

**Anti-Catholicism, Race, and National Identity in South Carolina**  
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**Nationalism and Colonial British America**

At first glance, it might seem that nationalism in colonial British America has been exhaustively explored. Two national identities in the colonial and revolutionary era have attracted scholarly attention: one that tied colonists to the mother country, and one that prompted them to see themselves as members of an independent United States. The usual approach of historians who have focused on the latter identity has been to search the colonial period for distinguishing characteristics - religious, political, social, ethnic, economic - that made the colonies different from the mother country. Many scholars believe that simply by identifying those distinctions, they have discovered the origins of U. S. nationalism. Those historians who have stressed that the colonists were Englishmen or Britons, right up to the eve of the revolution, have operated in much the same way. The colonists' British identity is generally described in terms of culture or of political ideologies that were shared by colonies and mother country, or in terms of loyalty to the monarchy and imperial government. The mainstream interpretation of national identity in the colonial period can be summed up as follows: most of the white colonists in America brought some sort of British identity with them when they migrated to the New World. They retained that identity until conflicts with the British government over taxation and other issues alienated them, or suddenly showed them how different they had become from their British cousins, after decades of living on the other side of the Atlantic.

Is there more to be said about national identity in the colonial and revolutionary period, besides filling in a few details here and there? According to Tim Breen, the whole question of the colonists' national identity is still in need of significant new work, because virtually all studies to date are seriously flawed by their failure to explore nationalism in eighteenth-century North America as the manifestation of a broader, global phenomenon. In the last twenty years, scholars working on fields outside the United States have profoundly revolutionized traditional concepts of what nationalism is, and of how it develops.<sup>1</sup> The most important insight of these scholars, preeminently Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, and Ernest Gellner, is that nations are artificial constructions, not predetermined realities waiting to be liberated, or awoken from slumber.<sup>2</sup> Distinctive cultures, languages, religions, or political ideologies, the very characteristics that historians have used as indicators of national identity in the British colonies before and during the Revolution, do not always, and indeed do not usually, develop into nationalism. These characteristics are at best "proto-nationalisms", to use Hobsbawm's term: a non-deterministic examination of the past reveals dozens, perhaps hundreds of languages, cultures, and beliefs that could have conceivably become the basis of a nationalism, but failed to do so, because the correct catalyst was lacking.<sup>3</sup> The new scholarship on nationalism has yielded fruitful studies in other areas of the world; by abandoning the assumption that the United States is an exceptional case, and by using the more rigorous models of national development pioneered

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<sup>1</sup> T.H. Breen, "Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions *Once More* in Need of Revising" in *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (June 1997), 13-19.

<sup>2</sup> The artificiality of the nation is convincingly discussed in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Ed. (Verso, 1991), Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1983), and Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge University, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 46-79.

by non-Americanists, the question of British and American identities in the colonial period can be profitably reopened.

The present study responds to Breen's call for a reexamination of nationalism in British America by conducting an intensive exploration of nationalism in one colony, South Carolina, during the mid-eighteenth century. The definition and theoretical understanding of nationalism in this study are chiefly derived from the work of Benedict Anderson. Anderson argues that nations are "imagined communities," and not the simple product of racial, linguistic, cultural, or political boundaries. These imagined communities are constructed and kept alive in the mass media, which alone can enable men and women to feel a close, emotional bond with millions of other people they have never met and will never personally know. Before the twentieth century, the newspaper was the only medium that could make the anonymous masses of the nation aware of each other, and sustain the illusion of communal bonds among total strangers. Unlike other products of the printing press, newspapers, supplemented perhaps by novels, uniquely focus on the commonplace and ephemeral: this subject matter is vital for the construction of nations, whose members, according to Anderson, share a powerful sense of their fellow nations as contemporaries and approximate equals. These horizontal relationships among millions of individuals distinguish the modern nation from more traditional political communities, in which a multitude of isolated local units are connected to the state through vertical relationships with social superiors, whose power is grounded on relatively static cultural and ideological norms laid down in the distant past.

One important implication of Anderson's definition of nationalism for colonial British America is that the first migrants to the New World did not bring a sense of English or British national identity with them. Nationalism, in its true modern sense, did not exist even in England before the advent of the periodical. Seventeenth-century colonists may have felt vertical ties to the English monarchy, along with horizontal ties to people back in the mother country based on family, religion, or region, but they could not have felt connected to a large-scale national community whose existence was literally inconceivable outside the pages of a regularly printed newspaper. Only after 1700, with the rapid growth of the press, first in Britain then in the colonies, was an English or British nationalism possible. Linda Colley has confirmed that the early decades of the eighteenth century saw the emergence in Great Britain of a newly-constructed British nationalism based on anti-Catholicism. What this study seeks to determine is whether the new national identity of the mother country spread to South Carolina, before the revolutionary crisis disrupted that identity.

The close connection between nationalism and the newspaper means that this study uses *The South-Carolina Gazette* as its most important primary source. The *Gazette* was the first periodical printed in the Lower South. It enjoyed an almost unbroken existence from 1732 until 1777, and it was the only paper in the region until a rival appeared in 1758. For virtually all of its life, the *Gazette* was published by the Timothy family, the descendants of Huguenot immigrants. In the years covered by this study (1752-1756), the *Gazette* was published weekly. It usually consisted of four pages, with occasional supplements of two to four pages. The *Gazette's* content was primarily divided between news and advertising, with news taking at least one and sometimes over two pages of the publication. In common with other colonial newspapers, most of the news reported in the *Gazette* was extracted from other newspapers that reached Charleston on merchant vessels. The local news, the advertisements, along with occasional pieces of humor or political commentary, were contributed by the editor or by the *Gazette's* readers.

My use of the *Gazette* in this study of national identity differs from the way in which scholars normally use colonial newspapers. Rather than mining the *Gazette* for particular types of information, I have treated each issue as a single narrative, whose fragmented components, read sequentially, constitute a discourse about how literate, white South Carolinians experienced the world beyond their immediate family, social, and business circles, and how they connected their local world to the wider horizons visible in the *Gazette's* pages. Since producing a

newspaper in the eighteenth century was a laborious and expensive process, I have assumed that there was some meaning for the editor and for readers in each item in the *Gazette*, and that reconstructing the worldview of those South Carolinians who had access to this newspaper depends on an inclusive approach to its contents. The *Gazette* is not the only source employed in this study: I have drawn on other sources available to colonial South Carolinians in order to flesh out the meaning of particular terms or particular stories for readers of the period, but the *Gazette* itself always provides the context for interpreting how readers fitted individual pieces of information into a broader picture.

### **The Construction of an Imperial Nation**

In a number of ways, *The South-Carolina Gazette* enabled readers to envisage themselves as members of a British imperial community. Most straightforwardly, the *Gazette* achieved this simply by reporting regularly on events in the British Empire. In order of frequency, the *Gazette* carried news about Great Britain itself, the West Indies, mainland British America, the British Mediterranean (Gibraltar and Minorca), and Ireland. News from each province of the empire did not appear in every issue, but appeared regularly enough to enable readers in South Carolina to feel that they were in continuous contact with Britain's Atlantic possessions. News about Britain's territory in India was more sporadic, though reports were long and detailed when the information was available.<sup>4</sup> News from regions outside the empire, particularly from Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and the Caribbean, was also covered in the paper: the regions included were those that had a direct impact on Britain's territories around the world. The imperial relevance of the most exotic news was frequently made explicit: for example, the *Gazette* reminded readers that civil war in Persia embroiled Russia and the Ottoman Empire, freeing France to take action against the British Empire.<sup>5</sup> South Carolinians should learn from the news, urged one contributor: summing up French activities in Sweden, Dunkirk, the West Indies, Cape Breton, and the Ohio, this writer concluded that South Carolina needed to invest heavily in fortifications.<sup>6</sup> Thus the global horizons that were visible to readers in Charleston were determined by the fortunes of the imperial community.

*Gazette* readers were encouraged to envision the British Empire as a single entity not only by the juxtaposition in the newspaper of news reports about disparate provinces, but also by single reports about the Empire's governance that yoked separate regions in various combinations: for example, the simultaneous ordering of reinforcements from Britain to Virginia and to India, the summoning of General James Braddock from Gibraltar to take command of the expedition in the Ohio Valley, or a list of new gubernatorial appointments to the colonies of Pennsylvania, Nova Scotia, Nevis, the Leeward Islands, North Carolina, and South Carolina were the types of report that made casual, but regular connections for readers between the far-flung provinces of the Empire.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the most evocative report, in terms of enabling readers to imagine the British Empire as a whole, was contained in the discussion of the calendar reform that took place in 1752. On January 1 of that year, the *Gazette* explained how the reform would affect the calculation of time, and told readers that "all his Majesty's dominions and countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America" will count the day after September 2, 1752 as September 14.

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<sup>4</sup> See *The South Carolina Gazette*, May 11, 1752, October 3, 1752, February 5, 1754, May 7, 1754, August 1, 1754, and January 9, 1755 for just a few examples of reporting about India.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, September 3, 1753.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, January 30, 1755.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, March 6, 1755, January 2, 1755, October 10, 1754.

The image of millions of British subjects simultaneously re-reckoning time was a powerful evocation of an interconnected imperial community.<sup>8</sup>

News about trade also connected the various parts of the empire. Each issue of the *Gazette* contained news about which ships had entered and left Charleston, with details of the ports of origin and destination for the vessels. Thanks to the Navigation Acts and to the colonists' trade preferences, the majority of the ports mentioned in the shipping news were within the British Empire. Advertisements presented readers with a selection of merchandise, much of it British, but some originating from outside imperial boundaries. However, the practice of mentioning the ship by which these goods had been imported, and the port from which that ship had most recently sailed, meant that even foreign merchandise reminded readers of trade links within the Empire. Trade tied the Empire together in sometimes unexpected ways. While reporting on the devastating hurricane of September 15, 1752, the *Gazette* provided details about the damage inflicted on ships that had been in Charleston when the storm struck. The discussion included vessels from New York, Rhode Island, Hull, Bristol, Falmouth, and Liverpool that were bound for Jamaica, Halifax, Rhode Island, Hull, New York, Cape Fear, Barbados, and Falmouth. A British warship, the *Mermaid*, was also mentioned: it had been driven aground by the tempest. Imperial commerce and defense turned this item of local news into an occasion for imagining an imperial community: the disaster affected Britons from all over the Atlantic empire.<sup>9</sup>

Even more than the content of news in the *Gazette*, the manner of collecting and organizing news enabled readers to imagine the British Empire as a single community. Benedict Anderson stresses that newspapers construct imagined communities not simply by reporting on events in places beyond the readers' localities, but by helping readers imagine other members of their community reading the same news at roughly the same time. It is the shared act of reacting to news that brings the imagined community to life. Newspapers in colonial British America, like *The South-Carolina Gazette*, were particularly effective at enabling readers to imagine other members of the empire in the act of receiving and sharing important news. Although the *Gazette* generated part of its own content, particularly local advertisements, varying amounts of local news, and sometimes a locally-written literary or philosophical composition, all of its non-local news was obtained by reprinting items from other newspapers that originated in various cities of the Empire and were brought to Charleston by visiting merchants.<sup>10</sup>

This practice of reprinting so much news helped to connect readers to an imagined imperial community in two ways. First, each item of news in the *Gazette* was preceded by a brief statement of the city or cities through which the news had been transmitted, and the date at which the news had been reported in each city, on its way to Charleston. This practice meant that readers of the *Gazette* could not encounter any piece of news in any issue, without being invited to imagine other imperial subjects receiving the same information. The fact that the *Gazette* referred to the cities through which the news had passed, rather than to the particular newspaper through which it had been transmitted, made the image of an empire of news-sharers even more vivid: for example, the *Gazette* regularly described news received from Pennsylvania's capital as though all the citizens of Philadelphia, rather than the editors of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, were passing this news on to Charleston.

