

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and Its Mission to Indian and Negro Slaves

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In 1680, the Anglican rector Morgan Godwyn published an appeal based on his experiences in the American colonies entitled "The Negro and Indian's Advocate Suing for the Admission to the Church" in which he affirmed the necessity of "Instructing our Negro's and other Heathen in the Christian Faith, and of Baptizing them both which I observed were generally neglected)" because these individuals "have naturally an equal Right with other Men to the Exercise and Privileges of Religion."¹ In 1700, another Anglican clergyman, Rev. Thomas Bray, again appealed for the relief of persons of African and native descent in his work *A Memorial Representing the Present State of Religion on the Continent of North-America* in which he lamented that "though some Provision [for missionary work] is made, it is as yet far short of being sufficient to maintain a Minister: And there is a total Neglect of informing the poor Natives."² As C.E. Pierre was to observe a couple hundred years later, "There were then in North America 250,000 settlers, whole colonies of whom were living in heathenism while others were adhering to almost every variety of strange faiths. The work of proselytizing these people was too important to be entrusted to individual enterprise and too extensive to be successfully prosecuted by the heads of the Church only."³

In order to remedy this situation and to "do missionary work among the heathen, especially the Indians and the Negroes,"⁴ the Society for the Propagation of Gospel in Foreign Parts was founded in June 16, 1701 as a branch of the Anglican Church. The expressed purpose of the S.P.G. "consisted of

¹ Morgan Godwyn, *The Negro's and Indian's Advocate, Suing for their Admission into the Church*, (London, 1680), 7.

² Rev. Thomas Bray, *A Memorial Representing the Present State of Religion on the Continent of North-America*, (London: Brudenell, 1701), 15.

³ C. E. Pierre, "The Work of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts among the Negroes in the Colonies" *The Journal of Negro History* 1, no. 4 (October 1916), 349-360.

⁴ Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*, (Washington D. C.: The Associated Publishers 1921), 6.

three great branches: the care and instruction of our people settled in the Colonies; the conversion of the Indian Savages; and the conversion of the Negroes.”⁵ Indeed, it was Rev. Thomas Bray who was a seminal figure in the founding of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel In Foreign Parts; even before the founding of the S.P.G., he had previously prepared a plan of a society for carrying on work “Amongst that Poorer sort of people, as also amongst the Blacks and Native Indians.”⁶ Thus, the S.P.G became the primary vehicle by which the Anglican Church established its missionary endeavor in the New World and “together with the negroes and with the Indian tribes who dwelt farther inland constituted the principal mission field of the Society.” In the first Annual Meeting in February 1702, the Dean of Lincoln urged “especially this may be a great Charity to the Souls of many of those poor Natives who may by this be converted from that State of Barbarism and Idolatry in which they now live, and be brought into the sheep fold of our Blessed Saviour.”⁷

When it began its missionary enterprise in American colonies, the S.P.G. regarded both Negro and Indian as “heathen” and made little or no distinction between the two; it is important to understand that the Society viewed many persons as “heathen” including Quakers, dissenters, and other enthusiasts.⁸ However, its focus upon “Barbarous and Savage Nations” would become the most critical aspect of its mission to the Americas:

I say to consider and assist in the best Methods of Turning many to Righteousness ought to be the Care and Concern of every Christian Church and Nation; and this out of a grateful Return for that Blessed Light of the Gospel which has shone amongst them, by which Christians are or may be, (if they suffer themselves to be regulated by the Rules of Christianity, which so directly tend to render both private Persons and publick Societies happy) by which Christians may be, I say so much distinguish'd from the

⁵ Charles C. Jones, *The Religious Instruction of the Negroes In the United States* (Savannah: Published by Thomas Purse, 1842), 8.

⁶ Marcus W. Jernegan, “Slavery and Conversion in the American Colonies.” *American Historical Review* 21 (April 1916): 504-527.

⁷ Faith Vibert, “The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts: Its Work for the Negroes in North America Before 1783,” *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 18, No. 2. (Apr., 1933), pp. 171-212.

