church any of them shall think best, and thereof be as fully members as any freeman. But yet, no slave shall hereby be exempted from that civil dominion his master has over him, but be in all other things in the same state and condition he was in before.⁵³

This provision resonates strikingly with some language in Locke's posthumously published *Paraphrase and Notes on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (1707). There Locke provided an interpretive gloss on Paul's instruction to servants, "Art thou called being a servant? care not for it . . . For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called being free, is Christ's servant."⁵⁴ In Locke's eyes, the statement meant that "noething in any mans civil estate or rights is altered by his becoming a Christian," echoing the statement in the *Constitutions* that "religion ought to alter nothing in any man's civil estate or right."⁵⁵

The provision in *The Fundamental Constitutions* on slave religion is peculiar in its ambivalence about slaves' social standing. On the one hand, the provision recognizes the slave's personhood in God's eyes, and expresses confidence in his capacity to evaluate different churches, select the one that best suits him, and function therein as a full and equal member. On the other hand, the provision sharply distinguishes the slave's spiritual condition from his civil estate. The *Constitutions* reinforce this distinction in a latter provision stating, "Every freeman of Carolina shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slaves, of what opinion or religion soever."⁵⁶

These provisions are consistent with a movement in the mid-seventeenth-century American colonies to establish legally that a slave's conversion to

convincing methods of gentleness and meekness suitable to the rules and design of the Gospel" and Locke's language of "the meekness and tender methods of the Gospel" in "Toleration A" (1675), in *Locke: Political Essays*, 231, and "the softness of Civility and good Usage" in *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James H. Tully (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983; first published 1689), 33.

⁵³ FCC, 179–80.

⁵⁴ Locke, *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St Paul to the Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, Esphesians*, 2 vols., ed. Arthur W. Wainwright (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987; first published 1707), 1: 198.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 202 n. 23.

⁵⁶ FCC, 180.

Christianity does not require his emancipation.⁵⁷ In 1664, for example, colonial Maryland passed a law specifying that the term of African servitude was “Durante Vita”; in 1667, Virginia followed suit, stipulating that Christian baptism does not automatically require a slave’s manumission. The Virginia House of Burgesses framed this latter law as an effort to “free masters from doubt” about the effects of baptism on their slaves’ civil status, and thus to make them more likely to allow evangelization on their plantations.⁵⁸

Insofar as Locke contributed to the slavery provisions of the *Constitutions*, he reinforced Carolina slave owners’ domination over their slaves, giving rise to the puzzle of his complicity in New World slavery. That complicity consists also in his personal investment in the early 1670s of £600 in the slave-trading Royal African Company and £100 in a company of Bahamian adventurers engaged in slave-based agriculture.⁵⁹ Several scholars have tried to reconcile Locke’s espousal of universal natural rights with his participation in New World slavery through creative readings of chapter 4 in the *Second Treatise of Government* defending the enslavement of captives taken in just wars.⁶⁰ There Locke writes that “Slavery . . . is nothing else, but *the State of War continued, between a lawful conquerour, and a Captive*.” If a combatant has “forfeited his own Life, by some Act that deserves Death,” his captor may

delay to take it, and make use of him to his own Service, and he does him no injury by it. For, whenever he finds the hardships of his Slavery out-weigh the value of his Life, ’tis in his Power, by resisting the Will of his Master, to draw on himself the Death he desires.⁶¹

John Dunn, James Farr, and Jeremy Waldron demonstrate, however, that Locke’s “just-war” argument is inadequate to the task of justifying New World slavery, for Locke restricts legitimate enslavement to the captive himself, prohibiting its extension to the captive’s children.⁶² Since Locke fully knew that New World slavery was hereditary, the “just-war” defense could not rationalize his

⁵⁷ Jernegan, “Slavery and Conversion”; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 210–11; Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 180–81; Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (London: Verso, 1997), 250–52.

⁵⁸ Jernegan, “Slavery and Conversion,” 506.

⁵⁹ Woolhouse, *John Locke*, 110–11; Farr, “Locke, Natural Law, and New World Slavery,” 497.

⁶⁰ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988; first published 1690), 284–5 n; Richard H. Popkin, “The Philosophical Bases of Modern Racism,” in Craig Walton and John P. Anton, eds., *Philosophy and the Civilizing Arts: Essays Presented to Herbert W. Schneider on His Eightieth Birthday* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974), 133; Bernasconi and Mann, “Contradictions of Racism.”

⁶¹ Locke, *Two Treatises*, 284.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 389–92.

involvement. Dunn's unsatisfying but accurate verdict on the subject stands: Locke felt no need to engage in "moral rationalization"; Locke's complicity in New World slavery was a case, rather, of "immoral evasion."⁶³

Yet even if evasion accurately describes Locke's response to slaves' rights-bearing individuality, it does not accurately describe his response to their ensouled humanity. *The Fundamental Constitutions* suggest Locke's concern for slaves' spiritual salvation and comfort. They also suggest his recognition of slaves' spiritual volition and equality, of their capacity "to enter themselves and be of what church any of them shall think best, and thereof be as fully members as any freeman."⁶⁴ This recognition is also present in Locke's colonial writings on Virginia. I will further elaborate the significance of this recognition later on.

Virginia From 1696 to 1700, Locke served on King William's newly organized Board of Trade, charged with the central administration of England's colonies.⁶⁵ Shortly after its inaugural meeting, the Board began hearing reports about the sorry state of Virginia's economy and the corruption of its government. Central to the Board's efforts to obtain information was James Blair, the bishop of London's Commissary in Virginia. The first president of the College of William and Mary, Blair secured the college's royal charter in 1693 by appealing to Queen Mary's desire to establish a "Nursery of Religion" in Virginia and spread Christianity among the Indians.⁶⁶ Concurrently, Blair convinced the Estate of Robert Boyle to donate £500 to the college to help it educate Indian children "till they are ready to receive Orders and . . . be sent abroad to preach and Convert the Indians."⁶⁷ Blair met Locke when Blair travelled to England in 1697 to plot against Virginia's governor Edmund Andros, whom he believed was obstructing the college's growth. Blair learned that Locke and the Board were frustrated with Andros's evasive responses to Board inquiries, and went out of his way to confirm their suspicion that "what ailments plagued Virginia . . . were owing to Andros."⁶⁸

⁶³ John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the "Two Treatises of Government"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 175 n. 4; Farr, "So Vile and Miserable an Estate," 273–4; *idem*, "Locke, Natural Law, and New World Slavery," 516; Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 201.