Second, the organization of this retransmitted news also encouraged *Gazette* readers to envisage the empire as an interconnected community. Instead of arranging news within each issue according to where the news had occurred, as papers do today, the *Gazette* organized news

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, January 1, 1752.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, September 19, 1752.

<sup>10</sup> Occasionally, the *Gazette* made reference to the mechanics of how it gathered news. For example, in the January 22, 1754 issue, the editor complained that a Captain Chisman had brought no news with him from London. About two months later, in the March, 26, 1754 issue, the editor printed a request for the person who had borrowed a copy of the *Virginia Gazette* from his office to return it immediately.

according to the city from which it had last been received. For example, under the heading “St. John’s, Antigua” in the August 28, 1755 issue, there appeared news transmitted from Boston about the detailed military agreement made between General Braddock and various colonial governors at the Congress of Alexandria (Virginia) earlier that year.<sup>11</sup> Instead of each city appearing as an autonomous region, preoccupied with its own events, each city is a node of communication, a partial microcosm of the entire empire. This use of place headings to organize news from various points of origin also applied to the “Charles-Town” heading in each issue. While much local news appeared under that heading, so did news of more distant places that had arrived in South Carolina’s capital during the preceding week. For one example among many, the “Charles-Town” heading in one issue discussed news of how the French attempts to settle the Windward Islands would lead to war.<sup>12</sup> Thus, even the *Gazette*’s own city did not appear as an autonomous region with its own concerns, but as a center where imperial events coalesced.

In various ways, therefore, the presentation of news and advertisements in *The South-Carolina Gazette* enabled its readers to envisage themselves as part of an imagined imperial community, stretching across the Atlantic and even to Asia. To what extent was that imagined community a *national* community? Writers on nationalism as a general phenomenon have posited particular criteria that distinguish nations from other communities: the majority of the inhabitants of a national community must see themselves as a single people, who are united or who aspire to be united under their own national government. Moreover, the rank-and-file members of this community must feel that they have a stake in the nation, and that the fortunes of the government are of concern to more than just a narrow elite.<sup>13</sup> Judging by these criteria, the imagined imperial community of *The South-Carolina Gazette* did possess all the essential characteristics that qualify it as an early type of national community.

Perhaps the starting point for investigating whether the inhabitants of the imperial state constituted a single and particular people is to pinpoint the general labels used by the *Gazette* to identify the mass of the empire’s members. Two labels were used: “British” and “English”. Technically, of course, the former referred to inhabitants of Great Britain, or their descendents abroad, and the latter to a narrower category, inhabitants of England or descendents of English migrants to the colonies. In practice, the two terms were frequently used to describe individuals from any or all of the provinces of the British Empire. For example, ships captured by the Spaniards and held at Havana were referred to as “English” ships, although they came from New York, Barbados, and Ireland. The same term was used to describe ships in the Bay of Honduras that originated from a variety of imperial ports, including Charleston.<sup>14</sup> The main difference between the terms was that “British” tended to be used in emotive contexts, where the actuality or need for strong individual loyalty to the empire was being stressed, such as in the eulogy for Peter Mercier, a South Carolinian killed during the French attack on Washington’s force at Fort Mifflin in July, 1754.<sup>15</sup> “English” was more often used neutrally, simply to mean imperial subjects.

The “British” or “English” inhabitants of the empire were sometimes specifically referred to as a “nation” in the pages of the *Gazette*. This word was used to mean the people of the empire, or public opinion, as distinct from the imperial government.<sup>16</sup> Hobsbawm has argued that the use of the word “nation” and its equivalents in other European languages evolved over

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<sup>11</sup> *The South-Carolina Gazette*, August 28, 1755.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, September 3, 1753.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6, 53-65; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 35-52; Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, 101-130.

<sup>14</sup> *The South-Carolina Gazette*, August 17, 1752 and February 22, 1752. See also October 31, 1754 for this generic use of “English” for imperial shipping.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, September 12, 1754 and November 21, 1754.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, December 3, 1753 and January 29, 1754.

centuries from meaning local communities, connected by birth, to meaning the entire people living under a government. Only when the term had acquired this latter sense, which happened during the late nineteenth century in the case of most languages, could a sentiment called “nationalism” have come into existence. Despite Hobsbawm’s conservative etymology, the modern use of the word “nation” was already evident in the *Gazette*. While this publication did sometimes use the term “nation” to describe members of relatively small, tribal societies such as the Cherokees, the term had lost all narrowness and all local connotations when applied to subjects of the British Empire.<sup>17</sup> The *Gazette*’s use of words such as “British” or “English” or “nation” demonstrates that the terminology and concepts necessary for imagining the empire as a national community were already in place.

The British nation was distinguished from other nations, according to the *Gazette*, by a number of widely-recognized characteristics, both positive and negative. Britain’s scientific achievements were acknowledged by foreign nations, as an article on the death of George Graham, a famous instrument-maker, made clear: the works of this “English artist” were imitated in “France, Spain, Italy, and the West Indies.”<sup>18</sup> British shipbuilding technology was the envy of the world: Britain was superior to Italy in shipbuilding, just as the Italians outdid the British in music.<sup>19</sup> Spain admitted Britain’s superiority in shipbuilding by actively seeking to obtain men and equipment from British shipyards.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, Britain’s manufactures of all kinds were of higher quality than foreign products, according to one writer in the *Gazette*.<sup>21</sup> British scholarship was also recognized abroad, as Abbé Barthelemi testified, when he attributed his decoding of the alphabet of Palmyra to earlier work by two Englishmen.<sup>22</sup> The note of national pride in many of these celebrations of British achievement was enhanced when foreigners, especially those from normally hostile states, recognized British talents. Given this self-consciousness about the achievements of British science and scholarship, even neutral references to such activities may well have conveyed a sense of national pride to the *Gazette*’s readers, such as a report about the merging of the Sloan Museum, the Cotton Library, and the Harleian Collection, to create a single, unprecedented repository of knowledge.<sup>23</sup> British Americans also played a role in this scientific and cultural enterprise. For example, the gift of “Esquimaux” artifacts to the Philadelphia Library showed that scientific enquiry was not confined to the mother country.<sup>24</sup> The *Gazette* took special pains to reprint an article from London’s *Universal Magazine* that praised a South Carolinian’s proposal for solving the problem of calculating longitude at sea. Owen Bower, an overseer, had suggested that ships should use large sandglasses to keep track of the time at Greenwich as they sailed the world’s oceans. Here there is evidence of pride in a provincial achievement, but the use of a publication from the mother country to describe that achievement demonstrates that the pride was in South Carolina’s contribution to the Empire’s scientific advance.<sup>25</sup> This report suggests that *Gazette* readers were eager to view themselves through the mother country’s eyes.

Not all distinctive British characteristics were praiseworthy. The *Gazette* recorded royal speeches to Parliament in which the king lamented the prevalence in Britain of “audacious

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<sup>17</sup> See *Ibid.*, January 9, 1755 for an example of the use of “nation” to describe the Cherokees. Even in today’s language, when the concept of the modern “nation” is clearly established, native American tribes are still referred to as “nations”, a use that is strictly incorrect, but serves to express respect for the tribes’ distinctive culture and identity.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, April 20, 1752.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, March 16, 1752.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, January 1, 1753, June 4, 1753.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, February 26, 1754.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, September 5, 1754.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, May 7, 1754.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, December 12, 1754.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, October 1, 1753.

Crimes of Robbery and Violence, so notorious of late to all the World.”<sup>26</sup> The House of Lords also believed that the increase in robberies was “a real Nuisance and Dishonour to the Nation.”<sup>27</sup> These royal and Parliamentary speeches argued that extravagance and idleness, and the debt that resulted from extravagance, were the root causes of these robberies. A South Carolina essayist picked up this theme, arguing that “Britons” (in which term he clearly included South Carolinians) were known for their “Love of what is slight, glittering, and gaudy.”<sup>28</sup> A British writer in the *Gazette* argued that the decline of religion was at fault: “We see, from every day’s woful experience, how much we suffer as a people, from men’s carelessness in respect of principle, and the progress of irreligious notions; from whence that inundation of perjuries, frauds, bankruptcies, and innumerable other evils that overwhelm us, clearly spring.”<sup>29</sup> Complaints about moral decline, crime, and extravagance are common enough in any age and society. The significant note in these reports is that the decay is *national*, that it is affecting the British *as a people*. All share the faults: even in self-deprecation, the singleness of the national community is emphasized, and readers of these criticisms are bidden to identify with the failing nation, rather than to isolate particular individuals or groups that are to blame.

Yet another source of national unity was the figure of the king. In general, loyalty to a monarch seems to be a pre-modern aspect of the state, one that focuses attention on a single individual rather than on the nation *en masse*. Yet, in the pages of the *Gazette*, mentions of the king evoke images of his subjects far more than of the royal master, so that the monarchy becomes another means of imagining a closely-knit imperial nation. The most detailed mentions of the king himself involve his movements from Great Britain to Hanover, and his speeches to Parliament.<sup>30</sup> Oblique information about his family life is given in references to members of the British royal family who are married to foreign rulers.<sup>31</sup> There is one mention of court life, a brief report that a new, magnificent palace will be built at St. James’s.<sup>32</sup> In this handful of reports, the king lacks any individual personality. Readers learn nothing about his daily life, his tastes, his relationships, or his opinions. In other reports, the king is extravagantly praised, but the praise relates entirely to his benevolence towards his subjects. Speeches of various colonial governors and of colonial legislatures in the *Gazette* praised the monarch in these terms. South Carolina’s Governor James Glen called George II a king who has “never invaded the Privilege of the meanest of His Subjects” and he asserted that it is the “peculiar Excellency of His Majesty’s Government, that all His Subjects may be happy if they will.”<sup>33</sup> Loyalty to such a ruler, said Governor Knowles of Jamaica “is truly becoming *English* subjects of the best of kings.”<sup>34</sup> The South Carolina Commons House of Assembly agreed that “We are truly Sensible of the Happiness peculiar to His Majesty’s Subjects, remote as we are from His Majesty’s Royal Presence; and we are assured, this Happiness was never more compleat than it is at present, under the benign Influence of His Majesty’s Government...[so that] we shall look upon His Majesty’s Interest and our own as inseparably united.”<sup>35</sup> The House of Lords agreed that harmony of interests between king and Parliament was “highly worthy a *British* monarch.”<sup>36</sup> The language of these and other speeches was to some extent conventional, but the phrasing of this loyal praise conveyed the existence of a British national community in two ways. First, readers of these

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, February 1, 1752, January 29, 1754.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, February 15, 1752.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, February 26, 1754.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, May 14, 1754.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, February 26, 1753, February 1, 1752, January 29, 1754.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, February 1, 1752, February 27, 1755.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, January 22, 1754.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, November 21, 1754 and January 22, 1754.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, March 13, 1755.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, January 22, 1754.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, February 20, 1755.

speeches in the *Gazette* would rapidly think of the king's subjects whenever the king was mentioned, so that the monarchy, rather than focusing attention away from the people, reflected readers' attention back to the nation at large. Second, the "peculiar" benevolence of George II's reign becomes a "peculiar" experience of his subjects, too, and hence a distinguishing characteristic of the British nation. Thus, even the most fawning references to the monarchy, even references that suggest the blessings enjoyed by British subjects are not so much a right of the people, as a gift of the king, still serve to implant the image of an imperial nation in the minds of *Gazette* readers.

