A Research Proposal

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by

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ABSTRACT

REVEREND THOMAS BRAY AND PARISH LIBRARIES OF THE AMERICAN COLONIAL SOUTH

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This research proposal examines the Rev. Thomas Bray – a 17th century British Anglican clergyman and missionary – and his libraries of the American colonial south. The emphasis is on philanthropic work exemplified by missionary activities related to founding libraries, and conversion efforts among American Indians and plantation slaves, firmly rooted in schooling and literacy frameworks. The geographic focus is the American colonial south, and the time period is 1696, to the years following the American Revolutionary War, when the American Anglican Church found it necessary to re-make itself as an institution no longer representing the best interests of the British monarchy. Reference resources provide information related to religious settlement during colonization, demographic data and biography. Primary sources including historic books and printed records, periodicals, photographs and archival material supplement the record and further tie religions beliefs and practices of the early 1700s with the man himself, and his libraries.
INTRODUCTION

This study proposes to research the Rev. Thomas Bray – a 17th century British Anglican clergyman and missionary best known for founding parish libraries in England, Wales and the American colonies – and his libraries of the American colonial south. The emphasis of the research will be two-fold. To start, the history of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands, a missionary society dedicated to spreading the gospel, in part through founding libraries and stocking existing collection in the colonies. Secondly, Rev. Bray’s conversion efforts among American Indians and plantation slaves, which were firmly rooted in schooling and literacy frameworks. With this focus on philanthropic work, this study will be able to further tie religions beliefs and practices of the early 1700s with the man himself, and the history of his libraries.

Clearly, research interests here lie at the nexus of library history, and the history of early American religious settlement. The geographic focus of research is the American colonial south, with an emphasis on Maryland and Virginia: Maryland where most of Rev. Bray’s work was centered, and Virginia where the contentious history of the American Anglican Church provides a backdrop to various understandings of religious beliefs and practices of the time. The time period at hand is 1696, the year which Rev. Bray learned he would be sent to the colonies in missionary assignment, to the years following the American Revolutionary War, when the American Anglican Church found it necessary to re-make itself as an institution no longer representing the best interests of the British monarchy.

This proposed research will augment present scholarly argument in at least three manners. It will represent Rev. Bray as a complicated man, who used his combination of missionary zeal and utilitarian view of practical knowledge on the fertile cultural ground of the
American southern colonies, where ministers needed books in order to spread the Gospel and a gentry class welcomed texts that would serve a rising professional class.

It will contribute to a recently emerging historical debate about the nature of the Anglican Church in colonial America, one which pits a critical 19th century narrative uniting the story of the demise of the church alongside a story describing it as institution destined to fail all along, and a new historiography describing a church that was vibrant all long, yet perhaps not particularly successful when needing to reconcile itself with democratic tendencies.

Finally, it will challenge a re-imaging of the previous research, within the framework of this new historiography.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The studies of the Rev. Thomas Bray and his parish libraries of the American south have provided historians – church historians and otherwise men of the cloth and secularists, alike – an opportunity to interpret a small slice of American Anglican Church history through certain larger narratives that have been popular since the mid-19th century. It is only until this decade that new scholarship related to the history of the Anglican Church during the colonial period has emerged, providing for somewhat of a “rival-schools” approach to interpreting the topic, at hand.

It has long been written that Rev. Bray believed strongly that ministers needed to have a substantial amount of appropriate texts in order to spread the Gospel, and that he set up parish libraries in the American south, Canada and the Caribbean as an incentive to convince struggling English ministers to leave the comforts of home for lands unknown. As his libraries took hold in the American south they took on a second role – as collections for use by the Anglican settlers of the American south who were accustomed to having books for professional development and recreational use. He was additionally known for founding the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands, a missionary society dedicated to spreading the gospel, in part through founding libraries and stocking existing collection in the colonies, and for his conversion efforts among American Indians and plantation slaves, which were firmly rooted in schooling and literacy frameworks.

There is little doubt that the scholarship paints Rev. Bray as an ambitious if not brilliant man, who in the end failed to make a lasting mark in the land of the spirit, but with a nod to the world of librarianship. It is necessary to position the story that has been written about the man and his missionary efforts – and the demise of his libraries – against the prevailing narrative of the history of the Anglican Church of the American south. The two-volume work Old Churches,
*Ministers and Families of Virginia* written by Rev. William Meade in 1857, provides that long-lasting, backdrop.¹

Rev. Meade was an evangelical bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church of Virginia, who told the story of the life of his church through his reasoning about its demise shortly after the Revolutionary War. He argued that colonial Anglicanism collapsed because of lack of strict conformity from the pulpit, the worldliness of its ministers, the absence of spirituality among the laity and a general lack of evangelical zeal. If this is true, it provides great understanding for the history of Rev. Bray’s efforts, and the ultimate undoing of his work, while allowing for praise of the man himself.

