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ANGLICANISM, CATHOLICISM AND THE NEGRO SLAVE *

I

In recent years, American scholars have begun to search for the uniqueness of the American institution of Negro slavery, by contrasting it with the experience of the other colonizing nations of Europe in the New World. Even as far back as the 17th century, a sharp difference in slave institutions was noted between English, French and Spanish possessions, yet few historians until recently have attempted to analyze the causes and consequences of these distinctions.

Beginning with the work by Frank Tannenbaum,¹ which was expanded by Stanley Elkins,² such a preliminary comparative study has been undertaken. Concentrating on the vast structure of the law, these two scholars have relied essentially on a comparative legal analysis. Critics have challenged their generalizations on the grounds that there exists a great distinction between the model of the law and the reality of practice, while recently the very distinctness of the legal structure has been questioned.³

But while subjecting these pioneer attempts to internal textual criticism, few have attempted to challenge their conclusions and generalizations by empirical investigation. The aim of this paper is to take such an approach, by subjecting to detailed analysis the slave systems of two colonial powers in the New World. It studies the operation of one crucial aspect of the slave system, the relationship between infidel Negro and Christian Church, in two highly representative colonies, those of Cuba and Virginia.

The problem of dealing with non-Christian African Negro slaves was one of the most difficult tasks faced by the churches of the New World in the colonial period. Whether of the Roman Catholic or Protestant denomination,

* Research for this article was made possible by a grant from the Social Science Research Council.

¹ Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen, the Negro in the Americas* (New York, A. A. Knopf, 1947).

² Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery, A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1959).

³ Arnold A. Sio, "Interpretations of Slavery: The Slave Status in the Americas", *CSSH*, VII, No. 3 (April, 1965), 289-308.

each metropolitan church suddenly found its colonial parishes flooded with human beings held in bondage and ignorant of the doctrines of Christianity. For each church the question of the validity of that bondage had to be dealt with, and for each the human and Christian nature of the African Negro had to be determined. While the problem might be ignored in the first hours of establishing a functioning church among the white colonists, and dealing with the problem of the evangelization of the American Indians, these questions had to be eventually resolved before a Christian kingdom could be established on the shores of the New World.

How the two metropolitan churches dealt with the African Negro slaves would be determined by a host of considerations, from the question of organizational differences, to the problem of religious climate. Whatever the cause, however, the patterns of dealing with these slaves, which they both evolved, would have a profound impact on the life of the bondsmen. For especially in the Pre-Enlightenment world, when religious thought and action completely pervaded the life of Colonial America, the attitudes and actions of the church did much to create and define the moral, legal, social and even economic position of the Negro, slave and free, within colonial society.

II

Within colonial Latin American society the Spanish Catholic Church was the prime arbiter in the social and to a considerable extent in the intellectual life of all men. Not only did it define the moral basis of society and determine the limits of its intellectual world view, but it also sanctified and legalized the most basic human relationships. While this was the traditional role of the Church in Catholic Europe, and especially within Spain, the Church in the New World also faced the unique task of dealing with non-European peoples and defining their place within traditional social patterns.

Acutely aware of this problem from the first days of the conquest, the Church conceived of its primary function in the New World as an evangelical one. Putting aside its harsh and negative role as defender of the faith, which dominated its European attitudes against the other "peoples of the book", it adopted a positive role of sympathetic conversion of virgin peoples to the true faith.⁴

⁴ The evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church in the New World was in fact a truly novel and powerful departure from previous experience. While the wars of *reconquista* against the Moors had brought the expansion of the faith, this had been through means of the fire and sword. Only in rare instances were attempts made to convert Mohammedans and Jews to Christianity peacefully, and thus despite the religious overtones of the centuries-long *reconquista*, the whole concept of evangelization was practically non-existent. Even when the opening up of virgin territories suddenly brought this great movement to life within Spanish Catholic circles, it was an entirely unique

While the thrust of this missionary activity was directed toward the American Indians,⁵ the evangelical Catholic Church of the New World also intimately concerned itself with the other great religiously primitive peoples, the African Negro slaves. From the beginning of slave importation, in fact, the Church took up the position that the African Negroes were to be considered part of the New World Church, on much the same level as the untutored Amerindians. And while the Church was often forced to concede colonists prior claims for the labor of these black and brown races, it never relinquished its position as the guardian of the moral, religious and even social life of the untutored Indian and Negro races within its New World domain.

This dominant role of the Church in the life of the Negro slaves is well illustrated in the history of the Cuban Church. Because of the virtual extinction of the pre-contact Indians on the island and the subsequent dominance of the slave population, the Cuban Church was forced to give its undivided attention to its Negro communicants, almost from the first years of colonization. Eventually becoming the most heavily populated Negro colony in Spanish America, Cuba, more than any other area, tended to set the pattern of Church-slave relations.

In defining its attitude toward the African slave, the Cuban clergy were of course governed by the ideas which had evolved on the institution of slavery and on African Negroes both in the contemporary mores of Iberians and in the decrees of the Metropolitan Church. In both sets of standards there had been built up in the Iberian peninsula an historic pattern which preceded the creation of the modern Spanish state. The sub-Saharan Negro as well as the North African peoples had had intimate contact with the population of Spain from recorded times to the 16th century. Especially important in the armies and slave populations of the Spanish Moslem states, the Iberian peoples had long accepted the individuality, personality and co-equality of the Negro. In fact, large numbers of Negroes mixed freely in slavery under the Moslem and Christian states, with Iberian Christians, Eastern European Slavs and other Mediterranean peoples.⁶

phenomenon, with no parallel in Europe. Thus while the New World church was pacifically preaching a gentle Christ to the Indians, the peninsular church during these same three centuries of colonial rule, waged an unrelenting war against Jews, Moors, *mudejares*, *moriscos*, *conversos*, judaizers, Lutherans and Calvinists. Intolerant defender of the faith at home, it proved to be unusually tolerant, patient and intelligently assimilationist in its encounters with the New World pagans. As one scholar concluded, "Militant Spain guarded its religious purity in the metropolitan territory with the sword, and turned itself into a missionary at the service of the same faith in the New World." Antonio Ybot León, *La iglesia y los eclesiasticos españoles en la empresa de indias*, 2 vols. (Barcelona, Salvat Editores, 1954-1963), I, 347-50.

⁵ See e.g., Robert Ricard, *La "conquête spirituelle" du Mexique* (Paris, Institut d'ethnologie, 1933).

⁶ On the role of the African Negro in medieval Spain, see E. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire*

Since North African Berbers blended into mulatto and black sub-Saharan Negroes, there was no reason for the white Iberians to conceive of these Africans as anything but normal human beings. As for their position under the slave systems developed by the Christian kingdoms of the North, they were treated as co-equal to all other non-Christian peoples, with the same obligations, duties and even rights. For those in the Castilian region, this meant that they were under the modified Roman slave laws elaborated in *Las Siete Partidas* of Alfonso X, a 13th-century codification of existing Castilian law and custom, which was the fountainhead for the slave code later to be applied to the New World.

The most fundamental aspect of the slave sections of *Las Siete Partidas* was the initial proposition that the institution of slavery was against natural reason.⁷ It declared that "slavery is the most evil and the most despicable thing which can be found among men, because man, who is the most noble, and free creature, among all the creatures that God made, is placed in the power of another . . .".⁸ While recognizing it as an institution of long standing and custom which had to be continued, the code considered it a necessary evil rather than a positive good; thus the slave was to be guaranteed every possible right which he held as a member of the human community, with modification of these rights only where absolutely necessary.

From this position, it followed that the basic legal personality of the slave was to be preserved as much as possible. While the slave was forced to relinquish his natural primary right to liberty, he was guaranteed his other rights to personal security and even the right to property. From the point of view of the Church, his secondary or social rights were even more important. Thus the slave was guaranteed the right of full Christian communion, and through the sanctity of the Church, the right to marriage and parenthood.

To guarantee the sanctity of these sacraments, the Catholic Church, according to these 13th century codes, was made responsible for their fulfillment even in the face of opposition from masters. Thus the Church itself had to pay compensation to masters if slaves married outside their own master's

de l'Espagne musulmane, 3 vols. (Paris, G.-P. Maisonneuve, 1950-1953), III, 72, 74-75, 177-78; 208ff.; Charles Verlinden, *L'esclavage dans l'Europe médiévale, péninsule ibérique - France* (Bruges, "De Tempel", 1955), pp. 225-26, 358-62; José Antonio Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud desde los tiempos mas remotos hasta nuestra dias*, 3 vols. (Barcelona, Jaime Jopus, 1875-77), II, 140-41. - African Negro slaves were still a known and recognized element within Iberia's small slave population right up to the opening up of the modern slave trade with West Africa by Portugal in the 15th century. *Ibid.*, III, 36; Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America*, 4 vols. (Washington, Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1930-1935), I, 1.

⁷ *Las siete partidas del rey Alfonso el sabio, cotejadas con varios codices antiguos, por la Real Academia de Historia*, 3 vols. (Madrid, Imprenta Real, 1807), III, 117, Partida IV, titulo XXI, ley 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 30, Partida IV, titulo v, introducción.

household, so that the couples could be united.⁹ It also had to guarantee that no families that were legally bound together could be separated, especially through sale overseas.¹⁰ Finally, the Church was used by the state to encourage the process of manumission as much as possible.¹¹

With the opening up of the New World to African slavery, the Castilians transferred these historic codes to the overseas "kingdoms" with little change, adding to them only as local conditions warranted. In the first years, this meant dealing with the background of the African immigrants. When raw blacks (*bozales*) were heavily imported directly from Africa after the granting of the *asientos*, it was suddenly discovered that many of these religiously "primitive" peoples were in fact practicing Moslems. Having as its major aim the religious purity of the Indies, especially in regard to its old enemy, the Crown quickly suppressed all such importations, and thenceforth only "primitive" *bozales* were allowed to enter, and they, like the Indians, fell into the same tutorial status as regards the Church.¹² While this meant exclusion of Indians and Negroes from the priesthood for this period, it also meant that they were exempt from the jurisdiction of the Inquisition.

Although the majority of the Catholic Church both in Spain and the New World had early and successfully attacked the legality and practice of enslaving the Indians,¹³ only a few exceptional clerics contested the right to Negro slavery.¹⁴ For the Negro was not originally a subject of the Crown of

⁹ *Ibid.*, 31-32, Partida IV, titulo v, ley 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, ley 1.