The manner in which reverence for the king evoked an image of his subjects was epitomized in the descriptions of celebrations of royal anniversaries. For example, South Carolina chose the anniversary of George II's accession to the throne (June 22) as the date on which to lay the foundation stone for the colonial government's new quarters. After the governor laid the foundation stone, members of the Council and Assembly each laid a brick, in turn.<sup>37</sup> A more frequently observed anniversary than that of the king's succession was his birthday, November 10. Commemorations of this event mixed formality with fun. South Carolinians could read about these festivities in various parts of the empire, such as London, Philadelphia, and Charleston, so that readers could imagine the imperial community as a whole simultaneously engaged in similar celebratory activities. The birthday festivities in Charleston in 1754 were typical of what took place in large cities. Cannon were fired, the Governor and Council reviewed the colony's Independent Company, "and in the Evening, His Excellency gave an elegant Entertainment at Gordon's and a Ball to the Ladies which lasted 'till the Morning.'<sup>38</sup> If direct participation in these official festivities was restricted to a small, privileged group, the *Gazette* enabled a broader group of South Carolinians to experience vicariously the empire-wide celebrations of the birthday of a peculiarly benevolent monarch.

The affectionate ties between monarch and people were part of a larger set of constitutional blessings that distinguished the British nation. The praise of English or British rights occurred in many different contexts in the *Gazette*, but the language used to describe those rights varied relatively little. For example the House of Lords included the theme of British liberty in an address to the King: "The honour and security of the nation, both at home and abroad, the maintenance of our religion and liberty, the protection and extension of our commerce, and every branch of national happiness are the objects of your royal care, wisely and steadily exerted for the common good of your people."<sup>39</sup> Many of these same elements were found in rhetorical flights all over the Empire. An account of an election at Ipswich (England), in which the popular naval hero, Admiral Vernon, was returned to Parliament, described 2000 supporters marching in a procession, "two and two, all with blue cockades in their hats, and the following motto in silver letters, Christianity, Liberty, and Loyalty."<sup>40</sup> In an electoral contest at Henley-on-Thames, victorious candidates led a procession that carried flags bearing the slogans "Liberty and Loyalty" and "the protestant religion and succession."<sup>41</sup> In America, the speeches of royal governors provided *Gazette* readers with moving encomiums on British liberty. According to South Carolina's Governor Glen, "We enjoy the happiest and most perfect Frame of Government in the World: it is the Envy of all Nations: the Language of all Nations is, Who would not be a *Briton*?"<sup>42</sup> Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia exhorted the Virginia legislature to be mindful of "the liberties, the properties, and the pure religion" that they enjoyed, and both

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, July 2, 1753.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, November 16, 1753, January 22, 1754, November 14, 1754, December 12, 1754, November 13, 1755.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, January 29, 1754.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, July 25, 1754.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, February 12, 1754.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, November 21, 1754.



legislative houses asserted their determination to protect these blessings.<sup>43</sup> The eulogy of South Carolina's first fallen war hero in the French and Indian War, Peter Mercier, praised him for dying to defend "religion and the laws."<sup>44</sup>

The *Gazette* not only printed celebrations of British liberty, but specific cases where that liberty had been successfully upheld in the courts. For example, the newspaper reprinted at length the story of the acquittal of a Mr. Owen, a London bookseller and printer, who was pronounced "Not Guilty" in a seditious libel trial, "to the entire satisfaction of a numerous and crowded audience, who were unanimously delighted to find the liberty of the press (so intimately connected with the liberty of the subject) so justly asserted by this equitable verdict." The importance of the trial was stressed by the inclusion in the *Gazette* of a full list of the jurors, crown prosecutors, and defense attorneys.<sup>45</sup> The paper also carried the stories of two "patriot cobblers" who demonstrated the rights of the lower classes, one by suing the mayor of an English borough to force him to hold an election, and one who reopened a right of way across an aristocrat's private park. The *Gazette* concluded these stories with a comment by the Duke of Devonshire, who said that "the liberty of a cobbler ought to be as much regarded as that of anybody else; that is the happiness of our constitution."<sup>46</sup>

In the course of these discussions of liberty in the *Gazette*, the imagined imperial community manifested the characteristics of a national community in two ways. First, the legal guarantee of property, religion, and certain civil rights was presented as another distinguishing mark of the British people. Second, these rights constituted one important way in which every British subject, however humble, enjoyed a stake in the community. These two aspects of the discussion of liberty in the *Gazette* deserve equal consideration when reconstructing the national identity of the newspaper's readers. In general, it is the second of the two aspects of liberty that has attracted the most attention from historians, who have long stressed that British Americans were deeply attached to the constitutional freedoms of the mother country. What needs more emphasis is the fact when colonial readers encountered discussions of British liberty in the press, they were not reading abstract essays on political philosophy. Newspaper references to liberty were but a handful of news items scattered among a multitude of other reports about military, diplomatic, commercial, scientific, cultural, and royal events. All of this varied content invited readers to regard themselves as members of a British, imperial nation that amounted to more than its constitution and its liberties. Rather than abstracting British liberty from other British characteristics and assuming that it was their love of liberty that underpinned colonial affection and loyalty to Britain, it might be worth considering that the colonists not only loved Britain because Britain was free, but also loved freedom because freedom was British.

### **Anti-popery and the Threat to the British Nation**

Readers of the *Gazette* encountered a clearly-delineated British imperial community that had many of the essential attributes of a modern nation. A vital element of modern nationalism is that the entire people who constitute a nation must believe that they have a stake in the nation, and that their own welfare is bound up with the fortunes of the nation. Theorists agree that nationalism must be broadly congruent with self-interest. The liberties of the British constitution, protected by a benevolent monarch, did give all Britons, including the colonists, a certain stake in the survival of the Empire, but the strongest tie between self-interest and national interest was derived from the existence of a common foe. Perhaps the *Gazette's* most important contribution

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, January 23, 1755.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, September 12, 1754.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, November 27, 1752.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, April 16, 1753.

to the construction of a national identity was its reporting, in issue after issue, on the threat to the British nation posed by the Empire's Catholic enemies, especially France, Spain, and Jacobite conspirators, backed by the Pope. Indeed, it was impossible to conceive of British liberty without automatically thinking of the "popish" enemies who sought to extinguish that liberty. The eulogies of British liberty described above dwelled upon the Protestant religion as one of the chief elements of freedom in the Empire: every mention of that religion, especially in such terms as the "Protestant Succession" or "defense of religion" would have immediately invoked, for most readers, images of the Catholic Church and the Stuart dynasty.

The *Gazette* did not attack "popery" merely by implication, as the antonym of Protestantism. Much of the newspaper's content kept readers informed about a multitude of specific Catholic threats. These anti-Catholic reports did not fall on virgin soil: most readers of the *Gazette* were probably familiar with some part of a body of anti-Catholic literature that had deep roots not only in the British Isles, but also in the other regions from which South Carolina's white migrants had come, especially France and the Rhineland. British anti-popery had both intellectual and popular components. The most cerebral attacks on "popery" in the eighteenth-century British Empire stressed the importance of the doctrine of infallibility in the Catholic Church.<sup>47</sup> The doctrine of infallibility, as Anglican and certain other Protestant writers argued, meant that even the most intelligent and well-meaning Catholic scholars were incapable of perceiving the self-evident and supposedly consistent truths of nature and scripture. Undisciplined by the restraints of reason, Catholics were liable to become the prey of imagination and appetite.<sup>48</sup> According to many British Protestants, the self-serving fantasy that had been unleashed by the doctrine of the Church's infallibility was responsible for many false beliefs in Catholicism, especially the Church's claim to be able to forgive sins through confession, indulgences, pilgrimage, the veneration of the saints, and other non-scriptural activities.<sup>49</sup> The supposed power to forgive sins made Catholics untrustworthy, since any lie or breach of oath could be forgiven by the Church, and often encouraged the most flagrant immorality.<sup>50</sup> Since common sense supposedly contradicted the Church's claim to infallibility, the Catholic Church favored absolute governments that could suppress any criticism of "popery," and prevent the population at large from perceiving the nonsensical claims of the Church. The alliance between "popery" and absolutism had been experienced in recent history by the British, who had (it was widely believed) narrowly escaped James II's attempt to render them civil and spiritual slaves.

The stress on infallibility as the core of "popery's" theological and political failings was vital in a British Empire that contained so many different Protestant sects. Any focus on liturgy or church hierarchy, or on the vexed question of predestination, would have divided Protestants, or created the notion of a spectrum of Protestant faiths, some more "popish" than others. By stressing infallibility, establishment intellectuals in the British Empire constructed an epistemological argument that sought to create a stark contrast between Roman Catholics and most Protestant denominations. While some Protestants could not be encompassed by the definition of Protestantism as an empirical creed, the epistemological categorization of Catholic

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<sup>47</sup> The doctrine of Papal infallibility, the current belief of the Roman Catholic Church, was not formally defined and asserted until the First Vatican Council in 1870. The doctrine of the infallibility of the Church as a whole dated back to the late Middle Ages. British theologians were clear about the distinction, and clear about the Catholic Church's claim that the Church, not the Pope, was the source of infallible knowledge. See, for example Gilbert Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England* (London: 1699; London: William Tegg, 1850), 243, 245-255 and John Douglas Bower and Tillemont Compared (London: J. Morgan, 1757), 54-55.

<sup>48</sup> Burnet, *Ibid.*, x-xii, 5, 243-244; Edward Wigglesworth, *Some Thoughts Upon the Spirit of Infallibility Claimed by the Church of Rome* (Boston: John Draper, 1757), 6.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Dudley, *An Essay on the Merchandize of Slaves and Souls of Men* (Boston: B. Green, 1731), 21-22, 30.

<sup>50</sup> John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1937), 205.

and Protestant avoided much of the contention that had set Anglicans against Puritans and Dissenters in the seventeenth century.

Outside intellectual circles, a popular tradition of anti-popery had been built upon the exaggerated retelling of historical accounts of Catholic persecution of Protestants, especially Mary Tudor's burning of Protestant "martyrs" in the sixteenth century, and the massacre of English Protestants in Ireland during the uprising of 1641. In these accounts, Catholics were not only intolerant but sadistic, and rank-and-file "papists" were as cruel as those in authority.<sup>51</sup> Along with the accounts of blood-thirsty persecution, there were popular tales of Catholic immorality, in which lascivious priests used their spiritual power, especially their role as confessors, to seduce innocent maidens, while less innocent females entered convents whose enclosures provided the inmates with every opportunity for promiscuity. Church authorities connived at this widespread immorality, although they kept up appearances with an outward show of celibacy and piety, hypocrisy being another Catholic characteristic, according to the popular tradition of anti-popery.<sup>52</sup> When the clergy weren't copulating, they were engaged in cozening wealth from the laity, either by gulling the naive with the promise of heaven, or by selling forgiveness, even forgiveness in advance of the sin, to the more worldly-wise laity. Lay Catholics had every reason to ignore the failings of a Church that indulged sinners as readily as it persecuted heretics. While popular anti-popery was very different in its flavor and focus from the intellectual variety, the two strains were far from inconsistent: indeed, the theologians and philosophers constructed a systematic epistemological and psychological explanation for the sadism, greed, and lust explored in the popular sources.