If indeed part of the collapse of the Anglican Church in the colonial south can be placed at the hands of those too interested in worldly affairs, a brief comparison to the roles of ministers in New England is worthwhile. In his article "Parochial Libraries in the Colonial Period," John Hurst notes New England as settled with a fundamentally anti-British sentiment and no nostalgia for the reproduction of English life—including characteristics associated with a gentry class interested in acquiring knowledge for practical ends and leisurely pursuit. The Puritan ministers of the north saw themselves not only as spiritual leaders, but also as the sole source of intellectual authority for their flock, with intellectual endeavors needing to be heavily grounded in the spiritual realm. In reality, these Puritan pastors did not believe there was a large amount of intellectual material that could be entrusted to the average parishioner.²

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Quite the opposite was true in the American colonial south, as least with respect to the Anglican Church. Thomas Key notes in his article "The Colonial Library and the Development of Sectional Differences in the American Colonies" that to the extent that there is a relationship between who founded a library and the larger purpose of the institution:

The owners of the libraries in the southern colonies were ministers, members of the professional classes, and to a considerable extent, the landed aristocrats. Similarly, these libraries reflect the traditional culture of the southern gentleman, that of a transplanted loyal British subject.³

While the scholarly literature does not necessarily fault Rev. Bray for being a well-educated man with philosophical intents as well as a theological one, the idea that the demise of the church could be placed at the hand of ministers too interested in this world, begs for criticism of the man himself. In "The Quest for" Useful Knowledge" in Eighteenth-Century America” the classicist Meyer Reinhold writes "with the signing of the Declaration of Independence came “a great new surge of utilitarian energy in America unleashed by freedom from Britain and fed by egalitarian aspirations.”⁴ This burst of energy was directly related to a growing interest in the concept of useful knowledge, and was best reflected by the fact that while education in the first century of America remained predominately theological and classical, it was designed to mold man for the primary goal of usefulness. It is ironic that this new American impulse for pragmatism, self-knowledge and self-improvement associated with freedom actually came from the English—it is a direct application of the English philosopher Francis Bacon’s theory of a utilitarian end for knowledge. This Baconian doctrine concerned itself with the acquisition of knowledge for the public good, and promotion of positive social ends. Reinhold did an extensive study of Rev. Bray’s own written words and concluded that he was highly influenced by the

work of Frances Bacon and presents Bray libraries as both centers for the support of ministerial work, and utilitarian in their larger goals of supporting professional development. For Bray, the usefulness of theological texts for ministers was rooted in the need to have materials for the purpose of professional function.\textsuperscript{5} To this end Bray libraries accounted for medical, mathematical and law tracts, history travel and geography books.

Rev. Bray’s libraries did not survive his death, and here blame is laid squarely on an unenthusiastic laity, who had no desire to keep them going, something Rev. Meade might have agreed as representative of his own written history. After Bray’s death, interest in the libraries he founded in England and the colonies died out. In "Rev. Thomas Bray and His American Libraries" Bernard Steiner provides a cultural and financial analysis of why the interest in the libraries founded in England and the colonies by Rev. Thomas Bray withered after his death.\textsuperscript{6} He argues that the libraries were fundamentally a foreign concept on colonial soil, and that the settlers took little interest in maintaining the libraries at their own expense. As books wore out, the libraries became antiquated and day-to-day usefulness was lost for clergy and the lay, alike.

If as a reflection of the demise of the Anglican Church in the colonial south Rev. Bray did not necessary succeed in matters of the spirit, there is some evidence he did succeed in the secular world of librarianship-at-large. What is perhaps most interesting about the collection of parish libraries in the colonial south, is that much like the Bray libraries of England and Wales, some became fixed collections for parishioners needing books in no way related to spiritual matters. In other cases these collections became actual lending libraries for these parishioners, or

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
the community-at large. In two fascinating cases, these libraries became the first provincial libraries of the American south.

In "Franklin's World of Books" Margaret Korty tells the story of a South Carolina library sent to a minister in Charleston, which was in turn regulated by what was most likely the first colonial library law. The history of that library is fascinating, as told in "Libraries of South Carolina: Their Origins and Early History, 1700-1830" by Frances Spain. A large sum of money was raised for it, and 225 books purchased. Even before all the money had been raised, a confident minister took up his duties in Charleston and brought the first donation of books with him. The South Carolina Assembly was so grateful for the donation that it became the only provincial assembly to appropriate public funds toward the support of a library. Additionally, a bill "To Secure the Provincial Library at Charles Town in Carolina" became a law of the colony on November 16, 1700 and the semipublic nature of that library was enshrined. This colonial law contained striking similarities to the essays Bray wrote himself, and the English Parochial Libraries Act of 1709, for which Bray could take much credit. The law lay down rules related to which books were to be preserved, and how the library was to function. A commission was appointed for purposes of oversight and visitation. The minister to the parish where Charleston was located was required to give the commissioners a receipt for the books, and to answer to questions of damage and theft. Seven catalogues had to be compiled, including one for the Bishop of London and one for Rev. Bray himself.