⁸ Keely McCarthy, *Reducing them to Civilitie: Religious Conversions and Cultural Transformations in Protestant Missionary Narratives, 1690-1790*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2000), 58.

deplorable State of those Barbarous and Savage Nations where Ignorance of the True God and Religion overspreads their Country. Nothing more naturally diffuses its self than light, and how prodigiously ungrateful would it be for a People themselves enlighten'd not to spread that to all Mankind which was given them to shew others as well as themselves, the Way to God, and their Happiness!⁹

By 1710, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel clarified its mission through a series of Resolutions declared that the design of the organization " does chiefly and principally relate to the conversion of Heathen and Infidels," and this work was to be prosecuted "preferably to all others."¹⁰ In a sermon the same year, the Bishop of Norwich affirmed this position, " For this is what they are always to look on as their principal Business, and that for which this Corporation was primarily erected."¹¹

That the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel understood the importance of and focused upon the conversion of "heathens and infidels" is clearly spelled out in its *Notitia Parochialis* as well as its *Noticia Scholastica* – its semiannual reports of its clergy's work. These forms provided a tabular overview of their missionary work that listed the numbers of Anglicans and dissenters in their parishes, the number of baptisms they performed, and, among other categories, the numbers of "heathens and infidels" they had converted in the previous year; these records provide the best information on individual ministers' work to the convert non-Christians.¹² Article Seven of the *Notitia Parochialis* asks for "No of Heathens and Infidels" and Article IV of the *Noticia Scholastica* asks for "Number of Indian and Negro Children;"¹³ these tables are scattered throughout the letters from the earliest missionaries of the SPG.

⁹ Thomas Bray, *Apostolick Charity*, (London : Printed for William Hawes, 1699), 17-18.

¹⁰ Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts Journal, April 21, 1710.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Travis F. Glasson, *Missionaries, Slavery, and Race: The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2005),

¹³ Letters of Rev. Samuel Johnson, Nov. 1740, *Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel* -- Letters series B, 1701-1786, Introduction by Belle Pridmore, (Yorkshire, Eng. : Micro Methods Limited, 1964).

In a letter from Timothy Cutler of New England, he states “ Negro and Indian slaves belonging to my Parish are about 32, their Education & Instruction is according to the Houses they belong to. I have baptized but 2. But I know of the masters of some others, who are disposed of this important good to their slaves, & are preparing them for it; however, there is too great a remissness upon this article.”¹⁴ In Article Seven of the *Notitia Parochialis* of St. James Parish, New London, it notes Article & and the records it as “150 or 200 Negroes & Indians;”¹⁵ a similar record of “Heathens and Infidels” comes from Elizabeth, New Jersey which reports “of Negroes and Indians within boundary of town or in it – upward of 300.” One of the most interesting NP’s comes from the “Albany of the Mohawk Indians” from June 3, 1739 to Nov. 18, 1739 in which Rev. Henry Barclay notes “No. of inhabitants: 10,610 whites; 1110 slaves, No Baptized – All but Slaves; Heathens and Infidels -- Very Many Natives,” and Barclay inserted a new category “No. of Indians under my care who profess Christianity – 500”¹⁶

A critical issue in this discussion and one that would prove increasingly problematic, especially in the Southern colonies was that of the condition of many of those “Heathens and Infidels” who also happened to be slaves. An S.P.G. minister from South Carolina addressed this problem in 1713,

As I am a minister of Christ and of the Church of England, and a Missionary of the most Christian Society in the whole world, I think it my indispensable and special duty to do all that in me lies to promote the conversion and salvation of the poor heathens here, and more especially of the Negro and Indian slaves in my own parish, which I hope I can truly say I have been sincerely and earnestly endeavoring ever since I was a minister here where there are many Negro and Indian slaves in a most pitifull deplorable and perishing condition tho' little pitied by many of their masters and their conversion and salvation little desired and endeavored by them. If the masters were but good Christians themselves and would but concur with the ministers, we should then have good hopes of the conversion and salvation at least of some of their Negro and Indian slaves.

¹⁴ Letters of Rev. Timothy Cutler Samuel Johnson, Oct 10, 1727, Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel -- Letters series B, 1701-1786, Introduction by Belle Pridmore, (Yorkshire, Eng. : Micro Methods Limited, 1964).

¹⁵ author undecipherable, Nov. 1739, *Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel* -- Letters series B, 1701-1786, Introduction by Belle Pridmore, (Yorkshire, Eng. : Micro Methods Limited, 1964).