To what extent did South Carolinians adhere to the broader anti-Catholic culture of the British Empire? Oral transmission of anti-Catholic ideas by immigrants from Great Britain is a strong possibility, though hard to trace. Waves of Protestant immigrants from France and the Rhineland, where Catholic persecution of Protestants was still active, must have brought their own stories of hardship that refreshed and supplemented the tradition of the English-speaking world. Advertisements in the *Gazette* reveal that specific anti-Catholic works were for sale in Charleston in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>53</sup> One of the most publicized controversies of the period, between Alexander Garden, Commissary of the Church of England in South Carolina, and the evangelist George Whitefield, had introduced South Carolinians to some of the major themes of British anti-popery in the early 1740s: Garden had accused Whitefield of being "popish" in his claim of infallible knowledge about the operation of the Holy Spirit in the souls of God's chosen. It is not surprising, therefore, to find many attacks on "popery" in the pages of the *Gazette*. These attacks did not take the form of theological essays or popular tales, but of news reports that provided evidence of Catholic behavior that seemed to confirm every charge leveled at "popery" in the wider anti-Catholic literature of the British Empire. In the *Gazette*, the evils of Catholicism were brought out of abstract and historical narratives and were portrayed as living, contemporary threats to the entire British imperial community. The *Gazette's* reports made it clear that every British Protestant had a stake in the empire, since it provided the only bulwark against the horrors of Catholic dominion.

In years of peace as well as years of war, conflict with France and Spain was incessant. Spain's *Guarda Costa* stopped British (including colonial) shipping in the West Indies, and searched the ships for evidence of trade goods or money smuggled out of Spanish America. The *Gazette* supplied detailed information about the most outrageous of these seizures, as well as

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<sup>51</sup> Thomas Mall, *The History of the Martyrs Epitomized* (Boston: Rodgers & Fowle, 1747), 1-6; and *Popish Cruelty Displayed: Being a full and true Account of the Bloody and Hellish Massacre in Ireland...in the Year 1641* (Boston: Thomas Fleet, 1753), 5-6.

<sup>52</sup> A. D'Auborn, *The French Convert* (New York, 1724, 1761; Boston, 1725, 1744, 1745, 1749, 1769; Philadelphia, 1748, 1751).

<sup>53</sup> *South-Carolina Gazette*, August 10, 1752 and June 25, 1753.

updates about British negotiations in Madrid that were trying to restrain the *Guarda Costa's* activities.<sup>54</sup> Spain also was actively engaged in an attempt to drive the British from logging settlements in the Bay of Campeche, the Bay of Honduras, and the Mosquito Coast. The *Gazette* reported on Spain's threat to British (including South Carolinian and other colonial) activities in this region, and on measures taken by the British government to counter the Spanish threat.<sup>55</sup> Less frequently mentioned, but still disturbing to South Carolinians in the wake of the Stono Rebellion of 1739, was Spain's encouragement of African slaves in South Carolina, and of Indians allied with the British in South Carolina and Georgia, to leave British territory and to settle near St. Augustine, Florida.<sup>56</sup>

France was an even greater threat than Spain. They were building forts in the Ohio Valley, arresting British traders who ventured into that area, and encouraging their Indian allies to raid frontier settlements and to attack Indians friendly to Britain all along the frontier, from Pennsylvania down as far as Georgia.<sup>57</sup> Further north, the French in the St. Lawrence Valley were encouraging Indian raids on New York and New England, while the French forts in Acadia and Louisbourg were bases for provoking Indians and the "Neutral French" to make trouble for the British in Nova Scotia.<sup>58</sup> French attempts to cause Indian wars and to seduce Britain's native friends away from their British alliance were paralleled, *Gazette* readers learned, by French actions in Bengal and the Carnatic.<sup>59</sup> In the West Indies, the French moved in on the Windward Islands, threatening to close a vital communication route between the British Caribbean and British North America.<sup>60</sup> France, with Spain's blessing or possibly with Spanish aid, was also getting involved in Corsica's revolt against Genoese rule in order to establish control of the island, from which French fleets could menace British trade in the Mediterranean, including South Carolina's export trade in rice.<sup>61</sup> As these specific conflicts escalated into a general, though still undeclared, war with France over the course of 1754 and 1755, the French threatened British and British American shipping everywhere in the West Indies and off the coast of Africa.<sup>62</sup>

These threats to specific territories and trade routes were serious: after all, the mercantilist economic philosophy explicated in the *Gazette* made it clear that loss of trade meant loss of power, and ultimately domination or conquest by foreign states.<sup>63</sup> The threat posed by

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, January 27, 1752, February 1, 1752, February 8, 1752, March 9, 1752, April 6, 1752, May 11, 1752, May 25, 1752, August 10, 1752, August 17, 1752, August 1, 1753, August 15, 1753, November 26, 1753, February 12, 1754, February 18, 1754, March 5, 1754, April 16, 1754, May 3, 1754, September 12, 1754, and October 10, 1754 for some of the most significant discussions of the *Guarda Costa* problem.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, February 22, 1752, October 3, 1752, October 30, 1752, November 20, 1752, November 27, 1752, August 15, 1753, September 10, 1753, October 1, 1753, July 4, 1754, August 15, 1754, August 29, 1754, October 31, 1754, December 12, 1754, January 16, 1755, and August 7, 1755.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, August 10, 1752, April 9, 1754, August 29, 1754. South Carolinians blamed the 1739 Stono Rebellion on Spain's standing offer of liberty to slaves on South Carolina plantations who could escape to Florida. The escapees murdered and plundered whites as they attempted to reach Spanish territory and freedom.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, See May 28, 1753, June 12, 1753, June 25, 1753, August 6, 1753, August 20, 1753, August 15, 1754, October 3, 1754, October 17, 1754 for reports of direct French and Indian raids on South Carolina and Georgia. Reports of French activities in the Ohio were in almost every issue from June 18, 1753 through the rest of that summer, and in almost every issue after March 5, 1754.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, For examples of the coverage of French and Indian raids in the northern colonies, see October 10, 1752, April 23, 1753, November 16, 1753, September 19, 1754, October 17, 1754, December 26, 1754, and August 7, 1755.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, January 16, 1755.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, August 15, 1753, September 3, 1753, December 3, 1753, February 12, 1754, January 12, 1755.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, December 25, 1752, April 11, 1753, July 30, 1753, and December 24, 1753.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, June 11, 1754, July 11, 1754, July 18, 1754, and February 6, 1755.

<sup>63</sup> See below, pp. 18-20 for a more detailed discussion of mercantilism in the *Gazette*.

Britain's Catholic enemies went much further than these specific areas of friction, however. By continuing to support the exiled Stuart dynasty, France and Spain, along with the Papacy, sought a complete subjugation of the British. The *Gazette* was filled with reports of Jacobite activity. News of the Pope's involvement with the Stuarts was one area of concern: the *Gazette* informed readers about even minor details, such as the Pope's healing of a quarrel between the Pretender and his second son, the Cardinal Archbishop of York, and the appointment of another Cardinal as a protector of Scotland.<sup>64</sup> The gathering of weapons and the return of former rebels to Scotland in 1753 caused concern, and the *Gazette* kept readers up to date with news of the conspiracy, and of British government action against it.<sup>65</sup> France was suspected of planning to assist a new Stuart invasion: the extensions to the fortifications at the port of Dunkirk, the most likely base for an invasion of England were reported on frequently, as were the movements of French ships off the Scottish coast, and the presence of Jacobites in France.<sup>66</sup> The Pretender's eldest son, who had personally led the 1745 invasion, was also the subject of discussion: his possible marriage, his possible homosexuality, his whereabouts, his rumored conversion to Protestantism, all attracted notice.<sup>67</sup> While the Papacy and France were the chief backers of the Stuarts, Spain and Spain's allies in Italy (especially Naples) were also assumed to be secret supporters of the exiled dynasty.<sup>68</sup> In addition to fears of current Jacobite plots, the *Gazette* kept readers in mind of earlier threats to British liberty by James II and his descendents, especially in 1688 and 1745. Among other references was the report of the death of a minor customs official who had accidentally found James II hiding on a ship during the time of William of Orange's invasion.<sup>69</sup> The *Gazette* also reported on the "usual" celebrations in Charleston of November 5, the "Anniversary of our happy Deliverance from a most horrid *Popish* Plot [the Gunpowder Plot of 1605] and of the glorious Revolution by the landing of King William in England."<sup>70</sup> In addition, every reference to the "Protestant Succession" during rhetorical celebrations of British liberty reminded readers of the importance of news about the Stuarts: a Stuart return would bring an end to the civil and religious liberties enjoyed under the current, benevolent monarchy.<sup>71</sup>

While the attempt to reinstate the Stuarts represented the most serious challenge by Britain's Catholic enemies, there were other broad threats that went beyond the seizure of this or that piece of territory on the Empire's fringes. In America, French incursions in the Ohio Valley were "no new or partial scheme of the French, merely for the sake of trade, or a settlement in the lands, but a thing long ago concerted, and only part of a general plan for rendering themselves masters of North-America...this plan has been concerted, laid before the court of France, and met with its highest approbation in the year 1689..."<sup>72</sup> Even before the beginning of French activity in the Ohio Valley, South Carolinians feared invasion: when Charleston and its defenses were devastated by the powerful hurricane of September 15, 1752, the government's immediate action, reported the *Gazette*, was to call an emergency session of the Assembly to pass measures to "make His Majesty's Subjects as secure as our present Circumstances will permit, against all Attempts from without."<sup>73</sup> 1752 was a time of official peace between Britain, France, and Spain, yet even the weather became a potential vehicle for an invasion by Britain's Catholic enemies.

<sup>64</sup> *South-Carolina Gazette*, January 1, 1753, April 11, 1753, July 11, 1754.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, July 2, 1753, July 30, 1753, October 15, 1753, October 22, 1753, December 3, 1753, January 22, 1754, and March 5, 1754.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, October 1, 1753, October 8, 1753, October 15, 1753, December 24, 1753, May 3, 1754, August 14, 1755.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, January 1, 1753, July 11, 1754, and January 29, 1756.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, January 29, 1756.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, November 27, 1752, January 1, 1753, May 28, 1753, and February 6, 1755.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, November 16, 1753.

<sup>71</sup> See the discussion on the monarchy and liberty, above.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, June 11, 1752.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, September 27, 1752.

This assumption was not unwarranted for those who believed, as one writer did, that the French, at least, “have ever been aspiring at universal Monarchy.”<sup>74</sup> In peace and war, the British Empire was engaged in a fight to the death with its Catholic foes.