⁶⁴ FCC, 179.

⁶⁵ Peter Laslett, "John Locke, the Great Recoinage, and the Origins of the Board of Trade: 1695–1698," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 14/3 (1957), 370–402; Woolhouse, *John Locke*, 361–70.

⁶⁶ Parker Rouse Jr, *James Blair of Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 64–6.

⁶⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 183.

⁶⁸ Kammen, "Virginia at the Close of the Seventeenth Century," 143–7; Laslett, "Locke, the Great Recoinage, and the Board of Trade," 397–402.

What ensued was not only collaboration between Locke and Blair to replace Andros with their mutual friend, Francis Nicholson, but also collaboration on a paper for the Board of Trade entitled “Some of the Cheif [*sic*] Grievances of the present constitution of Virginia, with an Essay towards the Remedies thereof” (1697).⁶⁹

The exact conditions of Locke and Blair’s co-authorship of the “Grievances of Virginia” are unclear. On the one hand, some evidence suggests that Locke was primary author. A copy resides in Locke’s papers in the Bodleian Library at Oxford; the first fifteen words are in Locke’s hand, while the rest (close to ten thousand) are in that of Locke’s amanuensis Sylvanus Brownover.⁷⁰ The document contains some distinctly Lockean policy proposals. In a section proposing ways to increase Virginia’s population and labor force, for example, the “Grievances” suggests forcing indigent and criminal Englishmen to emigrate to Virginia. The “Grievances” also recommends that, to encourage emigration, “people of all Nations be naturalized, and enjoy equal priviledges, with the other English inhabitants residing there.”⁷¹ These suggestions almost certainly came from Locke: in the contemporaneous “An Essay on the Poor Law” (1697) he proposed transportation to the plantations as a punishment for English poor found guilty of certain crimes,⁷² and in 1693 he advocated “General Naturalisation” as “the shortest and easiest way of increasing your people.”⁷³ Blair credited Locke with major contributions to the “Grievances,” writing to Locke in 1698 that “God . . . made you such an eminent instrument of detecting the Constitution and Government of Virginia”; in 1699, Blair declared himself beholden to Locke “for the thoughts you was [*sic*] pleased to bestow on our late unhappy circumstances, and the methods you contrived to relieve us.”⁷⁴ For these

⁶⁹ The original is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford University: John Locke and James Blair, “Some of the Cheif Grievances of the present constitution of Virginia, with an Essay towards the Remedies thereof” (1697), MS Locke, e. 9, fols. 1–38. For the purposes of this essay, I rely on the authoritative reprint in Kammen, “Virginia at the Close of the Seventeenth Century.” Kammen’s commentary is at 141–53, and the text is at 153–69. I cite the commentary as Kammen, “Virginia at the Close of the Seventeenth Century,” and the text as Locke and Blair, “Grievances of Virginia.”

⁷⁰ Locke and Blair, “Some of the Cheif Grievances,” MS Locke, e. 9, fols. 1–38; Laslett, “Locke, the Great Recoinage, and the Board of Trade,” 399–400; Kammen, “Virginia at the Close of the Seventeenth Century,” 141; Richard Ashcraft, “Political Theory and Political Reform: John Locke’s Essay on Virginia,” *Western Political Quarterly* 22/4 (1969), 742.

⁷¹ Locke and Blair, “Grievances of Virginia,” 159.

⁷² Locke, “An Essay on the Poor Law” (1697), in *Locke: Political Essays*, 186.

⁷³ Locke, “For a General Naturalisation” (1693), in *Locke: Political Essays*, 322.

⁷⁴ *Correspondence of John Locke*, 7: nos. 2380, 2545.

reasons, among others, Richard Ashcraft thinks that Locke was not just primary, but sole, author of the “Grievances of Virginia.”⁷⁵

Michael Kammen, on the other hand, argues that although Locke and Blair were in close contact during the essay’s production, the “Grievances of Virginia” “has to be Blair’s composition, with suggestions and possibly emendations by Locke.” Kammen points out that the “Grievances” “resembles Blair’s style much more than it does Locke’s.” A contemporaneous Blair document is “organized in the same grievance and remedy pattern” and “follows the same sort of unsystematic usage of roman and arabic numerals.” Kammen concludes that “Blair composed the document under Locke’s direct encouragement and assistance.”⁷⁶

The balance of evidence points to a conclusion slightly different from Kammen’s: Blair composed the document not simply under Locke’s encouragement and assistance, but under Locke’s substantive direction. Though Kammen shows that the “Grievances” bears greater resemblance to Blair’s style than to Locke’s, the substantive parallels between the “Grievances” and Locke’s distinctive ideas indicate that Locke’s contribution was major. This conclusion is consistent with Blair’s imputation of significant input to Locke. It is also consistent with the fact that the manuscript is in Locke’s and Brownover’s hands, suggesting that Locke took ownership of the document.

Though most of the “Grievances of Virginia” consists of proposals for the reorganization of Virginia’s government and the rejuvenation of its economy, a substantial portion concerns colonial religion and Christian mission.⁷⁷ Complaining that Virginians were so unconcerned about their religious lives that they barely maintained a stable ministry, Locke and Blair also complain that “Little care is taken to instruct the Indians and Negroes in the Christian faith.”⁷⁸ Declaring, “The Conversion, and Instruction of Negroes and Indians is a work of such importance and difficulty that it would require a Treatise of it self,” they then advise,

That all Negroes be brought to Church on Sundays . . . That a law be made, that all Negroes Children be baptized—catechized, and bred Christians . . . That as many Indian children be educated at the Colledge [of William and Mary] as may be; and these well instructed in the Christian Faith, (but with all keeping their own language) and made fit to evangelize others of their nation and language.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ashcraft, “Political Theory and Political Reform,” 742–743 n. 2.