In what was probably the first colonial library law, state control and religious influence worked together in allowing colonists access to books before the social library movement took

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In "Parish Libraries and the Work of the Reverend Thomas Bray" William Houlette writes of the most important of the Maryland Bray libraries, that at Annapolis, established by members of the royal family and designated as a provincial library and kept in the State House until a fire in 1704. A portion of the collection survived the fire, and was ultimately moved to St. John’s College. As a provincial library, the books were for circulation beyond the confines of parish membership, but still overseen by an Anglican cleric. In the end, unlike in South Carolina, public funds were not made available to the Annapolis library. Although the provincial governor proposed that part of tax raised for arms be diverted for the purpose of purchasing books that could be accessed by all persons, the assembly did not agree.

None of this could have been made possible without Rev. Bray’s grand plan for recruiting ministers to foreign lands, and here the scholarship is more in line with Rev. Mead’s interpretative conclusion that the general quality of ministerial talent was lacking in the American colonial south, in the years leading to the American Revolution. By 1696, Rev. Bray knew he would be traveling to colonial soil. Henry Compton, Bishop of London appointed Bray as commissary for Maryland, supervisor of all clerical endeavors in the province. At the time of his appointment he did not know when he would travel to the New World, or how long he would remain there. In Thomas Bray's Grand Design: Libraries of the Church of England in America, 1695-178, Charles Laugher paints a picture of a man working tirelessly on two projects: raising money to found and supply books to parish missionary libraries in the colonies, England and Wales, and interviewing candidates for appointment as missionary clergy. The second task

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proved difficult. He found that only destitute and less influential clergy were interested in making the difficult voyage—men who could most certainly never afford books. It was then that he realized that the haphazard fundraising methods that supplied collections to libraries at home and abroad—while successful—needed more structure. Thus was born the voluntary association known as the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. He returned to London on July 25, 1700 after spending only six months on colonial soil believing he could do more good from a base in England but assuming he would return at some point. He did not. It is quite fascinating to note that it almost impossible to separate Rev. Bray’s desire to recruit ministers to the colonies, from his capacity-building missionary efforts to give shape to the task.

Upon his return to England, Bray continued his missionary work and emphasis on libraries, most specifically by founding the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands, which emphasized missionary work in the colonies. In "Dr. Thomas Bray's Commissary Work in London, 1696-1699” Samuel McCulloch writes of a man who in setting up this missionary society, knew that in order to account for the future success of his fledgling organization, he had to maintain close contact with the Anglican missionaries based in Maryland, urging them to continue their work and following up with them on suggestions based on personal visitations he made during his six month stay.\(^\text{11}\)

Rev. Bray was deeply influenced by his stay in Maryland, as evidenced by the establishment of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands. As noted by Bernard Steiner in "Two Eighteenth Century Missionary Plans" it was from his short time in Maryland, that Bray became concerned with evangelizing two populations: the American Indian,

and the plantation slave. He sent forth ideas related to the conversion of Indians that emphasized setting up schools to teach industrial and religious education, alongside elders in the tribe. He advocated raising money for land grants to Indians. He believed clergy assigned to work with Indians should learn their languages. He needed high quality clergy, for this endeavor.

With respect to the conversion of slaves, he thought only the best of missionary clergy should take on the endeavor. He believed English ministers with an interest in such an assignment should have a year’s worth of training before leaving for the New World, because they would only be successful if they actually lived and labored alongside slaves on the plantations.

While these ideas were met with some resistance, he did indeed lay the framework for future Christian missionary efforts in America – particularly with ideas related to the conversion of Indians through schooling, and living and working alongside neglected classes as a method of serving God. With this taken in mind, it is here that the positioning of the scholarship does not need to imagine an overlay of Rev. Meade’s conclusion. It points to excuses by clergy, and lack of support by the Anglican Church.

In "The Established Virginia Church and the Conversion of Negroes and Indians, 1620-1760" Jerome Jones writes of the complicated nature of the demise of Indian schools of the colonial south, between 1710-1720. Using the case of Virginia as an example, he notes on one hand that Anglican ministers themselves claimed that historical events of the 1600’s – including massacres, had made the climate impossible for successful conversion. Additionally, Jones noted that when questioned in 1724, only four of the 29 ministers in Virginia who responded

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mentioned any efforts on behalf of Indian instruction and that while the Assembly itself refused to fund such efforts, schools were closed when the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel refused to provide additional funding. A problem of historical of events, individual ministerial lack of interest, government lack of intervention, and denial of church resources, all rolled into one.