The evils that would result from Catholic rule over Britons were laid out clearly in the *Gazette*. One problem with “popery”, as the *Gazette* represented it, was its intolerance of other religions, and especially of Protestants. The persecution of Protestants could be severe indeed: the *Gazette* reported at length about Catholic persecution of Protestants in France and Austria. In Austria, the Protestants had requested the right to worship according to their consciences, or the right to leave the country: “this just request, the court of Vienna will not grant them - Every whit as humane and charitable in this respect as the French government.” Austria, of course, was an ally of Britain’s until 1756, an uncomfortable fact that could be rendered palatable only by the knowledge that the alliance prevented France from extinguishing the “Liberties of Europe” and that Britain could use its influence to improve conditions for Protestants under Austrian rule.<sup>75</sup> The use of France as a standard of intolerance against which Austria’s actions could be measured was born out by stories of a severe persecution in Languedoc and Dauphiné. A letter from a Protestant reported that French armies were “commanded to regard neither sex nor age, but to fire upon us with ball if they discover any of our meetings for divine worship.” Protestant marriages were regarded as illegal, and families were being broken up if the parents refused to consent to being remarried by Catholic priests. Protestant ministers had a high price on their heads, “to make them suffer martyrdom.”<sup>76</sup>

The *Gazette* provided South Carolina readers with a great deal of news about another persecution taking place in France, that of the Jansenists. Although the Jansenists were in fact a group within the Catholic Church, the South Carolina paper represented their beliefs as being similar to Protestantism: Jansenists believed, and were being persecuted for believing, that the laity should read the Bible for themselves, and make it a central part of their worship.<sup>77</sup> The religious controversy spilled over into a political battle: the Parlements, or law courts of France, refused to accept as part of the law of the land the Papal bull *Unigenitus*, which condemned a major Jansenist work. The Parlements also took action against Catholic clergy who refused sacraments or burial to Jansenists. The king used armed force to threaten the Parlements, disbanded and tried to replace the Parlement of Paris, and France seemed poised on the verge of civil war. From October 3, 1752 until the spring of 1754, the *Gazette* covered the controversy in almost every issue. For most of the controversy, King Louis XV appeared weak and vacillating, and the *Gazette* usually reported the conflict in terms of clerical tyranny.<sup>78</sup> The remonstrance of the Paris Parlement to the king claimed to have “discovered an empire which is rising in the midst of your state; an arbitrary empire, which acknowledges no laws, no sovereign, no magistrates, and to which religion is only a pretext: the authority of the prince an instrument which it presumes to use or lay aside according to its interests....”<sup>79</sup> The influence of the clergy, complained reports in the *Gazette* was infecting the French monarchy with false principles, drawn from the Catholic religion, particularly the idea that “there is, or ought to be, *an infallible Head* in the State, as well as in the Church; which can hardly be acknowledged by Men that have either Hearts or Heads.”<sup>80</sup> The clergy’s desire to persecute heretics was in fact overturning what little liberty was left in France, and British subjects were invited by the *Gazette* to include regard the Parlements as

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, January 30, 1755.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, October 3, 1752, October 16, 1752, and December 25, 1752.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, July 18, 1754. See also October 3, 1752, January 8, 1754, and February 12, 1754.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, January 29, 1754.

<sup>78</sup> See *Ibid.*, September 17, 1753, November 16, 1753, December 17, 1753, February 20, 1755, and March 6, 1755, among other issues.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, September 24, 1753.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, March 12, 1754.

fighting for the civil and religious liberty that Britons themselves so prized.<sup>81</sup> By aligning the reader sympathetically with the victims of clerical and royal tyranny, the *Gazette* enabled South Carolinians to imagine what would happen if Catholicism did gain power in the British Empire as a result of French, Jacobite, or Spanish victory in war. The persecutions of actual Protestants, or of virtual Protestants like the Jansenists, persecutions that affected even the family life of ordinary people, wedded self-interest to British national interest very powerfully.

Intolerance and persecution were only two of the results to be feared if the Empire fell to its Catholic foes. According to the *Gazette*, the Catholic nations were not only governed by harsh civil and religious institutions, but members of those nations, from the highest to the lowest, had imbibed deeply warped principles as the result of their faith. Infallibility, the central principle of “popery,” according to many eighteenth-century writers, had made Catholics incapable of true reason, and the *Gazette* reminded its readers of that faith’s skewed logic and “monkish ignorance.”<sup>82</sup> False doctrines allowed Catholicism to pervert the entire moral order, creating whole nations of fundamentally cruel and dishonest people.<sup>83</sup> By providing examples of devious and sadistic actions by Frenchmen and Spaniards, the *Gazette* went beyond a mere attack on harsh civil and religious institutions, and formulated an attack on the national character of Britain’s Catholic foes. France and Spain were threats to the British Empire, chiefly because “popery” had turned the mass of the people into willing slaves to tyranny, into enthusiastic supporters of a system that crushed them.

A major flaw of both Frenchmen and Spaniards, according to the *Gazette*, was their fundamental deviousness. The highest authorities in France and Spain set an example of dishonesty: neither of these courts could be trusted to stick to treaties and other agreements, or to negotiate honorably. One contributor complained that the French design to conquer British North America was evident in all their actions, and indeed was “disguised nowhere, but in their most solemn treaties and the sacred engagements of their faith.”<sup>84</sup> The notion that France and Spain habitually used negotiation to cover preparations for war was frequently expressed. While the Spaniards “observe their accustomed slowness and procrastination with foreigners,” they were busily increasing their own power “with diligence and spirit.”<sup>85</sup> Five years of negotiation over the seizures of British ships by the *Guarda Costa* had achieved nothing, because Spain was only buying time.<sup>86</sup> The French were regularly referred to as “perfidious” or “treacherous.”<sup>87</sup> In fact, the *Gazette*’s basic assumption was that every act of France or Spain masked some deeper design: indeed, the French government may have deliberately let the dispute with the Parlements get out of hand in order to lull neighboring states into a false sense of security.<sup>88</sup> The ingrained dishonesty of Catholic governments was evident at lower levels of officialdom, too: the Governor

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, August 27, 1753 and January 29, 1754.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, January 8, 1754, January 15, 1754, and March 12, 1754.

<sup>83</sup> Infallibility, irrationality, dishonesty, and inhumane behavior were individual aspects of “popery,” that were mentioned in the *Gazette*. The link between these individual elements had been explicated for South Carolinians during the early 1740s by the published sermons of Alexander Garden, the head of the Church of England in the colony. See Garden, Alexander. *Regeneration and the Testimony of the Spirit. Being the Substance of Two Sermons Lately Preached in the Parish Church of St. Philip, Charles-Town, in South-Carolina. Occasioned by some erroneous Notions of certain Men who call themselves Methodists*. Charles-Town: Peter Timothy, 1740; Boston: Thomas Fleet, 1741 and *Six Letters to the Reverend Mr. Whitefield. With Mr. Whitefield’s Answer to the First Letter*. 2d. ed. Boston: T. Fleet, 1740.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, June 11, 1754.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, March 23, 1752.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, May 3, 1754.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, January 30, 1755, February 13, 1755, and August 7, 1755.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, May 3, 1754 and June 27, 1754.

of Montreal, or captains of *Guarda Costa* ships acted with the same disregard for the truth as their royal masters.<sup>89</sup>

An even more widespread vice of the French and Spaniards, according to the *Gazette*, was unspeakable cruelty. The *Guarda Costa* exhibited this trait on many occasions. When one Spanish patrol ship captured a vessel from New York, the *Diamond*, the captain threatened to cut off the ears of a crew member, unless he signed a paper confessing that the ship carried contraband goods.<sup>90</sup> On another occasion, the *Guarda Costa* stripped, whipped, and threw overboard the crew of the *Elizabeth*, operating out of Providence.<sup>91</sup> A different kind of callous act was the forcing of the *Sybil*, another New York ship, into Santo Domingo, despite the smallpox that was raging there.<sup>92</sup> The worst example of cruelty on the high seas was the treatment of sailors from the *Bathsheba*, yet another New York vessel. A privateer, operating out of St. Augustine with the connivance of the governor of that city, managed to entice six British sailors from the *Bathsheba* on board. One by one the British seamen were thrown overboard, while the Spanish sailors yelled “Heave the dog over.” All but one drowned.<sup>93</sup> On shore, Spanish Jesuits incited the Indians of the Mosquito Coast to murder all the British settlers, just as French priests and laity were inciting the natives on the North American continent to massacre innocent Britons.<sup>94</sup> A Monsieur Morin and his son, working with the Indians to murder British traders in the Ohio, had a tobacco pouch made out of the skin of a Boston ship’s captain, the rest of whose flesh had been eaten by Morin and by the Indians then with him, whom he incited to this act of cannibalism.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, accounts of joint French and Indian attacks generally blamed the French for native savagery: one of many descriptions of massacres along the frontier reported that “Nothing is to be seen but desolation and murder, heightened with every barbarous circumstance, and new instances of cruelty. They [the Indians], at the instigation of the French, burn all the plantations...”<sup>96</sup> French intentions for Halifax, Nova Scotia, were particularly ruthless: a *Gazette* report claimed that papers taken from a French officer showed that the French, assisted by Indians, planned to seize that city, and that “the inhabitants [were] all to be shut up in the church, and fire put to it, and the troops all to be put to the sword without quarter.”<sup>97</sup> One group of “French” Indians actually refused to attack the settlement at Saratoga, New York, because too much “English” blood had already been shed.<sup>98</sup> French cruelty was highlighted, not only by Indian restraint, but by the humanity of the British: General Braddock, the *Gazette* reported, forbade his Indian allies from scalping their enemies.<sup>99</sup> These stories made it clear why every British subject, even those outside the upper circles of power and influence, should support the empire’s efforts to defend itself against France and Spain.

The importance of Catholicism in motivating Britain’s enemies is most clearly brought out in the *Gazette*’s reports of conspiracies by Catholics living inside the Empire. Frenchmen and Spaniards abroad were disliked in part because of their religion, in part because of the political systems under which they lived, and in part because they were foreigners. Catholics living under British rule, however, were in a different situation. They were not subject to a political or ecclesiastical hierarchy that pressured them to support the Catholic Church: in fact, the pressures

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, September 17, 1753; March 9, 1752, September 12, 1754, and October 31, 1754.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, March 9, 1752. This story obviously recalled the notorious tale of the atrocity committed by the *Guarda Costa* against Captain Robert Jenkins, a tale which had recently sparked the War of Jenkins’ Ear.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, February 12, 1754.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, May 11, 1752.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, September 12, 1754 and October 31, 1754.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, October 30, 1752; April 23, 1753, March 26, 1754, June 4, 1754.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, June 11, 1754.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, November 13, 1755.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, November 20, 1755.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, October 2, 1754.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, August 7, 1755.



on them were exerted in the opposite direction, since penal laws restricted not only Catholic worship, but deprived “papists” of certain rights of education, inheritance, and property ownership, as well as the ability to vote and to hold public office. Despite having every political and material reason for converting to Protestantism and enjoying the blessings of British liberty, many Catholics stubbornly clung to their faith, and because of that faith, conspired with foreign Catholic powers against the British Empire. This problem of stubborn “popery” and internal conspiracy was particularly serious where there were concentrated Catholic populations, notably in Nova Scotia and Ireland. These groups had to be carefully watched, imperial authorities believed: the *Gazette* reported on searches of Irish Catholic homes for illegal weapons, and its coverage of the round-up and dispersal of the Acadians justified this harsh measure as a preemptive strike against blatant anti-British and anti-Protestant conspirators.<sup>100</sup> Even smaller groups of Catholics could not be trusted. At the end of 1752, the usual restrictions on allowing Catholic immigrants into America were relaxed, so as to allow some impoverished German Catholics into Nova Scotia. Within two years, religious ties had proved stronger than the gratitude which these Germans ought to have felt towards their British patrons: the French Acadians convinced the Germans that they were ill-treated, and stirred them into a revolt.<sup>101</sup> In Pennsylvania, the only colony except Nova Scotia where Catholics were permitted to build churches, the small Catholic population also was involved in conspiratorial activities: the *Gazette* reported that “a large quantity of gunpowder has lately been discovered in the Romish chapel at Philadelphia, where it was secreted, we suppose, by that people, ‘till they should find time and opportunity to make it serviceable, in reducing the Hereticks to the passive obedience and non-resistance of the true Catholic Faith.”<sup>102</sup> All these reports of Catholic conspiracy demonstrated how “popery” could sustain its adherents in enmity against the British Empire, even in the face of strong incentives to be loyal to the imperial state.