⁷⁶ Kammen, “Virginia at the Close of the Seventeenth Century,” 148.

⁷⁷ Ashcraft, “Political Theory and Political Reform” analyzes the political dimension of the “Grievances of Virginia,” but stops short of analyzing its economic, religious, and Christian missionary dimensions.

⁷⁸ Locke and Blair, “Grievances of Virginia,” 166.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

These remarkable remedies deserve enumeration. First, all Negroes—both children and adults—should be brought to church on Sundays. Second, all Negro children should be baptized, catechized, and “bred” Christians. Third, Indian children should be educated at the College of William and Mary and taught Christianity in their native language. Fourth, these Indian children should be encouraged and prepared to evangelize in their native communities.

Commissary Blair and his superior, Bishop of London Henry Compton, had long-standing interests in colonial Christian mission,⁸⁰ so Blair probably took the lead in devising these remedies. But because Locke’s greater power in the relationship meant that he had final say over the document’s contents, their appearance in the final copy handwritten by Locke and Brownover suggests that they met Locke’s approval. What does Locke’s approval of these remedies indicate about his views on Christian mission?

Like *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina*, the “Grievances of Virginia” assumes compatibility between toleration and Christian mission. The document takes for granted Virginia’s compliance with Parliament’s Toleration Act of 1689 and the political prevalence of “Lybertie of Conscience.”⁸¹ At the same time, it recommends, among other measures, that “a Law be made, that all Negroes Children be baptized—catechized, and bred Christians.” Such a recommendation may startle contemporary admirers of Locke’s 1689 *Letter Concerning Toleration*, for it seems to encourage what that work generally proscribes: using the force of law to make people Christians. Yet such a reaction is more the product of the contemporary secularist tendency to conflate religious toleration with religious disestablishment, for Locke’s original theory leaves ample room for state-sponsored Christian mission. The 1689 *Letter* stipulates that “the Magistrate may make use of Arguments, and thereby draw the Heterodox into the way of Truth, and procure their Salvation . . . Magistracy does not oblige him to put off either Humanity or Christianity . . . it is one thing to perswade, another to command; one thing to press with Arguments, another with Penalties.”⁸² Christian mission is permissible if the state’s methods are persuasive but not coercive. Locke’s theory of toleration does not prohibit a state policy of Christian mission, only the use of penalties to enforce that policy.

⁸⁰ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. “Blair, James (1655/6–1743),” (by James B. Bell), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2564/>, accessed 10 May 2010; Rouse, *James Blair*; Michael Anesko, “So Discreet a Zeal: Slavery and the Anglican Church in Virginia, 1680–1730,” *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 93/3 (1985), 256–78.

⁸¹ Locke and Blair, “Grievances of Virginia,” 159.

⁸² Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 27. Cf. Marshall, *Locke, Toleration, and Early Enlightenment Culture*, 557–8.

This frequently forgotten aspect of Locke's theory of toleration underscores Mark Goldie's point that, in early Enlightenment culture, "Arguments for toleration were broadly evangelical in nature." Late seventeenth-century politicians, philosophers, and divines

debated toleration and the relationship of the church to the state within the context of the Christian duty to evangelise. They began from the belief that all people should be of the true religion and that all godly people should seek to put an end to heresy and schism by winning over the errant and godforsaken.

The question was not whether Protestant states ought to try to promote Protestant Christianity, but whether policies of tolerance or intolerance were more effective in winning the heterodox to Protestant Christianity. Locke exemplifies the early Enlightenment tradition of evangelical tolerationism.⁸³

Do Locke and Blair's policy recommendations for Christian mission in colonial Virginia respect the distinction between permissible persuasive evangelical measures and prohibited coercive ones? The evidence is mixed. Locke and Blair's unambiguously imperative language in their prescriptions for African Christianization suggests that they think that these prescriptions should be backed by the state's coercive apparatus: Negroes will be *brought* to church on Sundays; the law will *require* the baptism of black children.⁸⁴ Yet the form and target of coercion is ambiguous. Will the police bring recalcitrant slaves to church? Such a measure contradicts the volitional essence of Locke's vision of worship. Locke believed that "all were in principle capable of guiding themselves in their choice of church; indeed, this responsibility they could not cede to another."⁸⁵

But what if the real targets of the coercive measures were masters and not slaves?⁸⁶ This scenario is more likely. Late seventeenth-century English missionaries saw masters as the main obstacle to slave evangelization: masters feared that Christianized slaves would no longer be able to work on Sunday and would be costlier to maintain since they would require ceremonious

⁸³ Popkin and Goldie, "Skepticism, Priestcraft, and Toleration," 99–100. Popkin and Goldie co-authored this article, but Goldie is responsible for the section in which this point appears. See 79 n.

⁸⁴ Interestingly, Locke condemns policies of mandatory church attendance in *A Second Letter Concerning Toleration*, in *Works of John Locke*, 6: 87. The specific object of condemnation is King Louis XIV's requirement that all French Protestants attend Catholic Mass. At the same time, in *A Third Letter for Toleration*, Locke argues that baptism is one of the few truly essential Christian rites (154–6). This helps to explain why he and Blair so directly address it in the "Grievances of Virginia."

⁸⁵ Timothy Stanton, "Locke and the Politics and Theology of Toleration," *Political Studies* 54/1 (2006), 89.

⁸⁶ I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this possibility.

Christian baptism, marriage, and burial.⁸⁷ To overcome masters' resistance to slave Christianization, Locke and Blair may have considered fining masters who prevented their slaves from attending church and receiving baptism. Such fines would not necessarily violate Lockean toleration. Magistrates, in this case, would not be using the force of law to compel worship, but rather to prevent one person (the master) from interfering with another person's worship (the slave's). The underlying assumption, of course, is that guaranteeing slaves the opportunity to attend church—over and against the will of their masters—is the same as guaranteeing religious liberty. Though this assumption is dubious from a contemporary perspective, it is valid from Locke's: he believed that Protestant Christianity was the one true religion.⁸⁸ Guaranteeing African slaves the right to practice Protestant Christianity was, in his eyes, the same as guaranteeing them religious liberty.