¹¹ Among the numerous laws on manumission see *ibid.*, 121-22, Partida IV, titulo xxii, ley 1.

¹² Fernando Ortiz, *Hampa afro-cubana: los negros esclavos, estudio sociológico y de derecho público* (La Habana, Revista Bimestre Cubana, 1916), p. 343 n; also José Antonio Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud de la raza africana en el nuevo mundo y en especial en los países americano-hispanos*, 2 vols. (Barcelona, Jaime Jopus, 1879), I, 69.

¹³ Silvio Zavala, *La filosofía política en la conquista de América* (Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1947), chap. iv. For the ending of Indian slavery in Cuba, see Irene Aloha Wright, *The Early History of Cuba, 1492-1586* (New York, Macmillan Co., 1916), pp. 229, 232.

¹⁴ Las Casas, who had stood at first for the introduction of Negro slaves, later held that the Negroes were unjustly enslaved, "for the same reasoning," he claimed, "applies to them as to the Indians." Alonso de Montufar, archbishop of Mexico, in 1560 questioned the enslavement of the Negroes, while Fray Tomas de Mercado in his work *Tratos y contractos de mercaderes* (1569) attacked the right of procuring and enslaving Negroes in Africa itself. Bartolome de Albornoz in his *Arte de contratos* (1573) approved of the slave trade in Moors from Berber, Tripoli and Cyrenaica, but rejected entirely the trade in Negroes from Ethiopia and the Portuguese traffic in it. Perhaps the most outstanding figures in the evangelical mission to the African Negro slave in the New World were two 17th-century friars: Pedro Claver, who worked among the Negro slaves arriving at Cartagena, for which he was later canonized, and the American Jesuit, Alonso de Sandoval who wrote the famous evangelical tract, *De instaurada aethiopum salute* (1627). Silvio Zavala, *New Viewpoints on the Spanish Colonization of America* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1943), p. 65; Zavala, "Relaciones históricas entre indios y negros en Iberoamérica", *Revista de las Indias*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 88 (1946), pp. 55-65; Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud de la raza africana*,

Castile and his enslavement had occurred prior to his entrance into the Spanish realms. This left the clerics no legal grounds and less moral will for denying the practice, since it was initiated, according to the thinking of the day, by the heathens themselves. But while the Church never officially opposed the institution of Negro slavery, it deliberately interfered in the direct relationship between master and slave on the grounds that both were communicants in the Church and that nothing must challenge this primary Christian right to salvation and the sacraments.

This responsibility of the Church to care for its Negro communicants, as well as to guarantee that no subject of the Crown was not a practicing Christian, was specifically laid on the New World clergy by the Crown itself. In the very opening book of the *Leyes de Indias*, the famous compilation of colonial legislation, the Crown demanded that the Church take especial care in dealing with Negro slaves. It stated that:

We order and command to all those persons who have Slaves, Negroes and Mulattoes, that they send them to the Church or Monastery at the hour which the Prelate has designated,¹⁵ and there the Christian Doctrine be taught to them; and the Archbishops and Bishops of our Indies have very particular care for their conversion and endoctrination, in order that they live Christianly, and they give to it the same order and care that is prepared and entrusted by the laws of this Book for the Conversion and Endoctrination of the Indians; so that they be instructed in our Holy Roman Catholic Faith, living in the service of God our Master.¹⁶

Nor was the Church itself slow in meeting these demands, and in its earliest colonial synods it dealt long and extensively with the problems of its Negro members. Given the close tie which existed between civil and canonical law, the legislation issuing from these synods became an essential part of the Cuban slave legislation.¹⁷

The first of these colonial Church synods to meet in the Caribbean was the Dominican provincial synod which met early in the 17th century on the island of Española. Held under the auspices of the Archbishopric of Española, which included all of the West Indies, Cuba, Florida, and Venezuela,¹⁸ this first Caribbean Church synod spent a good part of its time considering

I, 252-55; Rafael Altamira, *Historia de España y de la civilización española*, 5 vols. (Barcelona, Juan Gili, 1900-1930), III, 242.

¹⁵ "We order that in each one of the towns of Christians a determined hour each day, be designated by the prelate in which all the Indians, Negroes and Mulattoes, free as well as slave, that there are within the towns, are brought together to hear the Christian Doctrine." This same law also provided a similar arrangement for those who worked and lived in the countryside. *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias*, 3 vols. (Madrid, D. Joaquin Ibara, 1791), I, 4-5, Libro I, titulo i, ley 12.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5, Libro I, titulo i, ley 13.

¹⁷ Ortiz, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

¹⁸ Ybot León, *op. cit.*, II, 55.

the problem of its Negro communicants. With strong royal representation, in the person of the Governor and President of the Audiencia of Santo Domingo,¹⁹ the leading bishops and clerics prepared, after much discussion, a series of laws and ordinances known as *sanctiones*.²⁰ Because of royal representation and support, these Latin codes were later translated into Spanish and became the official civil code within the *audiencia*, as well as being canonical law for the ecclesiastical province.²¹

One of the very earliest of these *sanctiones* of the Provincial Dominican Council and the first dealing with the Negro concerned the very basic task of determining if the Negro had been properly admitted into the church:

Since we learn from a certain experienced leader that Negroes have been transported from Africa and brought from other parts to these Indies without benefit of baptism, so if at some time it is claimed that these were besprinkled with holy water by traders when they are put ashore by us it is recommended that they be questioned concerning their baptism: that is, if they have received the water of baptism before they left from Africa, or on the sea, or in any other place or whether they did not receive it at all? . . . Also one may question them whether at the time they received the baptism they had obtained any knowledge, however imperfect, concerning the performance of this sacrament which was conferred upon them, . . . and also whether they willingly received this holy water at the time it was offered to them. If however, any of these conditions are found to be lacking in their baptism, they must be baptized anew.²²

In the next section it was stated that redoing the baptism was essential if there were any doubts, because to the Negro "it is thus shown that the privilege of the sacrament is given to them, and the Negroes know themselves to be baptized equal to the others".²³ It followed that no cleric of the province could "confer baptism upon Negro adults unless they have been imbued first with the Christian doctrine",²⁴ which education was to be undertaken as soon as they entered the province, by a priest specifically designated for this task.²⁵ If Negroes refused to be baptized, they were given two to three months "during which the fear of the doctrine must be found". At the end of this time the cleric "may administer baptism to them, provided they are, one and all, sorry for their transgressions, they display the sign of this sorrow, and they realize the power of the sacrament of baptism".²⁶

As for the sacrament of confirmation, it was demanded that the "priest

¹⁹ Fr. Cipriano de Utrera, "El Concilio Dominicano de 1622, con una introducción histórica", *Boletín eclesástico de la arquidiócesis de Santo Domingo* (1938-1939), pp. 8-9.

²⁰ The original Latin ordinances, or *Sanctiones Concilii Dominicani*, are reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 23-81.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

²² *Sanctiones Concilii Dominicani*, Sessio Secunda, Caput I, Sectio vii.

²³ Sessio Secunda, Caput I, Sectio vii.

²⁴ Sessio Secunda, Caput I, Sectio ix.

²⁵ Sessio Secunda, Caput I, Sectio x.

²⁶ Sessio Secunda, Caput I, Sectio ix.

even warns the master of Negroes to place before these same ones the means and the place to receive this divine sacrament, but if they do otherwise they may be punished with a judgement".²⁷ In the sacrament of marriage, it was required that at Negro weddings (as in the case of Indian ones) two special benedictions be given instead of the usual one, to impress them with the importance of this sacrament.²⁸ In the case of an unbaptized Negro contracting marriage with someone already baptized, it was required that a new agreement be made and the marriage ceremony be repeated. And this was to be done as soon as possible, "so that the benefits of marriage may be rightfully enjoyed".²⁹

Negroes were not to be granted absolution until they had overcome their ignorance and inexperience and had finally accepted the faith.³⁰ It was also provided that every qualified confessor could hear the confessions of Negroes.³¹ Again, with the administration of extreme unction as with all other sacraments, it was demanded that the Negro be taught its meaning and accept its significance before it could be administered to him.³²

It was required by these *sanctiones* that Negroes who lived at great distances from the churches and worked in the country should hear mass at least at six festive holy days per year. If the master was not willing to allow his slaves to hear mass at least these six times, then the prelate was to see to his legal chastisement.³³ The Church council also demanded that "no master of Negroes may put slaves to any servile work on the festive days, nor may he hire others; under the penalty of ten silver pounds for the first transgression, for the second he will truly be implicated with excommunication".³⁴ For the Negroes on these days were to be taught by the priest "so that they may learn the articles of faith and reap the harvest of sacraments".³⁵

Largely supporting the declarations and ordinances of the Dominican Provincial Synod of 1622, and also providing further clarifications of the rights of Christian Negroes, were the *Constitutiones* published by the Church synod which met for the Cuban diocese in June of 1680. Constitución IV repeated a proviso that had become an essential part of the imperial slave code, that is, that all slaves be instructed in the Roman Catholic faith and be baptized within a year of their admittance into the Indies.³⁶

²⁷ Sessio Secunda, Caput II, Sectio iii.

²⁸ Sessio Secunda, Caput IV, Sectio iii.

²⁹ Sessio Secunda, Caput IV, Sectio vii.

³⁰ Sessio Secunda, Caput V, Sectio i.

³¹ Sessio Secunda, Caput V, Sectio vi.

³² Sessio Secunda, Caput VII, Sectio iv.

³³ Sessio Tertia, Caput I, Sectio iv.

³⁴ Sessio Tertia, Caput I, Sectio v.

³⁵ Sessio Quarta, Caput VII, Sectio ii.