Even outside the regions where there were concentrations of Catholics, individual Catholics worked for foreign interests against the British nation. In London, the empire faced a threat from Catholics who were recruiting skilled artisans to assist Spain in its shipbuilding program. The *Gazette* reported that a “papist”, Mr. Ruth, a former boat builder at Rotherhithe, was now the chief shipbuilder for the King of Spain at Ferrol. Ruth had recruited draftsmen from Woolwich to provide a skill that Spain needed.<sup>103</sup> Other reports reiterated the complaint that Irish and English shipbuilders were working in Spanish shipyards.<sup>104</sup> France, also, was interested in British shipbuilding skills, and bribed artisans at Deptford to send over a detailed model of one of Britain’s newest warships.<sup>105</sup> Officers of the Irish brigade, a military corps of Catholics who served the king of France, infiltrated England to recruit soldiers and sailors for the French service, particularly at Bristol and in the Dockland area near the Tower of London.<sup>106</sup> The *Gazette* also reported rumors of new gunpowder plots, such as a plot to blow up the Tower, and another to blow up a huge ballroom filled with prominent members of society at Charing Cross.<sup>107</sup> Individual Catholic conspirators had also reached America. The *Gazette* reported that two

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, September 1, 1752; August 7, 1755, August 28, 1755, September 4, 1755, September 11, 1755, October 2, 1755, October 16, 1755, October 30, 1755, November 6, 1755, and November 20, 1755.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, October 30, 1752, November 13, 1752, and March 5, 1754.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, September 18, 1755.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, January 15, 1753.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, December 4, 1752, January 1, 1753, September 17, 1753, and April 9, 1754. A bill to make it illegal for British shipbuilders to work abroad was put before Parliament was mentioned in the June 4, 1753 issue.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, January 2, 1755.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, May 7, 1754, July 11, 1754, and August 15, 1754.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, September 4, 1755. The plot to blow up the Tower was later proved to be nothing more than a rumor, but the readiness to believe such stories demonstrates the anti-Catholic paranoia of the *Gazette* and its readers.

companies at Saratoga, on the northern frontier against French Canada, discovered that the cartouches with which they loaded their guns contained no bullets, rendering them useless in battle. It was then discovered that the man who had made up these cartouches was an Irishman who had formerly served the French in Canada. Although he had been living in Connecticut for two years, he still, it seemed, retained his loyalty to his co-religionists.<sup>108</sup> Given this widespread perception that Catholicism created enemies for the British state, it is not surprising that a bill was brought before Parliament, proposing to prohibit any Briton from sending children for education in “Popish seminaries abroad,” because Catholic-educated Britons were “brought up enemies to the laws and religion of their country.”<sup>109</sup>

In report after report, the *Gazette* portrayed the imagined imperial nation as under attack from “popery” and all the political and moral evils associated, in Protestants’ minds, with that religion. “Popery” reinforced British nationalism in two ways. First, it posed a direct threat to the lives, liberties, property, and beliefs of British subjects, galvanizing Britons’ willingness to make sacrifices for the Empire. Secondly, and more subtly, it served as a model of a fully internalized nationalism that went beyond self-preservation: “popery” not only forged French and Spanish national character, but inspired an unshakeable loyalty among its adherents, even to regimes that offered nothing but oppression and intolerance. South Carolina’s Governor Glen pointed out the lesson that British subjects should draw from the example of Catholics’ loyalty to France, in his published address to the South Carolina legislature on November 13, 1754. “If the subjects of an absolute Prince can shew such Keeness to enlarge their Master’s Territories, what Spirit and Zeal should inspire the Sons of Liberty in the Defense of theirs? for, not only our Country, but our Constitution is worth contending for.”<sup>110</sup>

### **Revitalizing the British Imperial Nation**

The threat posed by “popery” gave all British subjects a stake in the success and survival of the empire. Mercantilist doctrines suggested how Britons could help – or weaken – their nation in the face of the Catholic menace.<sup>111</sup> Such doctrines pervaded the news section of the *Gazette*. The newspaper reported in detail on the unending competition between the Great Powers of Europe to build up their military and naval power. Armed might depended on money, and money depended on trade, which in turn depended on population and resources. The *Gazette* reminded its readers of the general principle that “any Nation” that fails to insist on the fulfillment of the trade provisions of treaties will find its commerce encroached on. Invasion of trade rights was only the first step towards national disaster: after foreign powers have “plucked all the feathers, [they] will devour the entire country like a naked bird.”<sup>112</sup> On similar lines, Governor Glen reminded the South Carolina legislature that military strength was chiefly the result of “Numbers [of people] and Wealth, Men and Money being now the Nerves and Sinews of War in all Countries.”<sup>113</sup> These general statements about the relationship of resources to national military power were illustrated by countless news reports about European nations struggling to increase the strength of their armed forces by building their economies and by attracting

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, September 11, 1755 and October 9, 1755.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, January 1, 1756.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, November 21, 1754.

<sup>111</sup> David Armitage has recently made the argument, albeit in a rather sketchy form, that mercantilism underpinned a sense of British national identity among British colonists in America during the mid-eighteenth century in *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge University, 2000), 170-198.

<sup>112</sup> *South-Carolina Gazette*, May 3, 1754.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, June 20, 1754.

immigrants. For example, a report from London informed readers that there were now 45 British ships engaged in the Greenland fishing and whaling trade, which was “of greatest importance to the welfare, as well as the naval force, of this kingdom.”<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the North Sea herring fishery was vital: it not only employed 20,000 people and relieved poverty, but, by training sailors, was “an addition to our naval strength.”<sup>115</sup> Spain, too, was engaged in building up its economy, in order to build up its armed forces: the government had compiled a book of instructions for the woolen weavers and had passed laws to encourage that industry, while it had also founded schools of navigation and shipbuilding, and was busy fortifying its major ports. All this suggested that Spain seemed “to aim at the title of a maritime power.”<sup>116</sup> Attracting immigrants was part of the process of building economies: the *Gazette* reported that Protestant refugees from France were settling in Switzerland and Prussia, the latter providing incentives to bring in immigrants skilled in silk and velvet manufacturing.<sup>117</sup> These and other brief reports made it clear that a skilled workforce, shipping, industry, and armed power were intimately connected, making much of the news section of the *Gazette* into one long narrative about the ever-shifting balance of power in the European-dominated world. Although the term “mercantilist” was not specifically used in the newspaper, the theory of political economy that underpinned the *Gazette*’s commentary on world events is best described by that label.<sup>118</sup>

This mercantilist vision of empire created a clear role for colonies in the overall defense of the British Empire. The *Gazette* reported on deliberate policies of increasing colonial production in order to reduce the Empire’s dependence on foreign imports. Sugar was a major concern: the French islands were producing it more cheaply than the British, leading to pressure on the British government to allow the import of French sugar. “Friends of our Colonies” in Britain were resisting this suggestion, but the colonies had to take action as well: Jamaica, it was suggested, should break up more land for sugar production. That colony could also plant mahogany and other exotic trees to free the British from dependence on supplies from Spanish America.<sup>119</sup> Back in Europe, French fishing off the British coast should be prevented, since the French used the catch as a cheap way of feeding the slaves on its sugar islands.<sup>120</sup> Discussions such as these demonstrated that mother countries and colonies were intimately connected in the ceaseless economic competition between European powers, the outcome of which would determine the survival of a free, Protestant, British Empire.

South Carolinians did not stand idly by while British reformers sought to revitalize the empire. South Carolina also had “patriots” who would, like their brethren in the mother country, speak out to encourage the public to meet the challenge of war with the Catholic powers. Such discussions were, in fact, a major point for the newspaper’s existence, according to one writer, who argued that contributors to the *Gazette* should find ways of using “every interval of peace, for [the colony’s] future security in war, extending its commerce, peopling its frontiers, and providing for their protection and prosperity, etc.”<sup>121</sup> Indigo, a fairly new product from the colony, attracted a lot of comment in the *Gazette*’s pages. Governor Glen praised the product for

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, June 4, 1753.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, May 18, 1753 and September 1, 1753.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, June 4, 1753 and April 11, 1753.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, October 30, 1752.

<sup>118</sup> Note that the *Gazette* did not assume in any way that Protestant nations as a whole were more economically advanced and efficient than Catholic nations. The newspaper took seriously the possibility that France or Spain (or Naples or the Papal States) could reform their economies to beat the British in the race for resources and military power. The equation of “popery” with traditionalism and backwardness, so common among nineteenth-century Protestants, was not in evidence here.

<sup>119</sup> *South-Carolina Gazette*, May 25, 1752, April 16, 1753, and March 6, 1754.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, December 24, 1753.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, January 1, 1752.

its value to both the local economy and the empire.<sup>122</sup> The imperial value was clear, since Admiral Vernon's "Anti-Gallican" (Anti-French) society in Britain offered a prize to the South Carolinian who produced the most indigo in 1754.<sup>123</sup> The *Gazette* reported on a hurricane that had devastated the indigo crop on Española, making South Carolina's product more valuable in European markets.<sup>124</sup> It also carried advertisements for "Guatemalan Indico Seed" that would allow more producers to grow the crop.<sup>125</sup> The South Carolina Indigo Society made known its intention to spread knowledge of how to grow the crop, to members who paid a small fee that would support a free school in Georgetown.<sup>126</sup> Of course, the negative aspect of indigo's value was that it would inevitably attract foreign invaders: contributors to the *Gazette* warned that the colony had to fortify itself in order to ward off France's desire for the indigo plantations.<sup>127</sup> Indigo provided many opportunities for *Gazette* readers to consider the integral role that their colony played in the Empire's mercantilist system: individual South Carolinians, through their engagement in a profitable economic activity, were becoming increasingly involved in the contest for domination among the European powers.

The present and future success of indigo prompted other suggestions from *Gazette* readers about how their colony could benefit the British Empire, at the same time as it built prosperity for itself. One contributor argued that South Carolina could encourage skilled immigrants from Sweden and Russia to teach British immigrants how to grow hemp, and how to make pot-ash and tar. Such products would reduce the British Empire's dependence on foreign powers for products vital in shipbuilding and in making gunpowder. There were pressing reasons for avoiding such dependence: France was very influential in Sweden, and might persuade the Swedes to stop trading with Britain and to block British trade with Russia.<sup>128</sup> South Carolina could thus play an economically strategic role in the Empire: such possibilities were further reasons for readers to study the news of distant places in the *Gazette*.