Similarly in "In Pursuit of Letters: A History of the Bray Schools for Enslaved Children in Colonial Virginia" Antonio Bly tells the story of a string of Bray schools in Virginia, decentralized in nature, unstable and having very little in common with each other in terms of administrative functional support and structure. He describes schools that while well stocked with books and other reading materials, were not adequately funded otherwise. He too, notes the complicated factors involved in the demise of Bray schools intended to teach enslaved children. While admitting that racial prejudice and gender prejudice – given that most teachers were female – may have been factor, he also believes that in general, provisions for education at the time were sparse, and the Bray schools may simply have represented the culture-at-large.

It is interesting to try to interpret the story of Rev. Bray – particularly when broken down into the history of his parish libraries, his missionary efforts at conversion of plantation slaves and Indians, and the connection between the founding of missionary societies and need to recruit high-quality clergy – against a larger historical backdrop that concentrates on the overall failure of the colonial Anglican Church in the south. It is interesting to see where church historians ignore the larger discuss in their interpretations, and where secular men like Jerome Jones and Antonio Bly writing more recently are apt to place at least partial blame, on church authorities. I am not sure it is a tactic that has been taken on by many historians, and certainly deserves a

greater look by those more experienced than I. However, a more recent and decidedly revisionist history of the Anglican Church in Virginia, may be what provides the future lens for interpretation.

In *A Blessed Company: Parishes, Parsons, and Parishioners in Anglican Virginia, 1690-1776* John Nelson\textsuperscript{15}, professor emeritus of history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill does extensive research using parish and government records and other primary sources, and challenges the previously held characterizations of the colonial Anglican establishment, particularly as represented by Rev. William Meade. For Nelson, the church not only played a fundamental role in the political, social and economic lives of parishioners, but in the life of the spirit as well. And for him, this was the definition of “evangelical.” While others sought to enumerate Bray’s evangelical efforts in numbers of parish libraries opened, slaves converted, library collections added to and clergy recruited, for Nelson it is about the church being in the position to serve the purely spiritual needs of its members. Numbers are about counting baptismal records and marriage certificates. The church was certainly flexible in nature, to the extent that it could provide such things as libraries to enhance the recreational and economic life of the community, and it was also a dynamically growth-oriented institution, with parishes nearly doubling between 1690-1776. Virginians taxed themselves heavily in support of the church, and volunteers in the form of a vestry typically managed parishes. And most interesting, Nelson argues that recruitment of clergy shifted from the British Isles to Virginia, as early as 1690. Nelson believes a strong church in the years shortly after 1690, set the stage for growth, and for the ability to train and retain well-educated and committed clergy born on the colonies. While some of the scholarship regarding Rev. Bray alludes to lack of administrative structure as a

problem for stability of evangelical efforts, Nelson asserts emphasis on lay leadership was more important, in the end, because it assisted in tending to the spiritual needs of parishioners. Without the emphasis on lay leadership, the act of worship could not have been as important as Nelson makes it out to be.

I imagine some of the church historians writing long ago about Rev. Bray would have been happier positioning their articles against Nelson’s more positive account of the Anglican Church. At present, some of the scholarship seems to make little mention of the ultimate demise of the church, and when laying blame, does so only against the laity. But this is where Nelson himself may fail. While he most certainly would never tell the tale of any portion of church history through its demise, he does not adequately explain internal factors that may have contributed to the church’s downfall, only looking outward to the American Revolution for answers.

One article related to Rev. Bray, written shortly after Nelson’s book was published gives a nod to this new revisionist history, and may not only portend toward future scholarship, but future interpretation of older, scholarly works. In "A Vision of an Anglican Imperialism: The Annual Sermons of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts 1701–1714" Rowan Strong looks at the sermons preached in England by leaders of the church and on an annual basis, in support of the work of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. It is a long, scholarly work, in part echoing Nelson’s definition of “evangelical.” He writes:

It is clear that at this time, for these Anglicans, evangelism was not confined to, or equated with the missions to the heathen Indians but also embraced the English colonists who were in danger of sinking through neglect into the

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same unbelieving heathen condition. While it is true that generally the SPG preferred to concentrate its resources on the faith of English colonists that work was understood as having an evangelistic motive. For most of the preachers the Christianity of the colonists was regarded as degenerate, as disappearing, or as barely existing in the first place, so that the English were elided into heathens, despite their Christian background. Therefore the colonial English needed evangelizing just as much as the heathen Indians because these English settlers were well on the way to becoming heathens themselves. Evangelism, for these earthly eighteenth-century Anglicans was therefore not confined only to those who had never heard the gospel, but also to those who were in danger of losing it, or had lost it.\textsuperscript{17}