³⁶ Fernando Ortiz, *Hampa afro-cubana: los negros brujos* (Madrid, Librería de Fernando Fe, 1906), p. 304. This same command was also contained in the very first chapter of the 1789 Slave Code, see "Real Cedula de Su Magestad sobre la educaci6n,

It also provided that *bozales* could not be married by a priest until both parties were baptized.³⁷ In attempting to deal with this problem, the Diocesan Synod was forced to take into account the African background of the slave and to adjust the Catholic atmosphere to the matrimonial situation brought by the slave from his native land. "Because there come many Indians . . . and Negro *bozales*, married in their infidelity: we order that wanting to live together in this bishopric, after being baptized, their marriage be ratified *in facie ecclesiae* [in the sight of the Church]." If either partner refused the faith, he or she was given up to seven months and six warnings to be baptized. If after this time elapsed they still refused baptism they could not continue their marital relations. And "if any of the said infidels come married with many wives" he was required to be baptized and married to the first one with whom "according to their custom and rites" he had contracted marriage. If the first one could not be so ascertained, then the male could marry the one he desired. And it was also required that if he was married within the direct parental line (mother, sister, etc.), his marriage was declared invalid and the couple had to separate before baptism was administered.³⁸

The Diocesan Synod also attempted to eradicate a continuing problem, that of unscrupulous masters who, for either personal reasons or those of economic expediency, tried to prevent their slaves from marrying or refused to honor these marriages. Thus Constitución V established that "marriage should be free" and ordered that:

no master prohibit his slaves against marriage, nor impede those who cohabit in it, because we have experienced that many masters with little fear of God and with serious damage to their consciences, proscribe that their slaves not marry or impede their cohabitation with their married partners, with feigned pretexts; . . .

In this same law, masters were prohibited from taking their slaves outside of Havana to sell them unless they took husband and wife together. Constitución VI added that masters could not sell their slaves overseas or in remote parts, in order to impede marital cohabitation. If this was done, then the slaves sold in this manner should be brought back with the master paying the expense.³⁹

The local Church did all in its power to carry out the intent of the metropolitan slave codes, and to guarantee to their Negro communicants their full rights. They met in powerful synods to deal with local conditions and the unique backgrounds of their particular colored congregants, and always legislated in favor of the fullest freedom and rights that were permissible. While the upper clergy dealt with these problems in law, the lower clergy, especially at the parish level, effectively carried this law into practice.

trato y ocupaciones de los esclavos en todos sus dominios de Indias . . .", reprinted in *Revista de Historia de America*, No. 3 (September, 1938), pp. 50-51.

³⁷ Constitución III, quoted in F. Ortiz, *Los Negros Esclavos . . .*, p. 348.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 349-50.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 349.

This correlation between law and practice is abundantly supported by the local parish statistics available on the administration of the sacraments. What these materials indicate is that the slave and free colored population had the same percentage and absolute figures of baptism as the white population. According to the census of 1827, for example, when whites represented 44% and the slaves 41% of the total population,⁴⁰ each group respectively had 12,938 and 12,729 baptisms performed on the island in that year.⁴¹

Not only were slaves and free colored fully admitted into the Church, but they also heavily participated in all the sacraments, and most importantly in that of marriage as well. Thus, for example, in the four years from 1752 to 1755, the Rector of the Cathedral Church at Santiago de Cuba reported 55 slave marriages to 75 free white marriages in his parish.⁴² At this time the entire urban population of Santiago de Cuba consisted of 6,525 whites, and 5,765 slaves,⁴³ which means that the slave marriages in that period represented one out of 105 slaves in the city, and the free whites one out of 96.3. In short, despite the sharp differences in education, social status, and wealth, the slave marriage rate was very close to that of the free white rate. This is all the more extraordinary a figure, given the fact that a large portion of the adult population, of all colors and social conditions, lived in free unions because of the high cost of clerical ceremonies.

This same pattern is repeated in the local parish of Santo Tomas, also in the jurisdiction of the Santiago de Cuba Church. In the parish census for 1824 there were listed 794 married whites, 855 free colored married persons, and 855 married slaves. This breaks down into a percentage of 44% for the whites, 42% for the free colored and 29% for the slaves of the adult population, that is, of persons seventeen or older.⁴⁴ On the one hand these figures reveal the great extent of illegal unions among adults of all races, but they also seriously under-rate the slave marriages. For the general statistics of the entire island consistently reveal that the free colored marriage rate was considerably below that of the colored slaves.

Thus, in 1827 there were listed a total of 1,868 white marriages, 1,381 slave marriages and only 385 free colored marriages. The ratios in the total population figures for that year come to one marriage performed for 166 white persons, for 207 colored slaves and 236 free mulattoes, the worst being one out of 347 free Negroes.⁴⁵ The reason for the high slave marriage rate

⁴⁰ Ramón de la Sagra, *Historia economico-política y estadística de la isla de Cuba* (Habana, Imprenta de las viudas de Arazoza y Soler, 1831), pp. 7-8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20. The free colored, who made up 15% of the total population in 1827, had 4,826 baptisms.

⁴² Archivo General de Indias [hereafter cited as AGI], Sevilla, Audiencia de Santo Domingo, legajo 516, no. 30, June 14, 1758.

⁴³ Sagra, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁴⁴ AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 223, February 15, 1824.

⁴⁵ Sagra, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 24. In France at this time, the figure was one married couple for each 134 persons. *Ibid.*, p. 24 n.

as contrasted to the free colored population appears to be the fact that the slave population was accountable to a master, and through him to the local church, and was therefore far more under the influence of the local parish priest.

Another remarkable factor is the large number of legal marriages between free and slave persons. Of the 702 colored marriages on record in six selected parishes of Havana between 1825 and 1829, 278 were between slaves, 293 between free persons and 131 involved a slave and a free person.⁴⁶

All of these baptismal and marriage statistics re-enforce the fact that civil and canonical law was the very essence of actual practice, and that the Negro slave enjoyed co-equal status with his masters before the sacraments of the Church. That the Church was so effective in carrying law into practice and constantly guaranteeing these rights, is also due to the extraordinarily large number of priests on the island. In the census of 1778, exclusive of nuns, there were listed 1,063 practicing clergy in Cuba. This meant that for the island's total population of 179,484, there was one priest for every 168 persons, a figure not even approached in any country in the Americas today.⁴⁷

Aside from its direct role in the sacraments and the carrying out of Catholic education, the Church also encouraged manumission by impressing on masters that it was a meritorious act in the eyes of God. On his special Saint's day, or in honor of a marriage, a birth, or a recovery from a severe illness, a master would give thanks to God by freeing some of his slaves. The Crown greatly encouraged these procedures by making it possible to manumit a slave by simple declaration of the master in a church before the local priest.⁴⁸

That the work of the clergy in providing a moral climate conducive to manumission was successful can also be seen in the statistics. From the early days of slave importation, a large free colored class began to appear in Cuba, largely as a result of voluntary manumission by their masters. By the 1560's the free colored population on the island was numerous enough to elect its own *aguacil*, or constable, in Havana,⁴⁹ and by the end of this century they had already fielded one full company of free colored militia of around 100 men.⁵⁰ By the end of the next century the free Negro community was able to

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁴⁷ For the 1778 census breakdown, see AGI, Indiferente General, leg. 1527, December 31, 1778. For a clerical census of the Americas in 1959, see Donald S. Castro, *et al.*, *Statistical Abstract of Latin America, 1963* (U.C.L.A., Center of Latin American Studies, 1964), p. 22. The lowest figure for any contemporary Latin American country was Chile, with one priest for every 2,750 Catholics. The United States figure in 1965, is 1 priest to 778 practicing Catholics. *The Official Catholic Directory, 1965*, General Summary, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁸ Tannenbaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 53ff.

⁴⁹ Saco, *Historia de la esclavitud de la raza africana*, I, 221.

⁵⁰ For the history of the first company of *pardos libres* (free mulattoes) of Havana see, AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 418, no. 7, 1714.

sponsor a full battalion of some 800 men,⁵¹ and by the census of 1774 the island listed 30,847 free colored, as opposed to 43,333 Negro slaves, making the free colored some 41% of the total black population on the island.⁵² In fact, from this first census, until the era of mass illegal importations of African slaves after 1820, the percentage of freedmen to slaves never fell below 36%. Even at its lowest ebb, in 1841, the free colored class still numbered 152,838, 26% of the total colored population. When this mass illegal trade was finally halted in the late 1850's, the temporary disequilibrium was overcome; by 1861 the free colored accounted for 39% of the total colored or 213,167 free persons as against 339,872 slaves.⁵³

The Church was not only the most important factor in encouraging and maintaining the impetus to voluntary manumission, which accounts for the majority of freedmen, it also encouraged *coartación*. Most fully developed in Cuba, *coartación* was the system whereby a slave had the right to purchase his freedom from his master. The slave was granted the right to appear in court at any time to have his price fixed and to begin to pay his purchase price in agreed installments after the initial down payment, usually a minimum sum of 50 pesos, or something like 1/4 of his value. Once a slave became *coartado* he had a whole range of rights including the right to change masters if he could find a purchaser for his remaining price, and to buy his freedom as soon as he was able. Because of the expense and labor involved, it was only the exceptionally able artisan and urban slave who most benefitted from the system, though it was open to rural plantation slaves as well, and it has been estimated that about 4,000 per year took advantage of it.⁵⁴

Throughout the whole practice of *coartación* the Church played a vital role, for it was the prime guarantor of the free time and labor of the Negro outside his master's jurisdiction. To obtain funds, the Negro slave was permitted by custom and the Church to work for himself in his own private truck garden, or *conuco*, on all holy days and Sundays. Income from these *conucos* was also exempted from tithe payments. This was a very unusual privilege in colonial society, where the *diezmos*, or tithes, were the most universal form of production and property taxes.⁵⁵ Finally in seeking a reliable third party to hold his savings toward the initial down payment, and also to help him present his legal case, the Negro slave often relied on the local parish priest.⁵⁶

⁵¹ AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 419, no. 8, 1715.

⁵² Sagra, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁵³ The figures for the census from 1774-1827 can be found in *ibid.*, pp. 3-6; and for those for the census from 1841-1861 are calculated by Julio J. Le Riverend Brusone, in Ramiro Guerra y Sanchez, *et al.*, *Historia de la nación cubana*, 10 vols. (La Habana, Editorial Historia de la Nación Cubana, 1950), IV, 170.

⁵⁴ For a complete discussion of this system, see Herbert H. S. Aimes, "Coartacion: A Spanish Institution for the Advancement of Slaves into Freedmen", *Yale Review*, XVII (February, 1909), 412-31; and Ortiz, *Los negros esclavos*, pp. 313ff.

⁵⁵ AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 152, ramo 2, no. 39, September 24, 1680.