If the network of imperial newspapers could share news that pointed out ways of strengthening the empire's economy and defenses, it could also alert readers to dangerous weaknesses. Complaints about imperial weakness and calls for national renewal came chiefly from two sources: from men in official positions, particularly royal governors, and from private men, often styled "patriots," who were outside or on the edge of power, and who were constructively critical of the empire and its government. Official and private reformers complained about a growing self-indulgence in the British Empire that, if unchecked, would undermine Britain's ability to stand up to its enemies. Rampant vices included gambling, which was ruining prominent men, who then took to robbery on the highways.<sup>129</sup> Open prostitution was endangering the morals and the health of London's young men.<sup>130</sup> The consumption of luxury products, especially French luxuries, was one destructive form of self-indulgence, as was travel to the Continent, where Britons picked up fashionable foreign vices.<sup>131</sup> Luxury was not simply a vice of the British upper classes: all nations' aristocracies indulged in luxury, but Britain was unique, because *all* social classes there were corrupted by the habit of living beyond their means.<sup>132</sup> The love of money was corrupting the political system: bribes were frequently given to

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<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, January 22, 1754.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, July 25, 1754.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, April 13, 1752.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, January 1, 1752 and elsewhere.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, February 6, 1755.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, January 30, 1755.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, February 26, 1754, March 19, 1754, and May 14, 1754.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, April 27, 1752, May 18, 1752, May 25, 1752, February 5, 1754.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, September 27, 1752.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, February 26, 1754, March 12, 1754, March 19, 1754, August 15, 1754.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, April 23, 1753.

win Parliamentary elections and useless political offices were being created to reward supporters.<sup>133</sup>

American colonists were not immune from these tendencies among European Britons: almost every week, South Carolinians encountered advertisements for items like French jewelry and Spanish olives cheek-by-jowl with condemnations of imported foreign luxuries in the Empire.<sup>134</sup> Even those colonists who could not afford European indulgences could still greedily import more luxuries from within the empire than they could afford, draining whole provinces of hard currency and leaving no resources for defense.<sup>135</sup> The potential for the corruption of colonists by French luxury was exhibited when a French ship was captured and brought into Rhode Island. These French prisoners should have been incarcerated, argued the writer of the article, but one of the passengers, who “affects the nobleman, and has a great many wash-balls, combs, and other trinkets suitable for the ladies or a valet de chambre,” was being allowed to wander the town freely, inspecting the docks and the harbor, because his elegant manners had won over the town’s leaders. Later, it was reported that this Frenchman and his fellow countrymen, whom “some of our gentlemen have so much caressed” abused the Rhode Islanders’ trust by trying to steal an armed brigantine and a schooner, and to escape from the harbor.<sup>136</sup> Even without the example of a foppish French gentleman, some men in South Carolina had learned to douse themselves with scent until they stank, complained a regular columnist in the *Gazette*.<sup>137</sup> Luxury was everywhere. It not only damaged the Empire’s economy, the foundation of its defenses, but also caused a range of other problems, from the abandonment of common sense and dignity, to crime, disease, and impoverishment. Luxury and its associated vices were so widespread and so ingrained in the British people, that they amounted to distinguishing national characteristics that set the British apart from the other European peoples.<sup>138</sup>

The prevailing self-indulgence of Britons and British Americans was part of a dangerous self-centeredness that had many serious consequences. Even as the war-clouds gathered and the French and their Indian allies began to threaten the British Empire’s independence, British subjects were strangely supine. Frontier communities were refusing to join a united defense force, even as neighboring settlements were sacked by “popish” invaders. Colonies that did raise troops for the common cause failed to get them to the frontier in time to make a difference. Colonists were refusing to vote sufficient taxes to support militias and fortifications, even though the need for these was imperative. Across the Atlantic, legislation to improve the economy and defenses of the empire was getting bogged down in the morass of special interests that dominated Parliament. False economies were cutting back expenditure on the navy, tempting unemployed shipwrights with valuable skills to seek jobs with Britain’s enemies. Throughout years of peace and of war, the *Gazette* printed articles that railed at the failure of Britons and British Americans to take simple and self-evident measures to save the Empire from France, Spain, and the Stuarts.

While dealing with the problem of a British nation that refused to react as it should have done to foreign threats, some contributors to the *Gazette* essentially began to distinguish between two imagined, national communities. The first was the actual British Empire, with all of its serious failings. The second was an ideal Empire, whose population had been awoken to a sense of its own self interest. The difference between these two is perhaps best described as the difference between a sense of national identity and an ideological nationalism. Certain contributors to the *Gazette* regarded the awakening of a nationalistic spirit as a highly desirable, but difficult process. Once awakened, nationalism was evanescent, and the Empire had to seize

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, March 11, 1752, April 16, 1753, April 23, 1753, July 25, 1754.

<sup>134</sup> For one example of such advertisements among many, see *Ibid.*, July 2, 1753.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, April 30, 1753, February 26, 1754, March 12, 1754, April 23, 1754, January 30, 1755.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, August 21, 1755 and September 4, 1755.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, January 22, 1754.

<sup>138</sup> See the discussion about the negative aspects of British national character above, pp. 6-7.

any window of opportunity offered by the appearance of this national spirit. These conceptions of nationalism were demonstrated by a comment that the *Gazette* reprinted from a London paper. After expressing the hope that war would be officially declared against France in the next few days, the author warned that “This step, in the opinion of some very considerable personages, will...become unavoidably necessary, would we continue to exert that spirit, with which we have so gloriously exerted ourselves.”<sup>139</sup> Another writer agreed that to negotiate a peace would be disastrous. Not only was it certain that France would negotiate peace now, only to attack later, when its preparations were further advanced, but if Britain made peace after all the talk of war, “the zeal shewn by the people to support the government in prosecuting a war against France [would] ... naturally die away, to revive no more.”<sup>140</sup>

In rousing this spirit of nationalism, the press played a vital and self-conscious role. One article, reprinted from a London paper, asserted that “there never was an age in which the voice of the people was either more loud, or more unanimous in support of ... public measures: the honour of the crown, the protection of our colonies, the vindicating our title, to be regarded as a maritime power, is in every man’s mouth, and, which is much more, in every man’s heart...But to what is this owing? Certainly to the information received from the public papers! These have ... exhorted men to such a behaviour, and always celebrated true patriotism...Could there be a greater service rendered than this, or one that ought to be more acceptable?”<sup>141</sup> Besides providing information about specific threats to the empire and solutions to those threats, reading newspapers could rouse national spirit by appealing to readers’ emotions. For example, the *Gazette* reprinted a speech by Governor Dinwiddie to the Virginia legislature. Seeking to awaken “that Zeal for his majesty’s service, that disinterested love for your country, for which you have been distinguished upon former occasions,” Dinwiddie described a recent assault by “French” Indians on a frontier family in graphic terms, bidding the legislators to imagine “the infant torn from the unavailing struggles of the distracted mother, the daughters ravished before the eyes of their wretched parents; and then, with cruelty and insult, butchered and scalped. Suppose the horrid scene completed, and the whole family, man, wife, and children...murdered and scalped by these relentless savages, and then torn in pieces, and in part devoured by wild beasts, for whom they were left a prey by their more brutal enemies.” He concluded this rather gothic narrative with a reminder that the French had instigated this Indian attack, and that Virginians could expect more of the same if the French established themselves permanently in the Ohio Valley. Dinwiddie’s rhetoric achieved his goal of raising the “Zeal” of the House of Burgesses, which voted him the financial aid he desired.<sup>142</sup> Appeals to the emotions, as in this address by Dinwiddie, made it clear that contemporaries believed there was more to nationalism than simple self interest: commonly used terms like “zeal” and “spirit” suggested that there was a non-rational element to nationalism that could overcome the barriers of selfishness and elevate British subjects to a more noble plane. Dinwiddie was putting into rhetorical practice an idea expressed by himself and others elsewhere in the *Gazette*, that severe threats from abroad could actually be beneficial, because they could “raise the spirit of every British subject to an immediate resentment, and thorough resolution, with their lives and fortunes, to repel the impending ruin.”<sup>143</sup> The newspapers played a vital role in making Britons feel the impact of these severe threats in time to take action.

The press could be used not only to exhort British subjects to self-sacrifice, but also to make them self-conscious about how they looked to the rest of the Empire. Certain royal governors perhaps made deliberate use of the press in this way: the speeches of royal governors to

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<sup>139</sup> *South-Carolina Gazette*, October 23, 1755.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, August 14, 1755.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, August 21, 1755.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, April 2, 1754.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, January 23, 1755. See also June 20, 1754.

colonial legislatures were regularly printed in newspapers throughout the colonies, sometimes by government order.<sup>144</sup> When Governor Dinwiddie of Virginia exhorted that province's House of Burgesses to contribute generously to the joint war effort against France, he reminded them that "the eyes of his majesty, his ministers, nay of all your fellow-subjects, are fixed on your present determinations." Thanks to the network of imperial newspapers, the governor's statement was, in a sense, literally true: South Carolinians, reading this statement in the *Gazette*, were bidden by it to see themselves, in their minds' eyes, as spectators of the deliberations of Virginia's assembly.<sup>145</sup> Pennsylvania's governor similarly tried to make that province's assembly self-conscious about being under the gaze of the imperial community. "The eyes of a British parliament, of the people of our mother country, of the other American colonies, and even of all Europe, are upon us. And the fate of the country, the happiness or misery of your posterity, very much depend on your resolutions."<sup>146</sup> Arguably, the ties between an individual and the national community become complete when the individual not only imagines the nation, but imagines himself being scrutinized by the imagined nation's gaze.

The *Gazette* demonstrated that newspapers could construct a national identity for readers on a number of different levels. Newspapers alone enabled readers to imagine the nation as a living entity, as a community with shared interests and concerns. They could inform readers about challenges faced by the nation, and about possible solutions to those challenges. Finally, they could invite readers to identify so closely with the nation that individual interests were forgotten, and readers became willingly caught up in an emotive nationalism, a rare but precious spirit that, if correctly cultivated, could impel the British Empire to great achievements.

### **Slavery in the Context of Imperial Nationalism**

Evidence in the *Gazette* for the existence of both a British national identity and a British nationalism among literate, white South Carolinians should be taken into account when evaluating other aspects of the colonists' experience. Certainly there are limits to the significance of imagined communities created in the press. National identity and nationalism constitute only one level of identity for individuals in any society, and the *Gazette's* readers spent most of their week focusing on family, friends, church, business, and other groups of people that shaped each reader's identity in numerous ways. The *Gazette*, after all, had a far more limited penetration of any individual's existence than the mass media of later periods. However, while a national identity is only one part of any person's sense of who he or she is, it provides one of the broadest contexts in which individuals can understand themselves. Themes that were prominent in the *Gazette*, such as war, the transatlantic economy, and the immorality of luxury were relevant to the many smaller circles and private activities of individual readers, and thoughts on these themes may have intruded upon readers' lives outside the time they actually spent reading or discussing the contents of the paper.