¹⁶ *Notitia Parochialis*, Albany, N.Y., June 3, 1739 to Nov. 18, *Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel* -- Letters series B, 1701-1786, Introduction by Belle Pridmore, (Yorkshire, Eng. : Micro Methods Limited, 1964).

But too many of them rather oppose than concur with us and are angry with us, I am sure I may say with me for endeavouring as much as I do the conversion of their slaves.

...¹⁷

In South Carolina in the first decade of the eighteenth century, the Indian slave population accounted for as much as one third of the total population of slaves;¹⁸ the South Carolina slave laws provided for wide ranging enslavement: "All Negroes, Mollatoes, and Indians which at any time heretofore have been bought and Sold or now are and taken to be or hereafter Shall be Bought and Sold are hereby made and declared they and their Children Slaves to all Intents and purposes."¹⁹ As the S.P.G. had made the conversion of Indians and the Negroes "as their principal Business, and that for which this Corporation was primarily erected," they had to come to grips with the slavery issue if they were to be at all successful.

In spite of the fact that the S.P.G. had established that "God has formed one man and one woman at first; and how all mankind are descended from them" and that "Jesus Christ will come again to judge all Men, according to what they have done in this Life, whether it be good or evil,"²⁰ the Society had to make a difficult choice. On June 7, 1712, the S.P.G. made their choice and passed an "Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes and Slaves" which established:

Since charity and the Christian Religion which we profess, obliges us to wish well to the souls of all men, and that religion may not be made a pretence, to alter any man's property and right, and that no persons may neglect to baptise their negroes or slaves, or suffer them to be baptised, for fear that thereby they should be manumitted and set free. Be it heretofore Enacted, That it shall be, and is hereby declared, lawful for any negro or Indian slave, or any other slave or slaves whatsoever, to receive and profess the Christian faith, and be thereunto baptised. But that notwithstanding such slave or

¹⁷ Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, *Classified Digest of the Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts 1701-1892* (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1893), 12

¹⁸ Verner Crane, *The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1928), 113.

¹⁹ M. Eugene Sirmans, "The Legal Status of the Slave in South Carolina, 1670- 1740" *The Journal of Southern History* 28, (No. 4: Nov., 1962), 462-473.

²⁰"Directions to the Catechists for Instructing Indians, Negroes, etc." in David Humphreys, *An historical account of the incorporated Society for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts containing their foundation, proceedings, and the success of their missionaries in the British Colonies, to the year 1728*, (London : Printed by J. Downing, 1730), 48-49.

slaves shall receive and profess the Christian religion, and be baptised, he or they shall not thereby be manumitted or set free, or his or their owner, master or mistress lose his or their civil right, property and authority over such slave or slaves, but that the slave or slaves, with respect to his or her servitude, shall remain and continue in the same state and condition, that he or they was in before the making of this Act.²¹

In establishing this position, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel went further than just reconciling its conflicting issues of slavery, it helped transform the organization's attitude focused on the reform of a problematic but religiously-sanctioned institution to an attitude that embraced slavery and saw it as not an obstacle to but as a tool for making the British Atlantic world more godly.²² In so doing, the Society established the framework for its missionaries' relationships with Negro and Indian slaves in the New World for the first fifty years of its existence seemingly at odds with those very persons who helped found and shape the organization's existence.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel's first missionary to South Carolina was Rev. Samuel Thomas who was sent as a missionary to the Yamasee but never actually went much farther than Governor Johnson's house.²³ Thomas, in his letters to the S.P.G., noted that South Carolina contained "great numbers of Heathens who stood in equal need of christian Instruction...the Negro and Indian Slaves in our parishes," but, that he, personally, was loathe to risk his own neck among the "poor savages" as "to prevent the growth of impropriety and heathenism among Christians ... is as highly honored as...propagating Christianity among Heathens."²⁴ Ultimately, Thomas he decided that the African Americans within his immediate community were in greater need of Christianity, so he asked the S.P.G. to excuse "his going among the Indians and praying the Society to continue him in the place

²¹ "Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes and Slaves" in Humphreys, 94-95.

²² Glasson, 173. As Glasson notes, a significant factor in the SPG's decision was the Society's ownership of Codrington plantation, a slave-worked sugar estate on Barbados. The Society was, by this time, so certain as to the acceptability of slavery as to assume ownership of the plantation without any recorded debate. [174]

²³ Allan Galloway, *The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670–1717*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 227.