In conclusion, the two schools of thought presented here provide the ability to interpret history in a number of ways, and in reality, both need further exploration. Analyzing the writings of church historians and Anglican ministers with academic credentials can in part be seen as apologist in nature and a cheery juxtaposition to the dominant discourse made popular by Rev. William Meade. Looking at scholarship of the same time written by secular academics, sometimes justifies the bleak end Rev. Meade deemed inevitable, through his telling of the church’s demise. And the revisionist history of Prof. John Nelson, may indeed provide yet another window for the religious and secular academic, to write through.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 189.
THEORETICAL ISSUES AND APPROACHES

In large part this research will emphasize a historiography of the United States, to the extent that it enables a critical look at how powerful men themselves wrote about the colonies, analyzed their own church within the scholarly realm, and used their privilege to attempt to shape affairs of the state. How did Rev. Bray use precepts of the Anglican Church to try to shape colonial history, and why? And how were these acts interpreted, against a larger history of the United States?

Secondarily, a history of religion and history of church approach will be utilized, to ascertain both the impact Rev. Bray may have had on colonial soil and how and why the ultimate demise of his libraries could be tied both into lack of on-going religious fervor and the re-shaping of a church implicitly tied to the British monarchy, in light of the democratic tendencies brought along with the American Revolution. This approach begs that two research questions be asked, alongside each other: 1) did indeed the Bray libraries fail in the years before the American Revolution because of lack of religious fervor; and 2) what does their demise tell us about how the Anglican Church tried to re-make itself in the colonial south, in the years following the Revolution?

Lastly, a historical revisionist school of thought will be brought to the table, to the extent that at present, a reinterpretation of orthodox views of the American colonial Anglican Church is slowly gaining traction – one that is based heavily on primary source records mined in Virginia, and telling a much more positive tale of the state of the church during the time Rev. Bray attempted his missionary work. An attempt will be made to articulate problematics related to challenging the story of Rev. Bray’s life and his libraries, and his missionary work against this largely positive narrative.
REFERENCE RESOURCES AND PRIMARY SOURCES

Various reference resources including specialized encyclopedias and dictionaries, atlases and maps, and scholarly national biographical dictionaries will provide a backdrop of information related to religious settlement during the period of colonization, demographic data and basic biographical information on Rev. Bray, himself. A wealth of primary sources including historic books and other printed records – some written by Rev. Bray – periodicals, photographs and archival material will supplement the record and paint a vivid picture of the man, his libraries, in colonial America.

Specialized Encyclopedias and Dictionaries

The Encyclopedia of American Religious History, Third Edition – with its 2009 revision – is now a three-volume work squarely placing American religion within a historical context. Although for the most part entries are short and focused, the longer topic essay A Short History of Religion in America is particularly helpful in positioning the history of American religion during the period of colonization within how each religious tradition found its way to America; and how newly emerging American religious life looked at what was successful in the “old country” and tried to mimic those successes based on what was occurring in the historical present. Other useful entries include: American Missionary Association, Anglicanism, assimilation and resistance (Native American), Carolinas (colonial period), colonial period, Episcopal Church, Maryland (colony), and slavery.

Written by the recently deceased Edwin S. Gaustad (Professor of History, University of California, Riverside) and one of his students, Leigh Schmidt (University Professor, Washington University), The Religious History of American: The Heart of the American Story from Colonial

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"Times to Today"\(^9\) was originally published in 1966 and updated in 2002. It remains a standard text for American religious history.

In attempting to give a balanced look at the different strands of religious development in the United States, Gaustad and Schmidt do various things helpful in positioning the work of an Anglican minister in the colonial American south. These include debunking the idea that American religious history began as a New England/Puritan endeavor, giving a strong overview of the state of Native American religions prior to the state of colonization, and discussing in detail the Anglican establishments in the developing coastal thirteen colonies, including official Church of England settlements.

**Atlases, Maps and Gazetteers**

Also written by the recently deceased Edwin S. Gaustad (Professor of History, University of California, Riverside) and Philip P. Barlow (Chair of Mormon History and Culture at Utah State University) the *New Historical Atlas of Religion in America* is an update of the 1962 publication of the same name.\(^{20}\) Special maps along with associated graphs, tables and charts elucidate denominational predominance be region, and it is here, that this particular reference resource is most helpful. Graphs outline the number of church – by denomination – in 1660, 1700, 1740 and 1780. A section of the book entitled *Establishment of Colonial Patterns* is broken down by denominations and provides dot maps clearly pointing to the prominence of Anglican churches in the Chesapeake Bay area, as compared to Baptists. The associated text makes note of Rev. Thomas Bray and through the bibliography provides four primary and/or secondary sources related to Anglicanism in the colonial south.