Although the clergy did not interfere with the actual functioning of the slave regime, they could be critical of it. The Bishop of Santiago de Cuba in the late 17th century bitterly complained that the masters were not properly clothing their slaves, so that the latter were often embarrassed to come to Church. He warned the masters that they were under obligation to provide the slaves with decent clothing, and not force them to provide for themselves.

The clergy also criticized the Negroes, especially on matters of laxity in church attendance and disinterest in learning their doctrine. This same Bishop who concerned himself over the poor dress of his Negro communicants, also was rather shocked at the indifference of some of the slaves to Church service. He charged that many were not attending mass on holidays and Sundays, before they began to work on their own properties, and that others were not seriously learning their lessons. In both situations he wanted the civil authorities to intervene, and in the latter case even proposed that instead of the present gentle method of instruction, the local clergy should adopt "the method by which the clerical teachers of New Spain and Peru teach their Indians", that is by using the whip on them in front of their fellow communicants if they forgot their lessons.⁵⁷

This stern attitude was the exception rather than the rule, most clergy dealing gently with their Negro church-goers. One who attempted to mold custom to the Church, and who largely succeeded, was Bishop Pedro Agustin Morel de Santa Cruz, in the middle of the 18th century. When he took up residence he found that there were 21 Negro clubs, or *cabildos*, in Havana where Negroes of both sexes gathered on holidays and Sundays to drink, dance "in extremely torrid and provocative dances" and commit other excesses too sinful to mention. Many told the Bishop that it was better to leave these *cabildos* alone, for they provided a reasonable outlet for the slaves and freedmen without causing undue harm. But, he declared, "not being satisfied with similar scruples, I attempted the gentle method of going by turns to each of the *cabildos*, to administer the sacrament of confirmation, and praying the Holy Rosary with those of that organization (*gremio*), before an Image of Our Lady which I carried with me. Concluding this act, I left the image in their houses, charging them to continue with their worship and devotion. . . ." He then named a specific clergymen to each of the *cabildos* to go to them on Sundays and holidays to teach them Christian doctrine. He also placed each *cabildo* in charge of a particular Virgin that it was to venerate under the direction of a clergyman. This unusual and enthusiastic bishop went so

⁵⁶ Such for example was the experience of the parish priest of the copper mining town of Santiago del Cobre in the 17th century with his 500 free and slave Negro communicants. AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 417, no. 15, December, 1709.

⁵⁷ AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 151, ramo 2, no. 22, February 22, 1682.

far as to propose that his clergymen should learn the various African languages spoken by the slaves so that they might teach them better.⁵⁸

Although this step was never taken, there is no question of the successful syncretization of Catholicism with the African folk religions brought to Cuba by the Negro slaves. Bishop Morel de Santa Cruz's action was only one link in a long chain of effort to construct a *cofradía* (or religious brotherhood) system by the Church. This was so successful that the African *cofradías* came to play a vital role in the social life of both slaves and freedmen, with their own saints and special functions in various holy marches and carnivals. Usually organized along lines of regional African origins, their members coming from the same *nación*, or geographic location, these were both religious and benevolent associations. They were not only normal *cofradías* tied to the local church and carrying saintly images in religious processions, but cooperated with the *cabildos* in other activities. Throughout the year the *cabildo* acted as a mutual relief association, the chief of the *cabildo* aiding his subordinates if they were sick; their general funds were also used to pay burial expenses and sometimes to free old and invalided slaves. They also maintained *cabildo* houses as general meeting-places for the members of the *cofradía*, available to them at all times. Finally, the *cabildos* were recognized as legitimate political agents for the slaves and freedmen in dealing with the local authorities, thus providing outlets for political organization and leadership.

The African *cabildo* was not peculiar to Cuba, but existed throughout the Spanish and Portuguese Indies wherever Negroes were congregated. It had its origins in medieval Seville, whose Negro *cofradías* and *cabildos* were active and fully recognized from as far back as the fourteenth century. As early as 1573, the Havana municipal government ordered that all the Negroes of the city turn out for the Corpus Christi processions, "the same as they assisted in the famous one of Seville". In the great religious processions, the Negro *cabildos* in fact played an increasingly important part. Though outright African fetishes were quickly prohibited from display, the local saints and virgins were so entwined with African mythology and even costume that these displays often tended to perpetuate pre-New World patterns and beliefs.⁵⁹

The most important religious processional for these organizations was the famous Christmas festival of the Day of the Kings. This day was recognized throughout the island as a special day for the Negro *cabildos* and *cofradías* and almost unlimited license was permitted by the white authorities in the great dances, drinkings and ceremonies. For the Negroes, both slave and free, it was the crowning event in their year, and provided an unparalleled opportunity for individual and community expression for the entire Negro

⁵⁸ AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 515, no. 51, 1755.

⁵⁹ An excellent study of these *cabildos* is Fernando Ortiz, "Los *cabildos* afro-cubanos", *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, XVI (1921), 5-39.

population. Thus, between religious processions, annual *dia de reyes* celebrations and the daily conduct of their *cofradías* and *cabildos* the Negro masses were provided by the Church with a vast and crucial outlet for social expression and community development.⁶⁰

While providing a rich fabric of social existence for the masses under the canopy of the Church, the Cuban clergy also aided the exceptionally able Negro to break through the rigid class-caste barriers of the white community through their control over the educational processes. Since, at the pre-university level, education was exclusively in the hands of the church, primary and secondary education was available to the exceptional and upwardly-mobile free Negro. Education was the only means by which a colored person could break through from the lower economic classes, at least to the learned professions, and possibly higher. For sons of prosperous colored artisans and successful colored militia officers, both mulattoes and Negroes, the open opportunity of the schools run by the secular and regular clergy was their avenue for mobility of their children.

For example, the mulatto, or *pardo*, Antonio Flores, a militia officer in Havana in the mid-18th century, had a son who had graduated with highest distinctions from the courses of Theology and Grammar offered by the local Jesuit college of Havana. When his son's right to enter the University was challenged on the grounds of his color, Flores, in bitter though unsuccessful opposition, pointed out to the Council of the Indies the innumerable examples of free Negro and mulatto children who had attended local church and primary schools in pre-university training courses.⁶¹ And while the University consistently fought the entrance of colored persons into its ranks, the large number of petitions of colored persons to the Crown demanding the right to practice a profession to which they had already been trained, indicates that many succeeded in "passing" with little trouble, through the combination of light skins and the pre-collegiate training they had received from the clerical schools.⁶² And even given denial of University admission to the majority of free colored, the very possession of a secondary *colegio* education in the days of mass illiteracy and non-professional university programs, was more than enough to break into the professional classes and the upper social levels. To read and write, at least, according to the Church, if not the colonial universities, was a right open to all, and a right which held out almost unlimited opportunities for the few who could achieve it.

Concerned for his social existence, his freedom, his family, and his soul, and even in a minority of cases for the training of his mind, the Church

⁶⁰ Fernando Ortiz, "La fiesta afro-cubana del 'dia de reyes'", *Revista Bimestre Cubana*, XV (1920), 5-26.

⁶¹ AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 1455, no. 5, 1760.

⁶² For example, see the petition of the mulatto Auditor of War of Cuba, who was a law graduate of the University, in AGI, Santo Domingo, leg. 2236, October 1, 1791.

deeply and vitally committed itself to its guardian role with its Negro slave communicant. Because it effectively controlled an important part of their lives, the Church was unquestionably the primary intermediary agent between master and slave, and the only institution which daily claimed its rights, as opposed to the property rights of the masters.

Although the Church could not abolish the rigors of harsh plantation servitude, it could modify that life to the extent of guaranteeing minimal periods of rest and independence for the blacks. The Church could also guarantee a degree of self-expression for all slaves, which enabled them to escape the close confines of bondage in many ways and thus to validate their human personality and potential. Finally it could create the panoply of mores and attitudes which permitted the Negro to be treated as a co-equal human being, and allowed him to fully merge into Cuban society when the harsh regime of slavery was destroyed.

III

Like Cuba, Virginia was settled by a dominant established church, in this case the Church of England. Both Spain and England at the times of colonization had a hierarchical metropolitan church which was closely tied to the royal government and was considered one of the major governing institutions of the realm. But while the counter-reformation Church of Spain was able to suppress all opposition to its religious authority, the Anglican Church found itself constantly struggling against Protestant dissenter groups who attempted to challenge its established authority. However, at the time of the initial planting of Virginia, the Crown and the Church were fully united and the Anglican Church was declared the established church of the colony. As early as 1606, the Crown decreed that the Virginia Company "... should provide that the true word and service of God should be preached, planted and used, *according to the Rites and Doctrine of the Church of England*".⁶³ In the first organization of the Company, there was even a bishop of the realm, John King of the London diocese, who was a leading member.⁶⁴ Through these actions, Anglicanism was guaranteed as the religion of the colonists, and from then until the end of the colonial period, the Church of England was overwhelmingly the state Church of Virginia, and its membership encompassed the majority of the population.

But while there was never any challenge to the religion of the metropolitan

⁶³ Quoted in Arthur Lyon Cross, *The Anglican Episcopate and the American Colonies* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1924), p. 10.

⁶⁴ George Maclaren Brydon, *Virginia's Mother Church and the Political Conditions Under Which it Grew*, 2 vols. (Richmond, Virginia Historical Society, 1947-1952), I, 40-42.

Church in Virginia, the Crown never established the leadership and organization whereby the established church could function in its accustomed manner in the colony. In sharp contrast to Cuba, where this problem was never raised, the Crown and the hierarchy made no attempt to fit the colony into the normal functioning of the Church. Whereas Cuba had its first bishop appointed in 1516 just five years after the conquest, neither the Archbishop of Canterbury nor the Crown saw fit to appoint a native bishop, nor even to place the colony within the jurisdiction of an insular diocese.

The Bishop of London, because of his connection with the Company, originally assisted in providing clergymen and some financial assistance to establishing the Virginia church, but this tenuous connection was destroyed when the Company was dissolved by the Crown in 1624. While the Company provided land for church income, divided the colony up into parishes and encouraged the migration of clergymen,⁶⁵ it made no effort to obtain the establishment of a native bishop, primarily because of the cost; nor was the Church or the Crown at this time the least bit interested in subsidizing such a venture, or even in considering it.