²⁴ Galloway, 230.

where he is now."²⁵ The Society approved Thomas's request to change the nature of his mission, but he soon died and was unable to fulfill the principal elements of his vision.

Thomas was succeeded in his mission to South Carolina by Reverend Francis Le Jau , a former Huguenot from Angiers, France who was ordained into the Church of England and received his commission to the S.P.G. on November 27, 1705 and arrived in S.C. almost a year later.²⁶ Soon after he arrived, he had come to some conclusions about those who were in his charge, "The Indians I have conversed with do make us ashamed by their life, conversation, and sense of religion, quite different from ours. Ours consists in words and appearance; theirs is reality. I hope they will soon worship Christ. The negroes are generally very bad men, chiefly those that are scholars; I will baptize none but such lead a Christian life, and of whom I have good testimony."²⁷ However, he was under no illusions as the nature of the challenge he faced in South Carolina and the greatest of these would not come from the slaves but their masters, "Many masters can't be persuaded that negroes and Indians are otherwise than beasts and use them like such." In another letter, Le Jau further laments "The irreligion and lewdness of too many persons, but chiefly the barbarous use of the poor slaves."²⁸

Le Jau arrived in South Carolina during a period of intense Indian slave trade and on the eve of the Yamasee War that nearly destroyed the colony of South Carolina; the colonists drove the Yamasee to war by "abusing the Indians with drink and then cheate them in Trading with them and Stealing Even their Children away and carry them off to other places and sell them for slaves."²⁹ Le Jau could not escape what stood before his very eyes, " It is reported by some of our inhabitants lately gone on Indian Trading that they excite them to make War amongst themselves to get slaves which they give for our

²⁵ Frank J. Klingberg, "The Indian Frontier in South Carolina as Seen by the S.P.G. Missionary," *The Journal of Southern History* 5 (No. 4: Nov. 1939), pp. 479-500

²⁶ Edgar Legare Pennington, "The Reverend Francis Le Jau's Work Among Indians and Negro Slaves," *Journal of Southern History* 1, (No. 4: Nov., 1935), pp. 442-458

²⁷ Earnest Hawkins, *Historical Notices of the Missions of the Church of England in the North American Colonies*, (London: B. Fellows, 1845), 49

²⁸ LeJau in Hawkins, 50

²⁹ Barbara Olexer, *The Enslavement of the American Indian*, (Monroe, N.Y.: Library Research Associates, 1982), 172.

European goods. I fear it is but too true and that the Slaves we have for our necessary Service are the price of a great many sins.”³⁰ He saw the enslavement of Indians as a critical impediment to his work, “I am told still that if anything opposes the publishing of the Gospel among the Indians it shall be that manner of how our Indian Trade is carried on, chiefly the Fomenting of War among them for our people to get slaves”³¹

In addition, Le Jau faced grave challenges in bringing African slaves into his fold, “Several sensible and sober Slaves have asked me also to be baptized and married according to the form of our holy Church. I could not comply with their desire without the Consent of their Masters, but I have exhorted them to perseverance and patience. I also humbly desire to be directed therein: the Masters are unwilling most of them.”³² To allay their master’s concerns, Le Jau follows the instructions of his own charges in London and baptizes them with the following acclamation:

To remove all pretence from the Adult Slaves I shall baptise of their being free upon that Account I have thought fit to require first their consent to this following declaration, “You declare in the presence of God and before this Congregation that you do not ask for the holy baptism out of any design to free yourself: from the Duty and Obedience you owe to your Master while you live, but merely for the good of Your Soul and to partake of the Graces and Blessings promised to the Members of the Church o Jesus Christ.”³³

He convinced the masters that slaves so baptized “do better for their Masters profit than formerly, for they are taught to serve out of Christian Love & Duty; they tell me openly that they will ever bless God for their knowing good things which they knew not before.”³⁴

Soon enough, Le Jau began to evangelize the Negro and Indian slaves in his parish; he hoped to set aside time for their instruction, “I design with God’s blessing to have a day in the week for the

³⁰ Francis Le Jau, *The Carolina Chronicles of Dr. Francis Le Jau, 1702-1717*, Edited by Frank W. Klingberg, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), 42.

³¹ Le Jau, 61.