Scholarly National Biographical Dictionaries

Written by Henry Warner Bowden (Professor of Religion, Douglass College, Rutgers University, Faculty of Arts & Sciences), the *Dictionary of American Religious Biography, Second Edition Revised and Enlarged* originally contained 425 biographical profiles when published in 1977. This 1993 revision includes profiles for 125 additional people, with 350 earlier biographical sketches revised and updated. Each profile begins with a short summary of the main events in that person’s life, including educational background and career, followed by a narrative discussion of his or her influence within the larger context of American religious history. Most helpful is that each entry concludes with two bibliographies, separated into primary sources by the person under consideration and secondary sources for further information. Two appendixes list entrants by denomination and by birthplace.

The entry of Rev. Thomas Bray is no different that the outline above. Education and career are explicitly outlined by date and location, and his work is positioned not only within the early colonial history of the Maryland colony but within the reigns of British monarchs William of Orange and Mary Stuart, and their coronation oath to maintain Protestantism as established by law, during their reign.

Books

Two sermons together touch on both sides of the story of evangelical fervor this research is in part, exploring. From the direct words of Rev. John Hough, we learn of the concern that although many of the colonial settlers identified as Anglican, there was reason to believe that without a church that could first and foremost ground members in the word of the Gospel, the

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risk of movement away from the faith was great.\textsuperscript{22} From the sermon by Rev. John Williams, we learn there was a sense among Anglican clergy that Indians in the colonies felt that their general sense of morality and natural sense of religion, was enough for salvation within a Christian context.\textsuperscript{23} Rev. Williams not only finds flaw with this notion, but also argues that positioning conversion efforts decidedly \textit{against} the notion of universal salvation based on good works, was key to the missionary work of the time.

Rev. Bray himself wrote pamphlets designed to inform patrons of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands of his day-to-day activities. The pamphlet writing began shortly after Rev. Bray learned he would be travelling to the colonies, with the writing continuing shortly until right before his death. The pamphlets range from memorial material, to letters from Rev. Bray to members of the clergy in the colonial south\textsuperscript{24} to description of the acts held during Rev. Bray’s visitations to parishes.\textsuperscript{25}

\textit{Bibliotheca Parochialis: Or, A Scheme of Such Theological Heads Both General and Particular}, also written by Rev. Thomas Bray is available as a Google Book and is of great importance in that it shines a light on so many areas of Rev. Bray’s work.\textsuperscript{26} Individual chapters


\textsuperscript{24} Thomas Bray, \textit{The acts of Dr. Bray’s visitation}. Held at Annapolis in Mary-land, May 23, 24, 25, (London: W. Downing, 1700). Part of a rare book collection at the St. John’s College, Annapolis Greenfield Library, where remaining items from the original collection of the Bray library at Annapolis, Maryland are held.

\textsuperscript{25} Thomas, Bray, \textit{Several circular letters to the clergy of Mary-land, subsequent to their late visitations, to enforce such resolutions as were therein}, (London: W. Downing, 1701). Part of a rare book collection at the St. John’s College, Annapolis Greenfield Library, where remaining items from the original collection of the Bray library at Annapolis, Maryland are held.

\textsuperscript{26} Thomas Bray, \textit{Bibliotheca Parochialis: Or, A Scheme of Such Theological Heads Both General and Particular}, (London: E. H., 1697). Also archived in the rare book collection at St.
shed particular light on his utilitarian philosophical bent, explicate a design for cataloguing 
business meant to lay the foundation for lending libraries, give a general view of missionary work 
in the colonies, list books suggested for any parochial library of the time, and outline a catechism 
for converting plantation slaves.

*An Answer to a Letter from Dr. Bray, Directed to such as having contributed towards the 
Propagating Christian Knowledge in the Plantations* by Joseph Wyeth is in reality, part primary 
source and part historiography. Most interesting is a letter written to Rev. Bray by a layperson 
avtive in the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign parts that while very dense in 
nature, is rather critical of the minister’s theology as not being driven enough by the desire for 
salvation. Also important in this book, is a list of the names of men serving on His Majesty’s 
Council of Maryland and the Burgess of the General Assembly, with notes as to whether or not 
they might be amenable to imposing a poll tax in support of the work of the Church of England 
in the colony. A cultural artifact of a first political campaign, of sorts. Or perhaps just a simple 
government document.

**Periodicals**

In “In Pursuit of Letters: A History of Bray schools for Enslaved Children in Colonial 
Virginia” Antonio Bly reprints a handwritten roster of student names that attended a school in 
Williamsburg started by the associates of the late Rev. Thomas Bray. It was customary for 
colonial trustees of the schools in the south to send back to England and benefactors a list of 
children – known as Bray scholars – who were enrolled.