Because of this amazing and gross neglect, the colonists within a few short years had completely usurped hierarchical authority and had transformed the centuries-old organization of English church government. In traditional English ecclesiastical organization, the local landowner, or other outside body or institution, had the power to nominate ministers for the local parish within their jurisdiction. This meant that the landowner or institution could present his own candidate for the local parish office to the Bishop for investiture. The Bishop then had the power to certify or reject the nominee, but once invested with his office, the clergyman served for life. The local parishioners had no say either in the nomination or investiture process, and had no recourse but to accept their minister on a life basis. The minister, in fact, was accountable only to the church, and only the Bishop could control him. What duties the local parishioners' vestry and churchwarden performed were all determined by law and were subservient to the local clergymen.⁶⁶

The Church hierarchy also had the task of guaranteeing religious uniformity, and had extensive civil-ecclesiastical functions. Thus the Bishops could appoint special courts to try and condemn heretics; they had full jurisdiction over marriages, the probating of wills, the collation to benefices, the appointment of notaries; and extensive rights over tithes and other ecclesiastical taxes.⁶⁷

Without the hierarchic structure, however, most of these functions could not be maintained; and, in fact, rapid erosion soon wiped out the complete edifice of the church as it was known in England. Although the Company at first appeared to claim the right of nomination of clergymen to Virginia parishes,

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-44.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67; Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

it seems not to have exercised that right, but simply sent out pre-ordained clergymen, which left open the question of their initiation into their parishes. With the dissolution of the Company, and the failure of English authorities to claim their rights, the local colonists absorbed all power. First the General Court of Virginia, consisting of the members of the upper house of the General Assembly, claimed that the right of nomination, or presentation, devolved on them from the Company. They also proceeded to absorb a host of other juridical, administrative and even ecclesiastical matters which by tradition belonged to the Bishop. This meant that control over vital statistics, notaries, wills, etc., the establishment of parishes, the naming and defining of all ecclesiastical offices, the collection of tithes; the regulation of church conduct and even the maintenance of purity of faith and dogma, was determined, not by the Bishop, canonical law courts and ecclesiastical officials as in England, but by the local General Assembly of Virginia.⁶⁸

While central authority now came to rest in a popular civil assembly, the local church came increasingly under the power of the parishioners themselves, rather than the ministry. Developing new institutions and adopting old practices to local conditions, the colonists began to establish their own distinctly unique form of Church government, at whose center stood the all-powerful locally elected board of governing parishioners known as the Vestry.

With the devolution to the General Assembly of all matters pertaining to the Church, the Assembly in turn gave to each local parish vestry a multitude of civil and ecclesiastical rights and obligations, and made it the prime institution of a new type of established church. As early as the 1620's the Assembly was providing that local churchwardens and leading members of the parish should concern themselves with the maintenance of the church. From this simple maintenance task the evolving vestry organization quickly began to assume ever greater powers. A reflection of this occurred in 1643, when, in a formal legal enactment, the Assembly provided that each parish should have a vestry, and "that the most sufficient and selected men be chosen and joynd to the minister and churchwardens to be of that Vestrie". Among the tasks enumerated for the Vestry, was the crucial absorption of the right of nomination. The 1643 Act declared "that the vestrie of evrie parish . . . shall henceforward have power, to elect and make choyce of their ministers. . . ." ⁶⁹ The vestry was to present the minister candidate for their parish appointment to the governor, not to a bishop, as in England, and the governor then made the formal induction and confirmation of that minister to hold the given office for life.⁷⁰

While creation of the first vestries seems to have been by appointment of the General Court,⁷¹ by the 1640's the Assembly provided that the vestry was

⁶⁸ Brydon, *op. cit.*, I, 67-68; 86ff.

⁶⁹ William Waller Hening, *The Statutes at Large, being a Collection of the Laws of Virginia*, 13 vols. (New York, R and W and G. Bartlow, 1823), I, 241-42.

⁷⁰ Brydon, *op. cit.*, I, 92.

to be organized on the basis of election from among the parishioners. By the time of the codification of the laws on the Church by the General Assembly in 1662, it was provided:

That for the making and proportioning the levyes and assessments for building and repaying the churches, and chappells, provision for the poore, maintenance of the minister, and such other necessary *duties* for the more orderly managing all parociall affaires, *Be it enacted* that twelve of the most able men of each parish be by the major part of the *said* parish, *chosen* to be vestry-men out of which number the minister and vestry to make choice of two churchwardens yearly, as *alsoe* in the case of death of any vestry man, or his departure out of the parish, that the said minister and vestry make choice of another to supply his roome . . .⁷²

By this act, which abolished the electoral system, the vestries in fact became autocratic local bodies of the leading planters, who exercised enormous control over social and economic conditions within the parish. After their initial establishment, elections never took place, and members usually held their office till death or resignation. When vacancies occurred, the vestrymen themselves proceeded to choose leading planters as members. So oligarchic and powerful did these vestries become, that one of the constant themes of colonial Virginian history was the popular, and continually unsatisfied, demand for periodic elections and the breakup of this autocratic control.⁷³

Given this entrenched self-perpetuating planter leadership in control of the Church, the role of the transitory minister could be only a subordinate one at best. In complete contradiction to the entire organization of the Church of England, the Vestry refused to present their ministers for induction. Since induction by the Governor would guarantee the minister his parish for life, barring ill conduct, the Vestries simply refused to present their ministers, and by this means made the minister's position completely dependent on the goodwill of his leading parishioners. Though the royal governors had full power to force induction on the Vestries, not one governor in the entire history of the colony saw fit to exercise this right, out of fear of vestry power.⁷⁴

This entire system was bitterly attacked by regular Church of England clergymen. The mid-17th century clergymen, Morgan Godwyn, who served in Virginia and the British West Indies, scornfully called this arrangement a "probational tenure" system,⁷⁵ while the Bishops' representative in the colony, Commissary James Blair, at the end of the century, was badly disturbed by

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁷² Hening, *Statutes*, II, 44-45.

⁷³ One of the major reforms of Bacon's rebellion was the call for vestry elections every three years. Brydon, *op. cit.*, I, 97.

⁷⁴ Philip Alexander Bruce, *Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*, 2 vols. (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), I, 136-39.

⁷⁵ Morgan Godwyn, *The Negro's and Indians Advocate, Suing for their Admission into the Church* (London, J. D., 1680), p. 168.

what he described as this "Custom of making annual Agreements with the Ministers, which they [i.e., the vestries] call by a Name coarse enough, viz. Hiring of the Ministers; so that they seldom present any ministers, that they may by that Means keep them in more Subjection and Dependence."⁷⁶ In short, stated the commissary, "they are only in the nature of Chaplains", whose tenure of office was dependent on an annual agreement renewable at the option of a small body of men.⁷⁷ Thus any independence on the part of the clergymen was quickly suppressed by the planters, who by the very nature of their positions would naturally be the strongest representatives of the status quo in the community. As Godwyn noted, they "obstruct all designs for the good of those Churches, and to report all things already so well settled as not needing the least amendment or alteration".⁷⁸

Because of these developments, the regular clergy of England by and large refused to come to Virginia. For as Blair lamented, "no good Ministers that were inform'd of it would come into the Country, and if they came ignorant of any such Custom, they quickly felt the Effects of it in the high Hand wherewith most Vestries manag'd their Power, and got out of the Country again as soon as they could".⁷⁹ A goodly portion of the practicing clergymen in Virginia, until well into the 18th century, were in fact deacons, or as Morgan Godwyn called them, "*Lay-Priests of the Vestries ordination*".⁸⁰

Even in his very vocation, the minister was challenged by the vestry. Thus the Reverend Hugh Jones in 1724 warned that "... in several places the clerks [of the parish] are so ingenious or malicious, that they contrive to be liked as well or better than the minister, which created ill-will and disturbance, besides other harm".⁸¹ Given the chance, he charged, they will usurp almost all of the clergymen's functions, even to the giving of sermons, and warned that they should have their functions carefully defined by law to prevent these abuses.

So all-embracing was parishioner influence and control, that the clergyman had to win popular endorsement, and constantly keep his congregation happy, which of course excluded all possibilities of independent thought or challenge to the given moral and social situation, for this was the sure road to ruin. This dependence was so pervasive, in fact, that often parishioners even went so far, in this era of non-conformity, as to question and modify standard

⁷⁶ Henry Hartwell, James Blair and Edward Chilton, *The Present State of Virginia*, 2d ed. (Williamsburg, Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., 1940), p. 66.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁷⁸ Godwyn, *op. cit.*, Preface, p. i. According to Godwyn the Virginia colonists chafed at the cost of Church tithes, and quickly lost their interest in the Anglican creed, because, he charged, Virginians "for the most part do know no other *God* but *Money*, nor *Religion* but *Profit*".

⁷⁹ Hartwell, Blair and Chilton, *loc. cit.*

⁸⁰ Godwyn, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

⁸¹ Hugh Jones, *The Present State of Virginia*, 2d ed. (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1956), p. 96.

Church dogma. Reverend Jones noted in his analysis of contemporary Virginia: "In several respects the clergy are obliged to omit or alter some minute parts of the liturgy, and deviate from the strict discipline and ceremonies of the Church; to avoid giving offence. . . ." ⁸²

While the mother church soon became deeply aware of the heterodoxy and complete breakdown of the established church in Virginia, it could do little to change the situation. Deeply involved in religious civil wars at home, it was not until after the Restoration that the Church of England could even begin to deal with the situation. It was only with the investiture of Henry Compton as Bishop of London, in 1675, that the Church finally forced the crown to place the colony within a diocese. For a number of historical reasons, the Bishopric of London was chosen; however, traditions were so entrenched that this brought little real change. The Bishop made no attempt to oppose vestry control, or to retake possession of his normal ecclesiastical or civil functions, or even his right of investiture. His only concern was to maintain some kind of purity of dogma by guaranteeing minimal standards for clergymen. This he did by forcing the colonists to accept only accredited clergymen licensed by himself. Thus in the instruction to Governor Culpeper of Virginia, the Bishop had the Crown declare that "no Minister be preferr'd by you to any Ecclesiastical Benefice in that our Colony *without a Certificate from the Lord Bp. of London, of his being conformable to the Doctrine of the Church of England*". ⁸³

While the Bishop eventually succeeded in sending a representative to the colony, with the title of commissary, or vicar general, this clergyman could only exercise moderating influence, and had to persuade rather than enjoin acceptance of church rules. ⁸⁴ The first commissar, James Blair (1689-1743) created much heat, but little concrete change, ⁸⁵ and despite all attempts of several energetic London Bishops, the Vestries could not be forced to induct their ministers, leaving the majority of them to the arbitrary will of their congregations. Through the commissary rule of Blair and his successors, some positive results were attained with the problem of providing a regular ordained clergy for all the parishes, but in the end, the commissaries had little or no effect at reforming the general structure of the Virginia Church. When the metropolitan hierarchy realized this failure, it attempted to establish a resident Bishop for the American colonies. But this was a potentially powerful challenge to local authority, and colonial opposition was so constant and vehement against this idea that the matter was never carried to fruition, despite all the strenuous efforts made by the mother church. ⁸⁶

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁸³ Quoted in Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4, 44.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-80.