³² Le Jau quoted in Pennington, 454.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Le Jau in Klingberg, 49.

instruction of poor Indians and Negroes, their masters like it well most of them.”³⁵ He also set about to bring others of those in his community into the brethren of the church , “God willing as soon as I get home, I will invite some weekdays, the servant slaves and free Indians to come and be catechized.”³⁶ He began to meet with some small success, yet he still faced grave challenges even to the point of his near exasperation,

Many Negroes and Indian Slaves are actually instructed and Tryal in order to be admitted to the Holy Baptism. I had appointed a day in the Week for publick Catechising; I am much concern’d at the remissness of the parents and masters, but I am not discouraged...I cannot to this day prevail upon some to make a Difference between Slaves and free Indians, and Beasts, yet there are worthy persons of another Mind in this Parish, else I shou’d have little comfort in my spiritual endeavours.³⁷

Le Jau tried very hard to get the people of the parish to release their slaves for evangelism, but he was not as successful as he hoped, “as I fear’d the Negroes and Indian Slaves shou’d not be sent to be Instructed I must give the melancholy account that it has so happened.”³⁸ By 1710, his weekly sessions had grown: “after our Divine Service invited the Negro and Indian Slaves to stay for half an hour, the Invitation to my Great comfort has been joyfully received by about 50 of them;”³⁹ but after only a few years and with the onset of the Indian wars, his congregation had begun to change, “I see 30 Negroes at church for an Indian slave.”⁴⁰ Unfortunately, before Le Jau was able to see the fruits of his labor fulfilled, he was stricken by malaria and died in 1717.⁴¹

About the same time that Rev. Samuel Thomas arrived in South Carolina, another Huguenot turned Anglican – like Le Jau -- by the name of Elias Neau began a mission to the Indian and Slaves of New York. Neau, like the Anglican Samuel Thomas, was sent to be a missionary to the Indians of New

³⁵ Le Jau in Klingberg, 26.

³⁶ Le Jau in Klingberg, 37.

³⁷ Le Jau in Klingberg, 53.

³⁸ Le Jau in Klingberg, 54.

³⁹ Le Jau in Klingberg, 76.

⁴⁰ Le Jau in Gallay, 239.

⁴¹ Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*, (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 1974), 71.

York but felt that it would be much easier and, perhaps, safer to work among the Negro and Indian slaves of New York.⁴² In 1703, Neau wrote to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel noting that there were a great number of slaves in New York “who were without God in the world, and of whose souls there was no manner of care taken.”⁴³ Neau initially traveled from house to house working with enslaved persons, but soon was able to add a special room to his house for the conversion and catechism of the “Indian and Negro Slaves” of what would become Harlem.⁴⁴

Though he is known as the “Catechist to the Negroes in New York,”⁴⁵ in reality, his mission was to the Negro and Indian slaves of New York; in 1706, he was commended by the S.P.G. for being a “constant communicant of our church, and a most zealous and prudent servant of Christ, in proselyting the miserable Negroes and Indians among them to the Christian Religion, whereby he does great service to God and his church.”⁴⁶ In the records of his Catechumens from 1704-1714, Neau listed nearly one hundred fifty students and, of these, approximately twenty were listed as being “Enslaved Indian” men and women.⁴⁷ In an astonishingly prescient move, Neau began to translate materials into the indigenous languages of his charges; he created a text with “the Lords prayer in three Languages -- in Indian, in Curmantin, and in Cymodingo.”⁴⁸ In his educational activities, Neau was able to achieve remarkable success in promoting an affection for books and learning;⁴⁹ in his religious ceremonies, the focus upon sacred songs and singing provided with much more than just the marginal success that had been made by his Southern counterparts.⁵⁰

⁴² Glasson, 147; Pierre, 356.

⁴³ Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, *Classified Digest of the Records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts 1701-1892* (London: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, 1893), 56.

⁴⁴ Glasson, 153; Pierre, 356.

⁴⁵ Vibert, 174.

⁴⁶ S.P.G., *Classified Digest*, 58.

⁴⁷ Neau in Glasson, 154.

⁴⁸ Glasson, 153.

⁴⁹ Vibert, 174.

⁵⁰ Glasson, 157.