Locke and Blair's prescriptions for evangelization among American Indians fall more plainly within the zone of permissible, persuasive state evangelization. Since these prescriptions involved the College of William and Mary, which operated under a royal charter, they implicated the magistrate. Granted four years after the Toleration Act of 1689, the charter itself illustrates the widespread post-Revolutionary conviction that state-sponsored Christian mission could take place under a regime of toleration; the charter declares that the college will help realize this newly tolerationist nation's aim of "propagating" the Christian faith "amongst the Western *Indians*."⁸⁹ Locke and Blair's prescriptions for Christian mission among the Indians are more tentative than the prescriptions targeted at African slaves: only as many Indian children will be educated at the college as *may* be. Whether the equivocal *may* indicates uncertainty about the college's ability to accommodate large numbers of Indians, or uncertainty about the government's ability to recruit or coerce Indians to attend, we cannot be certain. Locke and Blair's expectations probably corresponded to their hopes: Virginia's Indians would enroll in the college and undertake Christian mission voluntarily.

Locke and Blair's prescriptions for Christian mission among the Indians are also friendly in tone. Nowhere is this more evident than in their stipulation that the college's Indian students keep their own language. This provision is, in part, tactically motivated. Only by retaining their native language—and to some extent their native culture—can the college's students become cross-cultural ambassadors of Christianity. At the same time, the provision suggests a spirit of mutual accommodation, an attempt to meet new neighbors halfway. All told, Locke and Blair's prescriptions for Christian mission seem consistent with Locke's

⁸⁷ Godwyn, *Negro's and Indian's Advocate*, 136–7.

⁸⁸ Locke, "Sacerdos" (1698), in *Locke: Political Essays*, 344.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Rouse, *James Blair*, 72, emphasis in charter.

stipulation in the *Letter Concerning Toleration* that “the Magistrate may make use of Arguments, and thereby draw the Heterodox into the way of Truth, and procure their Salvation.”⁹⁰

New York Locke and the Board of Trade’s promotion of Christian mission among the Iroquois in colonial New York in the twilight years of the seventeenth century is a story still untold. This is because nearly all Locke scholars fail to avail themselves of the wealth of board memoranda bearing Locke’s signature in the *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies, 1696–1700*. Among these is a memorandum, dated 30 September 1696,⁹¹ recommending that England escalate its Protestant missionary activities in colonial New York as a means of strengthening its alliance with the Iroquois, or the “Five Nations,” as they were then called,⁹² against Catholic New France, England’s enemy in the North American theater of King William’s War.⁹³ That Locke’s signature was but one of five on the memorandum might suggest that he simply appended his name in deference to his colleagues.⁹⁴ Yet such passive compliance would have been—in this context—out of character for Locke. Locke’s biographers all agree

⁹⁰ Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 27. One final feature of the “Grievances of Virginia” deserves mention. The document confirms Locke’s knowledge of and interest in the work of Thomas Bray, future founder of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK): “The encouraging of Dr. Brays project of Parochial Libraries would in a great measure supply the want of Books.” Locke and Blair, “Grievances of Virginia,” 167. This reference to Bray—written in late August 1697—comes one year after Locke would have begun seeing Board memoranda mentioning Bray, but four months before Bray delivered his sermon *Apostolick Charity* at St Paul’s. This indicates that Locke became acquainted with Bray’s colonial Christian missionary work before acquiring *Apostolick Charity*. It is even possible that Bray himself sent it to Locke. Kammen, “Virginia at the Close of the Seventeenth Century,” 141.

⁹¹ CSP 1696–97, no. 286. An office copy of this paper—“Representation concerning the Northern Collonies in America” (1696)—is in the British National Archives, London: CO 324/6, 59–68. There are slight differences between the *Calendar* and office copies. I will quote from the office copy since it is presumably closer to the original.

⁹² These were the Cayugas, Mohawks, Oneidas, Onadagas, and Senecas. Mohawk served as the “*lingua franca* for diplomacy and trade.” H. Ward Jackson, “The Seventeenth Century Mission to the Iroquois,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 29/3 (1960), 240.

⁹³ For background on English and French efforts to win the Iroquois to their respective sides see Allen W. Trelease, *Indian Affairs in Colonial New York: The Seventeenth Century* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997; first published 1960), chap. 11, and Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Long-House: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), chap. 8.

⁹⁴ “Signed Tankerville, Ph. Meadows, John Pollexfen, John Locke, Abr. Hill.”

that he was the Board's preeminent member, "its chief director and controller."⁹⁵ Locke's contemporary Pierre Coste described him as "the soul of that illustrious body."⁹⁶ A further indicator of Locke's preeminence on the Board is the fact that his friend, William Popple, who had translated Locke's *Epistola de Tolerantia* from Latin to English, served as the Board's secretary; in addition, Locke's amanuensis, Sylvanus Brownover, was one of Popple's clerks.⁹⁷

There is also corroborating primary evidence of Locke's political involvement in Anglo-Iroquois diplomacy and its accompanying Christian missionary activities. In addition to the 30 September memorandum, there are four other Board papers signed by Locke showing interest in Anglo-Iroquois diplomacy and the ways Christian mission could aid it.⁹⁸ In the Bodleian Library at Oxford, there are notes in Locke's hand bearing the title "New Yorke Representation."⁹⁹ Cryptically, they read "Q . . . The Governor and Assistants of the Indian Stock. Ways of retaining the Indians v. Nelson's paper." The reference to "Indian stock" refers to the Company for the Propagation of the Gospel of New England—once governed by Boyle—which Locke and the Board hoped to employ in New York to convert the Iroquois to Protestantism.¹⁰⁰ The reference to "Ways of retaining the Indians v. Nelson's paper" refers to a memorial which Locke and the Board solicited in the late summer of 1696 from John Nelson, an acquaintance of Locke and long-time resident of England's North American colonies, regarding ways the English could best strengthen the Anglo-Iroquois alliance.¹⁰¹

Furthermore, it has long been known that Locke was instrumental in securing the 1697 appointment of Richard Coote, the First Earl of Bellomont, to the governorship of New York.¹⁰² But scholars have failed to note that Locke and Bellomont were both concerned about Anglo-Iroquois diplomacy and the ways

⁹⁵ Fox Bourne, *Life of John Locke*, 2: 353. Cf. Cranston, *John Locke*, 406; Laslett, "Locke, the Great Recoinage, and the Board of Trade," 399; Woolhouse, *John Locke*, 366–7.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Woolhouse, *John Locke*, 366.