⁸⁶ For the history of this struggle, see Cross, *loc. cit.*, and Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre*

Not only was the Church after the Restoration terribly concerned about the religion of the white colonists, but it also began to take an increasingly involved position on the status of the Negro and Indian heathens within England's American Empire. This concern with the plight of the Negro slave, especially, is heavily attested to by the growing movement for conversion, education and even emancipation among the lower and upper clergy. This movement began as early as the end of the 17th century, and one of its first advocates was Morgan Godwyn, the angry clergyman, who served both in the British West Indies and the colony of Virginia, and whose *The Negro's and Indians Advocate* (1680) created a good deal of sentiment. This growing awareness of the complete lack of impact of the Church on the Negro slaves, in sharp contrast to the Catholic Church in the Spanish and French islands, as many Church of England men noted,⁸⁷ caused the Bishop of London to put pressure on the Crown.

In the royal instructions to Governor Culpeper of Virginia in 1681-1682, the Crown proposed that:

Ye shall endeavour to get a Law passed for the restraining of any inhuman severity which by ill masters or overseers may be used towards their Christian Servants or Slaves. And you are alsoe with the assistance of the Council and Assembly, to find out the best means to facilitate and encourage the conversion of Negroes to the Christian Religion, *wherein you are to leave a due caution and regards to ye property of the Inhabitants and safety of the Colonies.*⁸⁸

The unusual restraint of this request indicates the royal government's recognition of the primacy of local law and custom over the humanitarian demands of the clergymen.

Nevertheless, the English hierarchy was becoming deeply concerned over the failure of the colonials to Christianize the Negro slaves. Finding that little could be accomplished directly through regular Church and governmental channels, despite the establishment relationship of the Church, the Bishops decided that the only alternative was a missionary society, completely

and Sceptre, Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities and Politics, 1689-1775 (New York, Oxford University Press, 1962).

⁸⁷ In his famous denunciation of West Indian Slavery, for example, the Reverend James Ramsay constantly contrasted the British to the French treatment of slaves. "In the French colonies," he declared, "the public pays an immediate attention to the treatment and instruction of slaves. The intendants [gov't administrative officers] are charged with their protection, proper missionaries are appointed for the purpose of training them up to a certain degree of religious knowledge; and ample estates and funds are allotted for their maintenance of these ecclesiastics." "The respect in which marriage is held, brings a farther advantage to French slaves. The ceremony is solemnized by the priest, and the tie continues for life. This gives them an attachment to their families, . . . that is seldom seen among English slaves; where the connection between the sexes is arbitrary, and too frequently casual." Rev. James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London, James Philipps, 1784), pp. 52, 54.

⁸⁸ *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, XXVIII (1920), 43-44.

financed from England. Thus in 1701, the hierarchy in England founded the famous Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.⁸⁹

That one of the primary aims of the Society was conversion of the slaves was understood by the Bishops from the very beginning. Thus in the annual sermon given to the society in 1710, Bishop William Fleetwood bitterly attacked the refusal of the masters of slaves to permit their conversion to Christianity. He claimed the refusal to permit baptism and Christian education was:

A thing so common in all our *Plantations* abroad, that I have reason to doubt, whether there be any Exception of any People *of ours*, who cause their slaves to be Baptized. What do these people think of Christ? . . . That He who came from Heaven, to purchase to Himself a Church, with his own precious Blood, should sit contented, and behold with unconcern, those who profess themselves his Servants, excluding from its Gates those who would gladly enter if they might, and exercising no less Cruelty to their Souls (as far as they are able) than to their Bodies?

These People were made to be as Happy as themselves, and are as capable of being so; and however hard their Condition be in this World, with respect to their Captivity and Subjugation. . . . They were bought with the same Price, purchased with the same Blood of Christ, their common Saviour and Redeemer; and on order to all this, they were to have the Means of Salvation put into their Hands, they were to be instructed in the Faith of *Christ*, to have the Terms and Conditions fairly offered to them.

Not only did Bishop Fleetwood attack the very Christianity of the masters, but also considered that this was probably their greatest sin, for he declared, "no Man living can assign a better and more justifiable Cause, for God's withholding Mercy from a *Christian*, than that *Christian's* withholding the Mercy of *Christianity* from an Unbeliever".⁹⁰ The radical Bishop even went so far as to attack slavery itself, holding, as Adam Smith was later to proclaim, that hired labor was a far superior system and that slavery should be abolished. He attacked the ideas of colonists, which held that Christianity challenged the slave status, but instead of proclaiming the docility of slaves under Christian doctrine as some clerics did, he properly attacked the Christianity of the colonists who would refuse to treat fellow human beings with Christian brotherly love. Finally, he proposed that the Society take up the crucial task of Christianizing the infidels, Negroes and slaves, and that this example would have a powerful impact on the masters, who apparently are unimpressed by "the Example both of *French* and *Spaniards* . . . , who all along have brought their Slaves to Baptism".⁹¹

⁸⁹ H. P. Thompson, *Into All Lands, The History of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1701-1950* (London, S. P. C. K., 1951), chap. 1.

⁹⁰ This sermon is reprinted in its entirety in Frank J. Klingberg, *Anglican Humanitarianism in Colonial New York* (Philadelphia, Church Historical Society, 1940), pp. 203-204.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

This call appears to have been heeded, for in the annual sermon of 1740, Bishop Secker pointed to the work of the Society in this special area. But the Bishop noted the vast difficulty still faced by the Church in this work as only a few had been converted and thousands yet remained outside the fold.

For it is not to be expected, that Masters, too commonly negligent of Christianity themselves, will take much Pains to teach it to their Slaves: whom even the better Part of them are in a great measure habituated to consider, as they do their Cattle, merely with a View to the Profit arising from them. Not a few therefore have openly opposed their Instruction, from an Imagination, now indeed proved and acknowledged to be groundless, that Baptism would entitle them to Freedom. . . . And some, it may be feared, have been averse to their becoming Christians, because, after that, no Pretence will remain for not treating them like Men.⁹²

Both within and without the society, the upper clergy were beginning, by the middle of the 18th century, to put pressure on the colonies to change their local customs and laws on these subjects, and to create a new panoply of beliefs that would permit the Church to carry on the work of conversion in a positive atmosphere.

The Bishop of London in 1742 put great pressure on Commissary Blair to get the local government to support a school for Negroes, and to indicate to them his great zeal in converting Negroes to the Christian faith.⁹³ But incapable of even fully protecting standard dogma and church practice, Blair and his successors could accomplish little. As for the SPG, the demands on its resources were so great, that it concentrated its efforts on the British West Indies, where the bulk of the New World slaves resided, and on the colonies in which the Church was unestablished.⁹⁴

This meant, in essence, that whatever the feelings of the hierarchy in England as to the desirability of conversion of the slaves to Christianity and their participation in the sacraments, this desire had little if any impact on New World conditions. The religious life of the slave remained wholly dependent upon the will of his master, and this was determined almost exclusively by local custom. With no clergymen capable of opposing these assumptions and customs, the planters felt under no obligation to change their ways.

Unfortunately, custom was indifferent, if not openly hostile, to the conversion of Negro slaves. In the early years of the 17th century, there had existed the almost universal belief that conversion for the slave required his freedom, since Christians could not hold Christians in bondage. While the General Assembly eventually declared that this was not so,⁹⁵ the idea was

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁹³ *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st Series, IX (1901), 225.

⁹⁴ Thompson, *op. cit.*, chap. 3.

⁹⁵ The Virginia legislature itself seriously accepted the thesis that Christianity was

hard to uproot, and persisted throughout the colonial period. Even when this factor was resolved or admitted by the reluctant master, there was still the key fear of education making the slaves intractable. As the Reverend Hugh Jones reported, he constantly tried to disprove this latter assumption among colonials. "As for baptizing Indians and Negroes," he said, "several of the people disapprove of it, because they say it often makes them proud, and not so good servants: But these, and such objections, are easily refuted, for Christianity encourages and orders them to become more humble and better servants, and not worse, then when they were heathens." He did agree with general opinion, however, which held that Negro slaves should not be taught to read and write, since this "has been found to be dangerous upon several political accounts, especially self-preservation".⁹⁶

While masters could be found who sponsored the baptism of their slaves, encouraged them to learn the catechism, and some who even read to them from the Bible, these were the exception rather than the rule. The pattern, in fact, was quite haphazard, and in the majority of cases conversion was never properly undertaken. This is well revealed in a survey of the colonial church of Virginia carried out in the early 18th century. In 1724 Commissary Blair sent out an extraordinarily revealing and exhaustive questionnaire to all the parishes of Virginia. Among the questions asked was: "Are there any Infidels, bond or free, within your Parish; and what means are used for their conversion?" The 29 clergymen who answered the inquiry give the overwhelming impression of only moderate clerical interest in the problem, and general planter indifference, if not hostility. As the Reverend George Robertson of Bristol Parish reported, "I have several times exhorted their Masters to send such of them as could speak English to Church to be catechised but they would not. Some masters instruct their Slaves at home and so bring them to baptism, but not many such".⁹⁷ The Reverend Henry Collings of St. Peter's Parish reported that of the Negro slaves in his parish "Some . . . are suffered by their respective masters to be baptized and to attend on divine service but others not."⁹⁸ The Reverend John Warden reported that in his parish "some masters will have their slaves baptised and others will not, by reason that

incompatible with slavery, and in its early definitions actually defined slaves as those who were not Christians. Thus in 1670 it enacted a statute which declared that "all servants not being christians imported into this country by shipping shalbe slaves for life." Henings, *Statutes*, II, 283. This was finally rectified in 1682 when the Assembly decreed that: "all servants except Turks and Moores . . . which shall be brought or imported into this country, either by sea or land, whether Negroes, . . . Mulattoes or Indians, who and whose parentage and native country are not christian, although afterwards, and before such their importation . . . they shall be converted to the christian faith; . . . shall be judged, deemed and taken to be slaves. . . ." *Ibid.*, 490-91.