However, it was his very success that brought great attention to Neau's catechetical school; the slaveowner's attitudes turned from support to suspicion as Elias Neau's evangelical mission began to prepare the educated and enlightened for baptism. In order to promote the baptism of slaves and in alignment with the S.P.G.'s developing policy on slave baptism, Neau sought – with the support of the Society -- a change in New York's slave code that would allow for baptism without manumission. In "An Act to Encourage the Baptizing of Negro, Indian and Mulatto Slaves," New York law now clearly restricted the rights of slaves...even baptized ones:

WHEREAS divers of her Majesties good Subjects, Inhabitants of this Colony now are and have been willing that such Negro, Indian and Mulatto Slaves who belong to them and desire the same, should be Baptized, but are deterr'd and hindred therefrom by reason of a Groundless opinion that hath spread itself in this Colony, that by the Baptizing of such Negro, Indian or Mulatto slave they would become free and ought to be sett at Liberty. In order therefore to put an end to all such Doubts and Scruples as have or hereafter at any time may arise about the same. BE it Enacted by the Governor Council and Assembly and it is hereby Enacted by the authority of the same, That the Baptizing of any Negro, Indian or Mulatto Slave shall not be any Cause or reason for the setting them or any of them at liberty....And be it declar'd and Enacted by the Governr, Council & Assembly and by the Authority of the same, That all and every Negro, Indian Mulatto and Mestee Bastard Child and Children who is, are, and shalbe born of any Negro, Indian, Mulatto or Mestee shall follow ye State and Condition of the Mother & be esteemed reputed taken & adjudged a Slave & Slaves to all intents & purposes whatsoever.

Under these new conditions, Neau's mission was able to meet with measured success among his catechumens, but continued to arouse suspicion not just among the community at large but even among his ecclesiastical superiors. His school was struck a tragic blow in the aftermath of a 1712 slave revolt in New York in which ten white persons were killed and several houses were burned down; students at Neau's school were suspected because the attack "was so bold and well planned" and because Neau had encouraged the slaves' "desire for temporal freedom."⁵¹ Reports in the newspaper cited the revolt as being led by "Cormentine Negroes and 2 or 3 Spanish Indians" who had

⁵¹ Vibert, 176.

"conspired to murder all the Christians here, and by that means thinking to obtain their freedom."⁵²

Though only two of the twenty one eventually hanged for the uprising were from Neau's school, "his School was blamed as the main occasion of this barbarous plot."⁵³ Neau's school was eventually cleared of the charges against it and Neau was defended even by the governor; his supporters "looked upon him as the only Person in that Country Capable of Exercising the Function of Catechist for the Negroes and Indians."⁵⁴ Elias Neau continued to operate his school until his death in 1722.

As the years progressed, the mission of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel towards the "Heathen and Infidels" became increasingly specialized and segregated into those who worked among persons of African descent and those who focused upon indigenous persons. While a contemporary Anglican priest found this a function of particularity stating "the sagacity of the Indian keeps him aloof... [while] the dull stupidity of the Negroes leaves him without any desire for instruction,"⁵⁵ it is more likely that the reasons for differentiation is a little more complex. Probably the greatest factor was the decline in Indian slavery and the transition to African slavery that occurred during the eighteenth century as well the accompanying institutions of racial codification. Another significant factor was that of language as both Samuel Thomas and Elias Neau both cited their relative inability to speak the languages of indigenous persons as a significant factor in their focus upon evangelizing persons of African descent. Native American resistance to enslavement and English colonization as well as indigenous nations forming allegiances with rival European colonial powers may have also increased the reluctance of SPG missionaries to traverse into "hostile" areas for missionary endeavors.

⁵² *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 15 vols. (New York: Weed, Parsons, Printers, 1853-1887), 5:341-42.

⁵³ David Humphreys, *An historical account of the incorporated Society for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts containing their foundation, proceedings, and the success of their missionaries in the British Colonies, to the year 1728*, (London : Printed by J. Downing, 1730), 241.

⁵⁴ Glason, 171.

⁵⁵ Knox, 14.

Though the missions of the S.P.G. became increasingly specialized over the years, in the beginning the missions to “Indian and Negro Slaves” was a collective endeavor. It seems that we often fail to appreciate the extent of colonial racial intermixture as well as enslavement and fail to appreciate that the religious struggle regarding baptism and enslavement was much more complex than we have a tendency to allow for. Lastly, though many writers describe the evangelical mission as well as the educational of the S.P.G. as existing specifically, if not solely, within the African American context – it is not necessarily so. If we are to do justice to history, we must do justice to its complexity.