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27 Joseph Wyeth, *An Answer to a Letter from Dr. Bray, Directed to such as having contributed 

Virginia,” 442. The listing of Bray scholar names is cited as: Plate 1. List of Bray Scholars. 
November 1765. Bray Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford University.
Photographs and Other Formats

The Maryland Historical Society’s Prints and Photographs Division has created descriptive inventories of many collections of glass and nitrate film photographic negatives, and has provided for the printing of all the negatives, and for the creation of copy negatives for the images. In 1981, the original negatives were rehoused. Included in this collection is a negative and a duplicate copy negative of the title page of the 1700 edition of *Necessity of Early Religion*, by Rev. Thomas Bray. With support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Maryland Historical Society’s Prints and Photographs Division has also catalogued and partially digitized a collection of vertical file portraits. Included in this collection is one print and one negative of Rev. Thomas Bray.

Searching through the *Libraries and Culture* Bookplate Archive yielded a digitized version of a bookplate used by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. Books sent out by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts carried the bookplate illustrated, albeit it with no provision for the insertion of any other information. So while it was impossible to match a particular book with a parish, at least books were known to be part of the particular collection sent by Rev. Bray and his associates.

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Archives

The Bodleian Library of Commonwealth & African Studies at Rhodes House, Bodleian Library University of Oxford, England holds the extensive collection of the papers of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. These papers include correspondence, committee minutes, sermons, correspondence, maps and financial records. A digitized version of some of the material is available through the British Online Archives, a subsidiary of Microform Academic Publishers and with purchase of a license. The British Online Archives provides a metadata viewer, albeit it with very little descriptive data. A great deal of American material from the archives of the USPG, 1635-1812 is available in this manner.

Religion and the Founding of the American Republic is a Library of Congress exhibition designed to demonstrate the connections between the deep religious convictions of those who settled the colonies in the 17th century, the religious fervor of 18th century immigrants from Europe, and the first home-grown religious revival movements on American soil. The collection provides many primary sources for anyone trying to understand the religious milieu of the colonial south, particularly Catholic Maryland and Anglican Virginia. Of particular note are images: 1) showing persecution of Jesuits in England and Scotland; 2) retelling the persecution of Catholics by Huguenots; and 3) depicting the 1555 execution of Catholic priest turned Protestant convert John Rogers, in the famous Protestant martyrology, Fox’s Book of Martyrs. Primary sources that bring us into the 16th and 17th centuries include: 1) a digitized version of portions of Thomas Jefferson’s Notes on the State of Virginia, commenting on the state’s anti-

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Quaker laws; 2) the only known depiction of Father Andrew White, the Catholic priest who
celebrated mass in 1634 with those on board the two ships the Ark and the Dove, bringing the
first settlers to Maryland; and, 3) the 1649 Maryland Act Concerning Religion. Quite a number
of resources shed light on the state of the Anglican Church during the same time period, and
provide a basis for exploring the weakening of the church after the American Revolution. These
include: 1) a page the Virginia Church Laws, 1618, which outlined the Virginia Company’s
concern for the Anglican Church; 2) the ordination papers of an American who had to travel to
Britain to receive his Anglican credentials; 3) evidence of changes to the Book of Common
Prayer, designed to lessen loyalty to the church, and thus the King of England; and 4) a page
from a publication resulting from post-revolution church conferences planning for an
independent, American Anglican institution in a democratic nation no longer subject to a
monarchy that also ruled the church.
TENTATIVE CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 1: Introduction and Historiography

The introduction will present Bray libraries as a cultural artifact of the early 18th century colonial south, both as import from England and as a homegrown movement reflective of religious and secular values of the times. Historiographies of the impact of the movement on American history-at-large, the shaping of the American Anglican Church, and recent revisionist historical trends, will be provided for context.

Chapter 2: Rev. Thomas Bray, 1658-1730

Beginning with his birth, Rev. Bray’s life story will be examined through the lens of theological imperative, philosophical bent and practical application. This chapter will attempt to tie the man to his libraries by exploring the backdrop of his religious views and missionary zeal, his decidedly philosophical bent based on the utilitarian views of Francis Bacon and his work as balance between providing ministers needed books in order to spread the Gospel and serving a gentry class that welcomed texts needed in order to serve a rising professional class. These disparate parts of Rev. Bray’s being will be validated and challenged, against the three historiographies previously outlined.