⁹⁶ Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

⁹⁷ William Stevens Perry (ed.), *Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church*, 5 vols. (Hartford, Church Press Company, 1870-1878), I, 267.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

they will not be surities for them in Baptism",⁹⁹ while Alexander Forbes reported that in his parish the local Negro slaves "as soon as they are capable they are taught and baptised by the care of some Masters, but this too much neglected by many".¹⁰⁰ The clergymen of Henrico and Southwark parishes respectively replied of the slaves in their parishes that "their Masters, do no more than let some of them now and then go to Church for their Conversion", and that "there are some of their Masters on whom I do prevail to have them baptised and taught, but not many".¹⁰¹ The Reverend John Brunskill of Willmington Parish probably best summed up the problem when he concluded that:

The Negroes who are slaves to the whites cannot, I think, be said to be of any Religion for as there is no law of the Colony oblidging their Masters or Owners to instruct them in the principles of Christianity and so they are hardly to be persuaded by the Minister to take so much pains with them, by which means the poor creatures generally live and die without it.¹⁰²

Even for the minority that were baptized, converted and taught the Christian religion, there were no positive rewards. No matter how Christian, no master allowed his slaves to be married. For if the sacrament of marriage was not to be made totally ridiculous, Negro slaves could not be admitted: it deprived human agencies of the right to separate the couple, and this was never accepted. Even when the best of masters died, the constant fluidity of fortunes meant that no slave community could remain intact beyond a few generations. Families were not sold together; to do so was uneconomic and therefore impractical. As the Virginia Baptist chronicler John Leland noted in 1790, "the marriage of slaves, is a subject not known in our code of laws.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 304, 306.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 277-278. Interestingly, the few records which survive of slave education and conversion carried out by masters, come not from Church of England slave owners, but from Presbyterians and Quakers. Thus Roberts Pleasants, one of the wealthiest planters of Virginia in the 18th century, and a Quaker, not only converted his slaves, but even educated and eventually freed them. Adair P. Archer, "The Quakers' Attitude towards the Revolution", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 2d Series, I (1921), 168. For his part, the Presbyterian planter Colonel James Gordon, in his journal in 1761 noted that "Several strange negroes come to Mr. Criswell [the local presbyterian teacher] to be instructed, in which he takes great pains." *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st Series, XI (1903), 223. Nevertheless, despite these and other efforts, the consensus of historical opinion is best summed up by Marcus W. Jernegan who declared that throughout the colonial period, "most of the slaves lived and died strangers to christianity" and that "with comparatively few exceptions the conversion of negro slaves was not seriously undertaken by their masters. On the contrary many of them strenuously and persistently opposed the Church of England, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. . . ." Marcus W. Jernegan, "Slavery and Conversion in the American Colonies", *American Historical Review*, XXI, no. 3 (April, 1916), 504; also see Jerome W. Jones, "The Established Virginia Church and the Conversion of Negroes and Indians, 1620-1760", *Journal of Negro History*, XLVI, no. 1 (January, 1961), 12-31.

What promises soever they make, their masters may and do part at pleasure",¹⁰³

As for the complex web of social organizations to which the Cuban slave had recourse this simply did not exist under the established church of Virginia. There were no fraternal brotherhoods, no great processions and special holidays, and absolutely no syncretization of Christian belief with folk religion of African origin. For the Negro slaves on the frontier of Virginia after 1740 there did exist the possibility of admission into the evangelical movement known as the "Great Awakening". From 1740 and especially after 1760 numbers of Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and a host of other sect preachers began invading the frontier counties of Virginia above the tidewater.¹⁰⁴ For these preachers, most of whom like Wesley himself were bitter opponents of slavery, welcomed the Negroes into the Church. Thus John Leland in his *Virginia Chronicle* of 1790 reported:

The poor slaves, under all their hardships, discover as great inclination for religion as the free-born do, when they engage in the service of God, they spare no pains. It is nothing strange for them to walk 20 miles on Sunday morning to meeting, and back again at night. They are remarkable for learning a toon soon, and have very melodious voices.

They cannot read, and therefore are more exposed to delusion than the whites are; but many of them give clear, rational accounts of a work of grace in their harts, and evidence of the same by their lives. When religion is lively they are remarkable fond of meeting together, to sing, pray and exhort, and sometimes preach, and seem to be unwearied in the procession. They seem in general to put more confidence in their own colour, then they do in whites; when they attempt to preach, they seldom fail of being very zealous; their language is broken, but they understand each other, and the whites may gain their ideas. A few of them have undertaken to administer baptism, but it generally ends in confusion; they commonly are more noisy in time of preaching than the whites, and are more subject to bodily exercise, and if they meet with any encouragement in these things, they grow extravagant.¹⁰⁵

But these camp meetings and non-hierarchical churches were not open to the majority of Virginia Negroes, who lived in the predominantly Church of England areas. Nor were the masters too ready to permit them to go to revivalist gatherings. As Leland himself notes: ". . . many masters and overseers will whip and torture the poor creatures for going to meeting, even at night, when the labor of the day is done".¹⁰⁶ As fear of insurrection developed in the period after independence, such meetings became less and less common, public gatherings of more than a few slaves being prohibited.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ John Leland, *The Virginia Chronicle* (Norfolk, Prentis and Baxter, 190), p. 8.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 21ff; also see Wesley M. Gewehr, *The Great Awakening in Virginia, 1740-1790* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1930).

¹⁰⁵ Leland, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁷ C. G. Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861* (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), chaps. vii, viii.

Not only was the Church incapable of undertaking a general conversion of the slaves, but it was also unable to promote manumission. Thus the common pattern of church-inspired individual planter manumission, which was accepted custom and practice in Cuba, was unknown in Protestant Virginia. Though the Methodists and Quakers early demanded that their members give up slave trading and emancipate their slaves, and though several revolutionary leaders followed their enlightenment thought to its logical conclusion and freed their Negroes, no powerful undercurrent of emancipation ever occurred. Quaker emancipations were few and of little consequence, and the Methodist leadership was soon forced to condone the existence of slaveholding even among its traveling clergy, and to give up its proposals for emancipation.¹⁰⁸ As for the Anglican hierarchy, while it too developed a powerful commitment to emancipation at the end of the 18th century, it took forceful Parliamentary legislation to carry out emancipation even in the West Indies. As for Virginia this emancipation movement never found echo in the local episcopal hierarchy, when the latter was finally established in 1790.¹⁰⁹

The clergy of Virginia were unable to convince the planters that emancipation was a good act in the sight of God, and was to be considered a common and accepted form of pious action, as in Cuba. Nor could the morally aroused and committed clergy, of whatever denomination, convince the masters that slavery was essentially a moral evil and that on these grounds the slaves should be emancipated as soon as possible. Neither forcing emancipation on moral grounds from above, nor having it become a part of routine common practice from below, the whole emancipation movement in Virginia was at best a haphazard and distinctly minor affair. In fact, from the late 17th to the late 18th century it was to all intents and purposes outlawed by the State. By 1691 the reaction had become so intense, that the General Assembly of Virginia declared that "great inconveniences may happen to this country by setting of negroes and mulattoes free", and provided under heavy penalty, that owners who emancipated their slaves had to pay for their transportation out of the country within six months.¹¹⁰ Not satisfied with this restriction on the growth of the free Negro class, the legislature next made it impossible for

¹⁰⁸ On the failure of the Methodists, see Gewehr, *op. cit.*, pp. 242-49; and for the Quakers see Thomas E. Drake, *Quakers and Slavery in America* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1950).

¹⁰⁹ Though the Anglican church consecrated native candidates between 1784 and 1790, which enabled the Americans to establish the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, the new bishops were subservient to local interests and Vestry government was in no way changed. See Cross, *op. cit.*, pp. 263ff; Clara O. Loveland, *The Critical Years, The Reconstruction of the Anglican Church in the United States of America: 1780-1789* (Greenwich, Seabury Press, 1956); Edward Lewis Goodwin, *The Colonial Church in Virginia* (Milwaukee, Morehouse Pub. Co., 1927), pp. 127ff. for the early bishops of the Diocese of Virginia.

¹¹⁰ Hening, *Statutes*, III, 87-88.

a master to free his slaves even on his own initiative. By a law of 1721 all emancipation was prohibited "except for some meritorious services, to be adjudged and allowed by the governor and council".¹¹¹

By these extreme measures, the free Negro population, which probably numbered around 350 in 1691, was kept for the next century to its natural increase alone; by 1782 there were only some 2,800 freedmen in the state.¹¹² In this year, however, under the impact of the revolution and the growth of clerical opposition, a new law permitted open emancipation at the discretion of the owner.¹¹³ By the first federal census of 1790, the number of freedmen had increased to 12,866. Even with this increase, the free colored population represented only 4% of the total colored population. Nor did the half-century between the first federal census and the Civil War see any major change. The percentage slowly rose from decade to decade, but with almost the identical number of colored, just over 550,000 in Cuba and Virginia in 1860/1861, Virginia had only 58,042 freedmen (or 11%) to Cuba's 213,167 (or 39%).¹¹⁴

As for the development of education for the free Negroes, this was informal and haphazard in the extreme, except for one short-lived experiment. In the late 1720's, Dr. Thomas Bray, who had been commissary in the State of Maryland for the Bishop of London, helped found a group of missionaries known as "Bray's Associates" who directed considerable attention to founding schools for Negroes in the American Colonies. A leading founder of the SPG, Dr. Bray received a private donation of £900 for this purpose.¹¹⁵ After setting up a successful school with the aid of Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia in 1759, Dr. Bray helped establish a Negro school in Williamsburg in 1764. Under the direction of Commissary Dawson, local clerics and Mrs. Ann Wager, the school soon opened its doors to 24 Negro students, and made major progress in the area.¹¹⁶ It appears to have won some local support, for a local printer, Mr. William Hunter, left in his will in 1761, some £7 for the support of Mrs. Wager.¹¹⁷ But despite the initial success and support granted to the school, with the death of Mrs. Wager in 1774, the school ceased to operate. In fact, in the agitation of those years all the Negro and Indian

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 132.