⁹⁷ Fox Bourne, *The Life of John Locke*, 2: 352–3; Cranston, *John Locke*, 406; Laslett, "Locke, the Great Recoinage, and the Origins of the Board of Trade," 390–91; Woolhouse, *John Locke*, 366, 370.

⁹⁸ See *CSP 1696–97*, no. 157 (i) for Locke and the Board's referral of a report on Iroquois affairs to the Lords Justice of England; *ibid.*, no. 1274 for Locke and the Board's authorization to the New York government to distribute powder and bullets to the Five Nations; *CSP 1699*, no. 726 for Locke and the Board's inquiry regarding the employment of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel vis-à-vis the Five Nations; and *CSP 1700*, no. 577 for a record of Locke and the Board's shipment of presents and arms to the Five Nations.

⁹⁹ Locke, "New Yorke Representation" (1696), MS Locke c. 30, folio 40, Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

¹⁰⁰ "Representation concerning the Northern Collonies," 67; *CSP 1699*, no. 726.

¹⁰¹ *Correspondence of John Locke*, 6: no. 2396; *CSP 1696–1697*, no. 250.

¹⁰² Cranston, *John Locke*, 420–21.

Christian mission could aid it. Bellomont was a member of the Company for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England (the New England Company);¹⁰³ given the interest the Board expressed in using the New England Company to advance Anglo-Indian diplomacy, it is even possible that Bellomont's membership in the company was a consideration in favor of his appointment. One of Bellomont's surviving letters to Locke expresses hope that Locke had heard Bellomont's most recent report to the Board on Indian affairs.¹⁰⁴ A 1698 letter from Popple to Locke reports that the Board had received letters from Bellomont "with an account of his journey to Albany and negociation with the Indians"; the letter further indicates that the other members of the Board would like Locke's advice on the matter.¹⁰⁵ The sum total of evidence suggests that Locke's signature on the 30 September memorandum reflects substantive agreement—maybe even primary authorship—rather than grudging acceptance.

The 30 September memorandum recommends measures "to keep the five nations . . . firm in friendship." First, the captain-general of the North American colonies "should from time to time make [the Five Nations] presents . . . [and] some of the most eminent & leading amongst them should be entertained, and have constant pay as Ensigns or Lieutenants of his Majesties, and be treated as his officers." Second, the Indians "should be rewarded for all execution done by them on the enemy, and the Scalps they bring be well paid for." Third,

some lusty vigorous youths of the English, should accompany [the Iroquois] in their Expeditions, huntings and other Exercise, who by inhabiting amongst them would learne their Language, grow acquainted wth their woods . . . and come in a little time to be able to endure their fatigues; all which would be a means to familiarize them to us and strengthen their union with us.

Fourth, "some of the bravest, or most credited amongst our Indian friends should be brought . . . into England to see the strength of his Majesties Forces by Sea and Land, and the Populousness of his Dominion especially of this great city of London." Fifth, "effectuall means should be taken for the conversion of [the Indians] to the Protestant faith, For among these here, as well as all other men, Religion has been found by experience to be one of the Strongest bonds of Union."¹⁰⁶

This last recommendation is consistent with Locke's support of Christian mission in Carolina and Virginia. Yet here, Christian mission becomes an instrument of geopolitics, a means of winning Iroquois allegiance to the exclusion

¹⁰³ Kellaway, *New England Company*, 260–65.

¹⁰⁴ *Correspondence of John Locke*, 6: no. 2614.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 6: no. 2503.

¹⁰⁶ "Representation concerning the Northern Collonies," 66–7.

of the Catholic French. It is important to highlight the geopolitical stakes. The Five Nations occupied the borderland between British North America and New France. Whichever empire secured their friendship secured a critical bulwark against its rival. The impetus for Locke and the Board's consideration of the matter was an urgent memorandum from a colonial official warning,

The value of the Alliance of the Five Nations of Indians to the English is well known . . . The Indians have lost much by [King William's] war and are inclined to make peace with the French, which would be fatal to the English Colonies . . . It is absolutely necessary to hold the Five Nations firm to their alliance . . . There is no doubt that the English frontier towards Canada is in great danger.¹⁰⁷

The impetus for Locke and the Board's decision to use Protestant Christian mission to strengthen the Anglo-Iroquois alliance was probably that same official's report of New France's use of Jesuit missionaries to court Iroquois favor:

they have sent Jesuit missionaries among them, who by subtle insinuations have tried to draw them away from their own country into Canada, pretending that they could be better instructed in the Christian religion, and have so far prevailed to have drawn away a considerable number . . . These have done eminent service to the French in the present war . . .¹⁰⁸

If England's Protestant missionaries did not win over the Iroquois, France's Catholic ones surely would. Locke and the Board thus advised England's Lord Justices that

the Governor and Company here in London for propagation of the Gospell in New England . . . apply their stock, and Revenue [to the conversion of the Iroquois] . . . [T]he converting [of] the Mohaques, and others of the five nations . . . is of the greatest importance imaginable for preserving those of the Protestant religion who are in those parts, as well as for the gaining [of] new Converts to it.¹⁰⁹

Three years later, they followed up, asking New York's governor whether he can "propound unto us any proper methods whereby we may procure some part of the stock of the [New England] Corporation for evangelizing Indians, to be employed toward the instruction of the Five Nations."¹¹⁰

Locke retired from the Board of Trade before anything came of these efforts.¹¹¹ Yet a 1701 exchange of letters with Richard King reveals that Protestant missionary

¹⁰⁷ CSP 1696–97, no. 157 (ii).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ "Representation concerning the Northern Collonies," 67.