Chapter 3: A History of Bray Libraries

A fascinating and little-known part of colonial American history will be explored, through telling the story of some of the most interesting Bray libraries. Some Bray libraries slowly became fixed collections for parishioners needing books in no way related to spiritual matters. In other cases these collections became actual lending libraries for these parishioners, or the community-at large. In the cases of the Bray libraries of Charleston, South Carolina and Annapolis, Maryland these libraries became the first provincial libraries of the American south.
This chapter will also provide the opportunity to explore the first colonial library law, most likely in Charleston, South Carolina, where state control and religious influence worked together in allowing colonists access to books before the social library movement took hold. A tie-in will be made to the English Parochial Libraries Act of 1709, which Rev. Bray himself helped draft and that to this day still governs parochial libraries established for ministers of the Church of England in Great Britain.

Chapter 4: The Founding of the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands

A tremendous amount of primary source materials in the form of books and pamphlets written by Rev. Bray himself and sermons preached by others on behalf of raising money for this missionary organization provides the perfect backdrop for a major research question to be addressed in this chapter: to what extent do these primary sources reflect an American colonial church already in trouble, lacking the spiritual fervor to make a mark on a new land? And if not, why did the Bray libraries ultimately fail, years before the American Revolution challenged the very need for a church beholden to the British monarchy?

It should be noted that in England, the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge became a funding arm to raise money for clerical libraries in England and the New World. It was so successful, that when Rev. Bray returned to England from the colonial south in 1700, he founded the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, which along with engaging in greater colonial missionary efforts, raised money for the parish libraries of the American south.

Chapter 5: American Indians and Plantation Slaves

This chapter will look at the work done by Rev. Bray during the six months he spent on American colonial soil. It was during this time that he become concerned with evangelizing two
populations: the American Indian and the plantation slave. His efforts were met with great resistance on the clergy end and the service end, and this chapter provides yet another opportunity to analyze primary sources for perceived weakness among the clergy and well-connected laity alike, as related to the spiritual strength of the American Anglican Church. This chapter is secondarily important to the historical record, given later efforts at converting Native Americans through Christian missionary efforts based in boarding schools, and where living and working alongside neglected classes represented service to God.

**Chapter 6: Conclusion**

A summary of the impact of Rev. Bray and his parish libraries told within the context of missionary efforts – and their ultimate demise – will provide a number of research questions positioned against a more recent historiography accounting for a deeply religious Anglican populace in the American colonial south. Along with the obvious questions related to the demise of the libraries, a number of other questions are worth asking. Did the southern American Anglican colonists really see themselves as an extension of the landed British gentry, or were they forging their own way? If spirituality privileged matters of practicality in the material world, was the story of Rev. Bray and his libraries an example of “culture clash” during a time of colonization? Was the situation of the lack of qualified ministers, really as dire as the picture that has been painted?

And of course, how might the answers to any or all of these questions re-write the history of Bray libraries?
TIMELINE

The following timeline assumes a maximum of one year from the point of acceptance of a research proposal, to a completed product.

At present, all reference resources and secondary sources listed are available, and most have already been examined, in detail. It can be assumed that more reference resources and secondary sources may surface during the period of time during which the proposal would be finalized. Upon acceptance, at least two months would be necessary to complete research related to this body of work.

During the time reference resources and secondary sources continue to be evaluated, plans can be made to coordinate visiting arrangements to archival collections. Preparation for visits should take in totality three weeks, since a minimum of four sites are being considered. Plans should be allowed to spend no less than one week at each repository, to include inspecting material in detail and photocopying primary source material. At least two months should then be allotted for the review of this collected material.

The writing phase should allow for at least 6 weeks to write, review and rewrite each chapter.
RESOURCES REQUIREMENTS

Unfortunately, much of the primary resource material mined during this proposal writing process has not been digitized and is not available online. Resources would be required for travel and photocopying expenses related to on-site visits at three American sites and Oxford University in England.

At minimum, East Coast locales that should be visited include the Maryland Historical Society, the Library of Congress and the St. John’s College, Annapolis Greenfield College. A minimum budget of $2,000 assumes airfare, travel and food, and free lodging with family and friends, for a maximum of three weeks. A trip of this nature may not yield all that much in terms of research material, but seems important for simple immersion into time and place.

A trip to the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford seems imperative, given that only a small amount of the material is available through the British Online Archives with very little descriptive data, and that four books alone have been based on, or about, this collection. Before travel, hiring an archival researcher for $350 per day for two days would be considered, to get a sense of the research imperatives. A minimum budget of $3,000 assumes airfare, travel and food for two weeks, again with guaranteed free lodging with family residing in Oxford, England.

With no special equipment, software or hardware needed, a generous budget of $1,500 should be allotted to reproduction costs at 25 cents per page in England, especially given the possibility of a great deal of material needing to processed at a later date, after travel.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Reference Resources


Secondary Sources


**Primary Sources**

[http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/blcas/uspg.html](http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/blcas/uspg.html)


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