¹¹² John H. Russell, *The Free Negro in Virginia, 1619-1865* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1913), pp. 10-11.

¹¹³ Hening, *op. cit.*, XI, 39-40.

¹¹⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population 1790-1915* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1918), p. 57, table 6. It should be noted that Virginia had the largest number and percentage of freedmen in its colored population in 1860 of any slave state in the Union except Maryland, which was a unique border state.

¹¹⁵ Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-19, 42-43.

¹¹⁶ Mary F. Goodwin, "Christianizing and Educating the Negro in Colonial Virginia", *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, I, no. 3 (September, 1932), 148-51.

¹¹⁷ *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st Series, VII (1899), 13.

schools on the North American continent founded by Dr. Bray and his associates, as well as by the SPG, collapsed. The Williamsburg school seems to have been the model for another which lasted five years in the 1770's in Fredericksburg, but with the American Revolution, the source of English enthusiasm and funds for these schools was destroyed and local planter interest seems to have become exhausted.¹¹⁸ Apparently neither free nor slave Negroes were permitted regular education by the local county schools.

There was some attempt by the Vestries, however, to provide for the free Negroes, orphans and poor, some type of apprenticeship in which they were also taught to read and write by the person to whom they were indentured. The Vestry of Petsworth Parish in 1716 required that for his indenture, Mr. Ralph Bevis was to:

give George Petsworth, a mulattoe boy of the age of 2 years, 3 years' schooling, and carefully to instruct him afterwards that he may read well in any part of the Bible, also to instruct and Learn him ye sd mulattoe boy such Lawful way and ways that he may be able after his Indented time expired to gitt his own Liveing, and to allow him sufficient meat, Drink, washing, and apparill, until the expiration of ye sd time &c. . . .¹¹⁹

But these indentured and apprenticeship programs were for only a few free Negroes, and aside from the temporary Negro school experiment on the eve of the American Revolution, the Church seems to have made almost no serious or successful effort to educate the Virginia Negro. No Negro was admitted to William and Mary College, and none appears to have been trained by the Church in local parish schools for the liberal professions, as was the case in Cuba, while in the harsh reaction which took place by the early 19th century, even basic literacy was denied the freedmen.¹²⁰

Thus the Virginia Church, dominated by the planter elite, offered no educational escape opportunities either for free or slave Negroes. It totally denied the right to slave marriages, and by and large in the colonial period did not even Christianize the majority of African Negroes. Finally, the established Church in Virginia did nothing to enrich the community life of the Negroes. The religious brotherhoods, the pageantry and processions, the folk religious syncretization, which were such an important part of the fabric of Catholic Cuba, were alien to Anglicanism. Although the dissenter groups in the "Great Awakening" after 1740 provided some compensation in the evangelical and

¹¹⁸ Thompson, *op. cit.*, chap. 4.

¹¹⁹ *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st Series, V (1897), 219; also see the case of Robert, son of the free Negro woman Cuba, who was bound out in Lancaster County in 1719 till his twenty-first birthday. *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1st Series, VIII (1899), 82.

¹²⁰ In 1800 the General Assembly specifically prohibited the local parishes from requiring the masters to teach the indentured free colored children to read or write, and by the 1830's the state legislature was prohibiting all types of schooling and education for even free Negroes who were willing to pay the costs. Russell, *op. cit.*, pp. 140, 144-45.

revivalist meetings (which were to give birth to the future Negro church movement) these were confined to the frontier in the colonial period and involved only a few thousand Negro slaves. For the "Great Awakening" in Virginia was the work of only a handful of ministers and never penetrated into the Tidewater parishes where the overwhelming majority of slaves lived under Anglican masters.

Within the great plantation areas, despite all the efforts of the Bishop of London and his commissaries, the few local clergy were hardpressed to maintain even the established Church among the white colonists. As late as 1774, Virginia had only 104 Church of England clergymen,¹²¹ in a total population of roughly 447,000 persons,¹²² just one to over 4,000 colonists. Nor was this ratio unusual, for the Reverend James Ramsay in his famous attack on slavery in the British West Indies, asked for an ideal of one clergymen per 3,000 inhabitants to carry out the needed Christianization of the Negroes.¹²³

Few in number, operating on provisional contracts based on the consent of the congregation, and completely subservient to the planter-dominated Vestry, and working against ingrained opposition to conversion, it is surprising that the Church of England accomplished as much as it did. Unfortunately, when moral pressure within the Church finally brought the metropolitan hierarchy to put pressure on the Crown and Parliament to over-ride local slave legislation, it was already too late for Virginia. The anti-slavery crusade did not fully get under way, despite the sentiments of such early leaders as Bishop Fleetwood, until after 1783, when the colonies were no longer a part of the British Empire. Although it was to have a profound influence on the British West Indies and on the abolition of the Slave Trade, the severance of political ties and the establishment of an independent Episcopalian Church in Virginia rendered the North American colonies impervious to this great moral crusade. How differently events might otherwise have turned out is shown by the impact of the aroused church on the eventual education, Christianization and emancipation of the British West Indian Negro slave.¹²⁴

Too involved with defense of its very position at home in the 17th century, the Church of England had allowed the colonists to usurp its power and authority, and to create for themselves a congregational church organization. While this allowed more religious liberty for the white colonists, and greater individual expression in this age of religious non-conformity and dissent, it

¹²¹ Brydon, *op. cit.*, II, 608-614.

¹²² Evarts B. Greene and Virginia D. Harrington, *American Population before the Federal Census of 1790* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1932), p. 141.

¹²³ Ramsay, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-66.

¹²⁴ For the history of this struggle see Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement*, 2d ed. (London, Frank Cass and Co., 1964), along with Frank Klingberg, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in England, A Study in English Humanitarianism* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1926).

was fatal to the rights of the Negroes and Mulattoes, slave and free. When the Church finally turned its attention to the issue, it was too late, and the emancipation of the colonies of the North American continent destroyed the hope of the colored peoples that the Church would protect their rights and liberties as human beings.

IV

Having compared the impact of the Church on the lives of the Negro slaves within two distinct New World colonies, we have a clearer conception of the uniqueness and the consequent differences between the two institutions of Negro slavery. As Elkins and Tannenbaum have properly pointed out, the Church was one of the most crucial institutions which had the power to intervene in the relations between master and slave and to help mold that relationship.

In Cuba, the Church took an immediate daily concern and involvement, and succeeded in molding custom and patterns, as well as commanding obedience to higher authorities. From the beginning the Church viewed its own role toward the slaves as distinct from that of the masters and succeeded in establishing its claim on the mind, soul and time of the Negroes, free or slave. Not troubled by the belief that Christianity was incompatible with the slave status and working with established Iberian attitudes toward the Negro and his place within the Catholic society, the Cuban clergy were able to mold and modify the conditions of human bondage for the African Negro. Capable of carrying imperial and synodal edicts into immediate effect, the Cuban clergy effectively Christianized the imported slaves and freely admitted them into the Church. For the slaves this admittance provided inestimable social advantages and rights, as well as duties, and a host of concrete immediate advantages, from rest days on Sunday to the full sanctity of the family through the sacrament of marriage. In the syncretization of African religions in folk catholicism, and in the organization of *cofradías*, *cabildos*, and religious processions, the Africans were provided with a rich cultural and community existence, which paradoxically eased their assimilation into society. Finally, the Church stood as the great potential benefactor to the exceptionally able, who, through church education, could achieve a new upper class status within society.

None of these things occurred for the Virginia Negro. Beginning with the planters' open hostility even to the admittance of Negroes into the Church, and faced by usurpation of authority by the parishioners, the fight even for minimal conversion was an uphill struggle for the Church of England. Involved with defense of the Church at home, the Anglican hierarchy allowed the Church abroad to be converted into a democratic congregational organi-

zation. It therefore had as much as it could do to guarantee church conformity among the white colonists, and had little energy to spare for the Negro, and even less for the Indian. Fully aware of the progress of the Catholic Church in these two areas, and morally sensitive to the issues, the metropolitan Anglican hierarchy could not develop enough power and unity prior to 1776 to break down the American congregational control and overcome planter hostility toward its conversion and incipient emancipation efforts.

Unlike the Cuban Church, the Church of England could not rely on the Crown for unquestioned support on these matters, for in the organization of the Empire, control over slavery and the Negro was left exclusively to the local government. Thus the Anglican Church could not build up a panoply either of canonical or civil law to guarantee free entry of the Negroes into the Church, and even more importantly to provide them with the full rights to the sacraments. As for the local legislature, the glaring silence of Virginia law as to the religious rights and condition of the Negro slave reflects the totally marginal character of slave Christianity, where it even existed. With such hostility built up in the colonial period against conversion, it was impossible for the Church even to suggest that slaves be legally married before God, or that the family had to be protected against the economic needs of the planter.

Even in the revivalist churches of the upland parishes, the "Great Awakening" and the participation of the Negro slaves was a short-lived affair, and within a few decades of Independence, the Virginia branches of the Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian churches had conformed to planter opinion and had, by and large, contained slave conversion and participation to a minimum. As for the Virginia Episcopal Church, the successor after 1790 to the Church of England, its own decay and even greater dependence on planter support, made it take even less of an interest in Negroes, slave or free, than its colonial originator.

Denied the full rights of the Christian, with his family unrecognized by the Church or the state, with his previous religious experience rendered totally useless and destroyed, and his chances for self and community expression severely curtailed if not openly discouraged by the local parish, the Virginia Negro slave faced a harsh world dominated by his master, and with little possibility of protective intervention and support from an outside institution.

While the relationship of the Church to the slave was only one of several relationships, it was probably the most important non-planter one available. Because of this, the success or failure of the Anglican or Catholic Church to mold the life and soul of the Negro slaves had a profound impact on the personality, social organization and even eventual assimilation of the Negro into Cuban and Virginian society.

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