¹¹⁰ CSP 1699, no. 726. "Signed, Ph. Meadows, Jno. Pollexfen, Jno. Locke, Abr. Hill."

¹¹¹ CSP 1700, no. 600.

vigilance against Catholicism remained for Locke a preoccupation. After receiving from King on 13 January an unspecified pamphlet on Protestant Christian missionary societies, Locke responded on 20 January:

I thank you for the printed Paper you sent me, and am very glad to see such a Spirit rais'd, for the Support and Enlargement of Religion. Protestants, I think, are as much concern'd now as ever, to be vigorous in their joint Endeavours, for the Maintenance of the Reformation. I wish all that call themselves so, may be prevail'd with by those whom your Paper intimates, to imitate the Zeal, and pursue the Principles of those great and pious Men, who were instrumental to bring us out of Roman Darkness and Bondage. I heartily pray for good Success on all such Endeavours.¹¹²

This illustrates Dunn's claim that, at the turn of the eighteenth century, Locke was "nervous" about "the geopolitical vulnerability of European Protestantism."¹¹³ The theater of conflict between Protestantism and Catholicism, however, was not just Europe but also North America. In the eyes of Locke and the Board, Catholic New France threatened England's American colonies, and the friendship of the Five Nations was essential to defusing that threat. Locke and the Board believed that Protestant Christian mission could secure that friendship. They made little pretense that they pursued Christian mission in New York as an end in itself: it was geopolitics by other means. At the same time, one end of English geopolitics—as Locke's letter to King suggests—was the defense of Protestant power and position. In the conflict with New France, Christian mission contributed to that defense by winning souls to Protestantism at Catholicism's direct expense. Ends and means were hard to separate in the Anglo-French battle for the New York frontier at the turn of the eighteenth century: the souls of the Iroquois were a prize of war, and Christian mission was the means of victory.

B. Letters on toleration

While the colonial documents strongly suggest both Locke's interest in Christian mission and his belief in its compatibility with toleration, Locke's 1689, 1690, and 1692 letters on toleration prove both that interest and that belief beyond a reasonable doubt. We have already noted that Locke's 1689 *Letter* provides that "the Magistrate may make use of Arguments, and thereby draw the Heterodox into the way of Truth."¹¹⁴ A heated exchange between Locke and the Anglican clergyman Jonas Proast, his interlocutor in the *Second* and *Third Letter*, elaborates

¹¹² *Correspondence of John Locke*, 7: nos. 2843, 2846.

¹¹³ John Dunn, *Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 18.

¹¹⁴ Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 27.

Locke's understanding of the compatibility between toleration and Christian mission.¹¹⁵

The instigation of the exchange was Locke's insistence in the 1689 *Letter* that toleration be extended to Jews, Muslims, and "Pagans": "neither *Pagan*, nor *Mahumetan*, nor *Jew*, ought to be excluded from the Civil Rights of the Commonwealth, because of his religion."¹¹⁶ Citing this passage in the opening of his 1690 *The Argument of the Letter Concerning Toleration*—defending magistrates' right to use coercion to "save souls"—Proast voiced astonishment at the breadth of Locke's toleration:

how much soever it may tend to the Advancement of Trade and Commerce (which some seem to place above all other Considerations;) I see no reason, from any Experiment that has been made, to expect that True Religion would be any way a gainer by it; that it would be either the better preserved, or the more widely propagated, or rendered any whit the more fruitful in the Lives of its Professours . . .¹¹⁷

In *A Second Letter Concerning Toleration*—Locke's first response to Proast—Locke argued that using force to effect conversions would cause Jews, Muslims, and Pagans to doubt the charity and goodwill of Christian preachers:

We pray every day for their conversion [i.e. of Pagans, Muslims, and Jews], and I think it our duty so to do: but it will . . . hardly be believed that we pray in earnest, if we exclude them from the other ordinary and probable means of conversion, either by driving them from, or persecuting them when they are amongst us.¹¹⁸

Locke implies that toleration is a superior means of Christian mission because it establishes a positive rapport with non-Christians and thereby makes them more receptive to Christian truth. In his 1691 *A Third Letter Concerning Toleration*, Proast responded that even if toleration increased the likelihood of Pagan conversion, the price of that conversion was too high—for it entailed "suffering [Pagans] to commit those Indignities and Abominations among us, which they call Religion."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ For a general contextualization of the debate between Locke and Proast see Goldie, "John Locke, Jonas Proast, and Religious Toleration, 1688–1692," in John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor, eds., *The Church of England, c.1689–c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 143–71.

¹¹⁶ Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 54.

¹¹⁷ Jonas Proast, *The Argument of the Letter Concerning Toleration, Briefly Consider'd and Answer'd* (Oxford: George West and Henry Clements, 1690), 2.

¹¹⁸ Locke, *Second Letter*, 62. Cf. Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 43.

¹¹⁹ Proast, *A Third Letter Concerning Toleration: In Defense of the Argument of the Letter Concerning Toleration, Briefly Consider'd and Answer'd* (Oxford: George West and Henry Clements, 1691), 4.

Locke got the last word on the subject in the gargantuan *Third Letter for Toleration* of 1692. Though Locke conceded that Paganism was an “abomination,” he argued that, for the purposes of evangelization, it was better that Pagans practice an “abominable” religion than no religion at all. Prohibiting Pagan worship would not draw Pagans closer to Christianity, but would “make them downright irreligious, and render the very notion of a Deity insignificant, and of no influence.”¹²⁰ Prohibiting Pagan worship, in other words, would make Pagans less susceptible to Protestant evangelization. Yet if Pagans were allowed to worship their deity, the salutary practices of religious reverence and subordination would remain in place for Christian evangelists to redirect.

What is remarkable about Locke and Proast’s exchange on the issue of tolerating Pagans is the way it allows Locke to articulate his sense of how best to practice Christian mission. Locke sees a glaring contradiction between, on the one hand, the insistence of clerics like Proast that they pray daily for the conversion of Jews, Muslims, and Pagans, and, on the other hand, those clerics’ determination to shut Jews, Muslims, and Pagans out of Christian commonwealths where their conversion can be most easily pursued.¹²¹ Sarcastically, Locke wonders whether it is religious error that the clerics object to, or religious error in close geographic proximity. Intolerant policies recommended by Proast—such as the denial of naturalization to Jews, Muslims, and Pagans¹²²—do nothing to eradicate idolatry; instead, they send idolatry abroad. A true Christian, Locke says, should seek to “drive idolatry out of the world,” not to “driv[e] idolaters out of any one country.”¹²³

Locke’s *Third Letter* voices specific concern for the “many pagans . . . in the [American] plantations . . . of whom there was never any care taken that they should so much as come to church, or be in the least instructed in the Christian religion.”¹²⁴ Notice how this concern foreshadows Locke and Blair’s recommendation in the “Grievances of Virginia” that colonial Virginians bring Indian children to the College of William and Mary to learn Christian gospel so that they may one day spread it among their native people. Locke’s *Third Letter* also calls on Protestants to give up the use of force in matters of religion and instead to emulate the early apostles who brought Christianity “to the heathen world” by “travels and preaching.”¹²⁵ Locke may have seen his own efforts to promote

¹²⁰ Locke, *Third Letter*, 234, 233.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 233–5.

¹²² Proast, *Third Letter*, 2–3.

¹²³ Locke, *Third Letter*, 235.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 390.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 234. Cf. Locke, “Toleration A,” 231: “Methinks the clergy should, like ambassadors, endeavour to entreat, convince, and persuade men to the truth rather than thus solicit the magistrate to force them into their fold.”

Christian mission in the New World as a modern successor to early Christian efforts to spread the faith in the Greco-Roman world. Locke nicely conjoins the issues of Christian mission and toleration when he voices contempt for “those men” who, however much they pray for Pagans, are so unconcerned for their conversion that they “will neither go to them to instruct them, nor suffer them to come to us for the means of conversion.”¹²⁶ Here Locke implies that Englanders must both “go to them” and “suffer them to come to us”—for the goal is not the religious purification of the homeland, but the religious salvation of the world. Toleration is central to this Christian missionary project: toleration allows for the peaceful co-mingling of people of different faiths and the development of trust between them. The development of trust, in turn, diminishes intellectual and spiritual defensiveness and creates conditions where persuasion can take place. Locke is supremely confident that the Gospel—by its own intrinsic “beauty, force, and reasonableness”—will prevail in such circumstances.¹²⁷ As he says in *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), wherever the light of the Gospel has shone, “polytheism and idolatry hath no where been able to withstand it.”¹²⁸

III. LOCKE, CHRISTIAN MISSION, AND EMPIRE

The previous section documented Locke’s interest and involvement in colonial Christian mission and established the first two of this essay’s four points: (1) Locke believed that religious toleration and Christian evangelization were compatible, and (2) Locke saw Protestant Christian mission in colonial New York as not only a religious end, but also a geopolitical means of securing English advantage against the Catholic French. The previous section, for the most part, also demonstrated point (3), that Locke understood the semi-coercive Christianization of African slaves to be a benign effort to improve their lot, but this point needs some elaboration. Point (4)—the spiritual imperialism of Locke’s colonial vision—still needs to be made. This section elaborates point (3) and establishes point (4).

Locke showed pronounced concern for slaves’ spiritual salvation and well-being in both *The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina* and the “Grievances of Virginia.” In seeking to guarantee them the opportunity to select a church, attend

¹²⁶ Locke, *Third Letter*, 234.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 436.

¹²⁸ Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity with A Discourse on Miracles and a Part of A Third Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. I. T. Ramsey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958), 58.

it, and enjoy equal membership within it,¹²⁹ Locke conceded slaves' volition, humanity,¹³⁰ and spiritual equality. To be sure, this still occurred within the system of total domination that was racial slavery. Locke nevertheless hoped to create small spaces of spiritual freedom within that system. Understanding this point requires us to set Locke within a late seventeenth-century tradition that was simultaneously "exploitative and ameliorative" in its stance on African slavery.¹³¹ Godwyn and Blair exemplified this tradition. Godwyn's passionate insistence that African slaves "*have naturally an equal Right with other Men to the Exercise and Privileges of Religion; of which 'tis most unjust in any part to deprive them*" captures the tradition's self-contradiction:¹³² it insisted that there was a natural right to religion within a system whose logical culmination was—in Orlando Patterson's haunting words—slaves' "social death."¹³³ Godwyn, Blair, and Locke, however, wanted to resist this logic and create a middle ground where corporeal freedom was denied but spiritual freedom was guaranteed. Even as he reinforced the colonial systems of governance that protected masters' authority, Locke worked simultaneously to prevent masters from standing in the way of their slaves' attending church. Locke's complicity in African slavery was tempered by his desire to make that institution more Godly and humane. This does not excuse Locke's complicity, but it does enable us to distinguish Locke from those completely indifferent to slaves' plight.

Locke's desire to Christianize African slaves, however, raises other difficult questions. Though Locke understood this desire to be Godly and compassionate, it is fair to ask whether Locke's Christian missionary efforts were spiritually imperialistic. This question turns on Locke's asymmetrical treatment of his own native religion versus African native religions. Locke's defenses of slaves' right to worship are always conspicuously limited to the right of Christian worship. Although Locke never says that African native religious practices should not be tolerated, his failure to acknowledge the existence of such practices and to consider what the magistrate's posture toward those practices should be suggests that he thought of Africans as having either no native religion or none worth

¹²⁹ FCC, 179.

¹³⁰ A humanity also conceded in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975; first published 1689), IV.vii.16, where Locke cites "the Child [that] can demonstrate to you, that a *Negro is not a Man*, because White-colour was one of the constant simple *Ideas* of the complex *Idea* he calls Man" as an example of erroneous generalization.

¹³¹ Anesko, "So Discreet a Zeal," 264.

¹³² Godwyn, *Negro's and Indian's Advocate*, 7.

¹³³ Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

considering.¹³⁴ Locke's vision of Christian mission among African slaves tacitly figures English Christians as possessors of truth imparting it to a benighted populace.

Locke's figuration of the English as possessing truth and of non-Europeans as lacking it comes out more subtly in the case of American Indians. Locke acknowledged that Indians had "rudimentary ideas of God and worship,"¹³⁵ and described their religion as "Pagan"; he advocated toleration of Indian religion over and against the ridicule of clerics like Proast. Locke's tolerance of Paganism, however, was predicated on the conceit that within a setting of free and open intellectual exchange the Gospel's truth and beauty would inexorably triumph. The twofold basis of the conceit was, first, Locke's belief that the truths of Christian revelation were supremely "agreeable to reason, and such as can by no means be contradicted,"¹³⁶ and, second, Locke's conviction that Indians were just as rational as Englishmen.¹³⁷ The most convincing evidence of this latter conviction is Locke's statement in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689):

had the *Virginia King Apochancana*, been educated in *England*, he had, perhaps, been as knowing a Divine, and as good a Mathematician, as any in it. The difference between him, and a more improved *English*-man, lying barely in this, That the exercise of his Faculties was bounded within the Ways, Modes, and Notions of his own Country, and never directed to any other, or farther Enquiries.¹³⁸

Locke's sense that Indians were just as rational as Englishmen underwrote his confidence that Indians would assent to Christianity upon hearing the Gospel, for though Indians had previously been deprived of Christian revelation they

¹³⁴ Locke's only allusions to African native religion are expressions of shock over its supposed absence: in the *Essays on the Law of Nature* and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he observes that "the Inhabitants of Soldania Bay [in Southern Africa] acknowledge or worship no god at all." Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature* (1663–4), in *Locke: Political Essays*, 113–14. Cf. Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, I.iv.8. This raises the possibility that Locke thought that compelling slaves to attend church was morally permissible because Africans were atheistic. Locke excepted atheists from toleration. Locke, "Essay on Toleration," 137; *idem*, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 51. Yet for this explanation to obtain, Locke would have had to generalize from the inhabitants to Soldania Bay to all of Africa. Locke usually resisted this kind of overgeneralization.

¹³⁵ Farr, "Locke, 'Some Americans', and the Discourse on 'Carolina'," 26.

¹³⁶ Locke, *Reasonableness of Christianity*, 61.

¹³⁷ Farr, "Locke, 'Some Americans', and the Discourse on 'Carolina'," 68, 72–4; Armitage, "John Locke, Theorist of Empire?," ms, 2, 5, 11.

¹³⁸ Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, I.iv.12; cf. Daniel Carey, *Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson: Contesting Diversity in the Enlightenment and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), chap. 3; and Farr, "Locke, 'Some Americans', and the Discourse on 'Carolina'," 46–50.

nevertheless possessed the reason necessary to recognize its intrinsic “beauty, force, and reasonableness.”¹³⁹

Locke’s support of Christian mission in colonial America gives us a new angle on the question whether Locke was an “imperial” thinker. Armitage argues against applying the “imperial” label to Locke, for unlike prototypical nineteenth-century British imperialists such as James and John Stuart Mill and T. B. Macaulay, he did not rank “the world’s peoples in a hierarchical order with Europeans at the top of the scale,” legitimate “European imperialism within a progressivist view of history,” or propose “European capacities—specifically European rationality—as a universal standard against which other peoples were to be judged and toward which they were to be led.”¹⁴⁰ Locke indeed fails to meet these criteria for fully fledged imperialist thinking; at the same time, Locke’s support of Christian mission may be imperial in a slightly weaker but still important sense. Locke sought an empire of Protestant Christian spirit. This project is imperial because it presupposes Protestantism’s religious supremacy, works to steer history toward worldwide Protestant Christianization, and employs direct knowledge of the Gospel “as a universal standard against which other peoples were to be judged and toward which they were to be led.” Without a doubt Locke’s Protestant imperialism was moderate: its distinguishing methods—toleration and religious persuasion—were resolutely non-coercive. But the kinder and gentler implements of Locke’s Protestant imperialism should not block from view Locke’s determination to reach into the souls of New World peoples and influence what he saw as the most important decision of their lives: whom to worship. Locke’s effort to turn African slaves and American Indians toward Christ exposes an irony: the modern West’s paradigmatic philosopher of toleration hoped to make Protestant Christianity a universal religious norm. Enlisting colonial policy to promote Protestantism, Locke strove to make his own religion a religion for all the world.

IV. CONCLUSION

Locke’s evangelical commitments and defense of toleration on Christian missionary grounds indicate how Protestant norms underwrite his political theory. They also demonstrate his adherence to an ecumenical form of religious establishment. Locke’s insistence in the *Letter* that “the whole Jurisdiction of the Magistrate reaches only to . . . Civil Concernments . . . [and] it neither can nor ought in any manner to be extended to the Salvation of

¹³⁹ Locke, *Third Letter*, 436.

¹⁴⁰ Armitage, “John Locke, Theorist of Empire?,” ms., 2.

Souls”¹⁴¹ has understandably led many readers to interpret Locke as advocating disestablishment. Yet the particulars of Locke’s theory reveal that he advocated disestablishment only in the limited sense of prohibiting the use of coercion to enforce established religion. The magistrate was still free to endorse Protestant Christian truth and promote it by persuasive means.¹⁴² We may fairly characterize a magistrate’s Protestant evangelical efforts as a form of establishment because they entrench Protestantism as a social and political norm; they even insinuate that becoming Protestant is a prerequisite to becoming a fully fledged member of political society. Locke’s Christian missionary commitments and defense of toleration in light of them show that his case for toleration falls short of a case for strict separation of church and state. Not only did Locke believe that England could expand the global reach of Protestantism through an imperial practice of toleration, but he also personally contributed to that evangelical project.

¹⁴¹ Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 26.

¹⁴² Cf. Walker, “Limits of Locke’s Toleration,” 137–8.