For all its limitations, the evidence of British national identity in the *Gazette* can be used to reevaluate other aspects of its readers' experience. One area of South Carolinians' experience that has drawn a great deal of attention from historians is slavery. Historians have been very impressed by the fact that enslaved Africans constituted the majority of South Carolina's inhabitants from almost the start of the eighteenth century. As a result, most discussion about South Carolinians' identity and other aspects of their mental world has focused on their position

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<sup>144</sup> The *Gazette* explicitly mentioned the fact that it had been ordered to print the speeches of the colony's governor and legislature in the February 6, 1755 issue.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, January 23, 1755.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, January 23, 1755.

as a racial minority, ruling over an oppressed, culturally alien labor force.<sup>147</sup> Historians argue that the ratio between the races made South Carolina a distinctive colony, at least when compared to Britain's other colonies on the North American mainland.<sup>148</sup>

The overwhelming importance of race and slavery in shaping the experience of white South Carolinians needs to be somewhat revised in the light of the evidence of an imperial identity in the *Gazette*. When they entered the imagined world constructed in that newspaper, white South Carolinians ceased to be a racial minority in a peculiar colony: they became, instead, part of the racial majority of an empire in which contact with non-whites was a normal, but not an overwhelming determinant of experience.<sup>149</sup> In fact, most Britons who dealt with non-whites were having to fight them on a regular basis, as news from all over North America and from India demonstrated.<sup>150</sup> The *Gazette* provided white readers with an opportunity to detach themselves from their local society. From that detached viewpoint, the problems and benefits associated with slavery and with interracial relationships became both reduced in importance, and normalized by comparison with the experience of other Britons and other white Europeans.

Of course, even from the perspective of the imagined imperial community portrayed in the *Gazette*, slavery necessarily involved certain inconveniences and dangers. Slaves could revolt. There were no large-scale slave revolts or conspiracies in South Carolina during the 1750s, but reports of revolts in other places must have reminded *Gazette* readers of what could happen in their own colony.<sup>151</sup> In response to that possibility, contributors to the *Gazette* did regularly remind readers of the need for careful patrols, and enforcement of laws that ordered every ten slaves to be supervised by one white, and that forbade slaves from carrying weapons.<sup>152</sup> Slave revolt might occur not only on land, but at sea, where slaves occasionally took control of slaving vessels off the coast of Africa.<sup>153</sup> Slaves also committed crimes, like murder and theft.<sup>154</sup> Slaves on one occasion, provoked trouble with native Americans by murdering an Indian in a drunken brawl.<sup>155</sup> Slaves, of course, did "steal themselves" by escaping, as advertisements regularly pointed out. The presence of slave women tempted white Carolinian men to indulge in interracial sex, an activity that the *Gazette* branded as grotesque and ridiculous.<sup>156</sup> Newly imported slaves could also bring disease into the colony.<sup>157</sup> As many historians have emphasized,

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<sup>147</sup> One of the most notable examples of a historian assuming that slavery fundamentally shaped South Carolinians mental world was Henry F. May, who argued that the ideas of the Enlightenment were tinged with pessimism in South Carolina. Even when participating in the broad intellectual culture of the Atlantic World, whites in this colony were incapable of escaping the fact that they were surrounded by the brutal and alien institution of slavery, May argued. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (Oxford University, 1976), 143-149.

<sup>148</sup> The most significant recent work that makes slavery dominant in shaping the mental world of South Carolina's whites is Philip D. Morgan's *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998).

<sup>149</sup> The *Gazette* provided statistics about the importance of the slave trade in various British ports, especially Liverpool (August 20, 1753), and it noted tensions with France over slaving posts on the African coast (September 10, 1753 and July 18, 1754). The slave trade was a relatively minor component of imperial news, and it appeared most prominently in the *Gazette's* advertising section, where newly-arrived cargoes of slaves were regularly offered to readers.

<sup>150</sup> *Gazette*, passim. See August 8, 1755 and January 9, 1755 for uses of a color term, "black," to describe native Americans (of Prince Edward Island) and Indians (of the Carnatic), respectively.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, October 10, 1752 and January 8, 1753 (in Guadeloupe and Jamaica).

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, February 26, 1754, May 14, 1754, October 17, 1754, November 7, 1754, and August 21, 1755.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, May 21, 1754, July 18, 1754, September 5, 1754.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, September 19, 1752, March 26, 1754, June 20, 1754, June 27, 1754, July 25, 1754, August 15, 1754, and August 29, 1754 (in Jamaica as well as in South Carolina).

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, June 27, 1754 (in Albany, New York).

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, February 26, 1754.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, June 27, 1754 and July 4, 1754.



there were numerous ways in which slavery could make life insecure for white South Carolinians, and the imperial and Atlantic context provided by the *Gazette* often reinforced those insecurities.

From the vantage point of the imperial community constructed in the pages of the *Gazette*, however, white South Carolinians could also see many advantages to slavery, and gain a sense of security from being slaveholders. Slaves, after all, were a form of wealth, and in the mercantilist world of the 1750s, wealth in general was the basis of defense. Slaves made a more direct contribution to defense by helping to build forts, and because taxes on slaves helped pay for fortification projects.<sup>158</sup> While slaves might on occasion flee white rule and fight against whites, good treatment could turn slaves into contented subjects, whose voluntary industry contributed to the prosperity, and therefore the security, of the empire.<sup>159</sup> Freed blacks were sometimes invaluable as auxiliaries in Britain's struggles with its enemies.<sup>160</sup> Newspaper advertisements reminded readers that slaves regularly found and reported lost property.<sup>161</sup> Advertisements in the *Gazette* reminded readers that whites committed brutal crimes in South Carolina more often than slaves did, and that white servants also ran away.<sup>162</sup> As readers shifted their gaze from the imperial to the local scene in the news pages of the *Gazette*, slaves might look like a relatively safe underclass: compared to the anonymous mass of criminal poor that operated in London, runaway slaves could often be individually identified by name, distinguishing marks or character traits, and even by clothing. There was no way of enumerating, let alone identifying and controlling, the underclass of London. In fact, slaves were the ideal, ascetic laboring class that reformers across the empire called out for: they contributed to the production of the empire, but would never weaken the empire's economy by importing French luxuries, or dressing above their station. Most importantly, since Britain's enemies used slaves to increase their colonial production, imperial wealth, and therefore armed power, Britain needed slaves to keep the balance of wealth and power favorably tipped in its favor. Slave labor was often the only way of turning empty, cultivatable lands into viable settlements, and if Britons neglected to cultivate vacant lands in this way, France or Spain would move into the vacuum.<sup>163</sup>

Judging by the contents of the *Gazette*, white South Carolinians feared foreign, Catholic powers far more than they feared their slaves. This conclusion contradicts the arguments of many historians of slavery, who, perhaps as a belated punishment for eighteenth-century slave owners, have suggested that whites in societies like South Carolina, where the slaves were a majority, lived a world of psychological torment, where fear of uprisings, of savage violence, of sexual violation, even of ending up being ruled by the slaves, overshadowed their daily lives.<sup>164</sup> This portrait of white life makes sense if whites are regarded as entirely absorbed by their plantations and by what went on inside the provincial boundaries of South Carolina. Yet, as the *Gazette*

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<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, October 10, 1752, March 26, 1754, May 14, 1754, and January 30, 1755 (examples from South Carolina and Jamaica).

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, March 26, 1754 and May 7, 1754 (Jamaica). Governor Knowles visited towns of free blacks in the interior of Jamaica and commented that "as there seems to be a spirit of industry amongst them, I have no doubt of their continuing faithful and becoming useful to this community." These black towns had been built after the former governor, Trelawney "in person conquered the rebellious Blacks, and then treated them with so much compassion and mercy that they in gratitude built a town and called it by his name."

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, April 11, 1753 (in South Carolina, against "French" Indian raiders) and July 4, 1754 (against the Spaniards in Honduras).

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, October 16, 1752, September 10, 1753, September 17, 1753, and elsewhere.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, Robberies and murders by whites were reported on March 12, 1754, May 21, 1754, July 4, 1754, July 11, 1754, October 3, 1754, October 17, 1754; advertisements were regularly placed for runaway white servants, for example on September 10, 1753 and October 31, 1754.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1754.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, Winthrop Jordan has imaginatively portrayed this nightmare world of slave owners in colonies with a black majority in *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1968), especially 110-178.

demonstrates, white South Carolinians had a broader understanding of who they were and of the world in which they lived. In the context of the imagined Atlantic world, it was the Africans who were isolated and friendless, while the whites were intimately connected to a major world power. The *Gazette* reflected the whites' sense of their slaves' isolation by providing absolutely no information about political, diplomatic, or military affairs in Africa. Although some information about African regimes must have been available from the captains of slavers who called at Charleston, there were no reports about even coastal polities. Given the ability of South Carolinians to read about Russian trade policy on the Caspian Sea, French diplomacy at Delhi, and the numbers of each nation's ships fishing off the coast of Greenland, this lack of information about Africa is significant. Apart from indicating a lack of respect for African culture and civilization, the *Gazette's* silence about this topic conveyed a comforting message to its readers: Africans by themselves could launch only a local revolt against whites: they were not part of any broad national community with the wealth to support sophisticated navies and armies. Whites faced by African revolt, on the other hand, could call on a large and powerful community of fellow nationals to suppress the uprising. Slave revolt would be an unpleasant prospect, but there was no possibility of an ultimate African victory, if the Africans alone were taken into consideration.

Of course, given the state of virtual or actual war between the British Empire and its Catholic enemies, rebellious Africans would not be alone. France and Spain could provide the organization, the weapons, the backing from a large, modern state, that slave populations needed for a successful revolt. White South Carolinians were most fearful of the black majority when it appeared to be yet another tentacle of the "popish" monster which, unlike the slaves, did have a real prospect of overrunning all or part of the British Empire on a permanent basis. *Gazette* readers were reminded, on a small scale, of the possible connection between the Catholic powers and the slaves whenever small groups of Africans escaped to find freedom - and to be converted to "popery" - in Spanish or French territory.<sup>165</sup> The *Gazette* also recorded fears of large-scale revolt by all the slaves in the colony in the wake of a Spanish or French invasion.<sup>166</sup> Conclusive evidence that South Carolinians feared Catholics more than their slaves emerges from the colony's immigration policy: slaves were far preferable to white, Catholic immigrants in the colony, since, as reports from across the empire showed, Catholics habitually engaged in conspiracy with Britain's enemies.<sup>167</sup> For this reason, when South Carolinians talked of encouraging white immigration, it was always Protestant immigrants who were mentioned. When white Protestants weren't available, enslaved Africans were preferable to white Catholics.

A decade after the period covered in this study, British Americans in general, including white South Carolinians, began to complain loudly about British attempts to "enslave" them. Scholars have discussed at length what the colonists meant by "slavery": some have argued that colonists literally feared being reduced to the status of chattel slaves, like the Africans, while others have argued that the colonists meant political slavery only, a concept well-established in British and other European traditions of political thought.<sup>168</sup> The *Gazette* makes it clear that, for

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, April 9, 1754 and August 29, 1754 (escapes or attempted escapes from South Carolina to St. Augustine), October 3, 1752 (Britons in Honduras lose slaves to Spaniards there), and January 8, 1753 (French authorities in St. Martin's refuse to return escaped slaves to Anguilla).

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1754.

<sup>167</sup> South Carolinians had a rare experience of Catholic migration when two shiploads of forcibly dispersed Acadians arrived in Charleston in late 1755 and early 1756. The *Gazette* recorded the escape of "two Parties" of these Catholics on February 5, 1756; most were apprehended, but 30 managed to remain at large. Some robbed a plantation, terrifying the lady of the house and stealing weapons. *Ibid.*, February 5, 1756, February 12, 1756, and February 19, 1756.

<sup>168</sup> Two good examples of scholars who believe that "slavery" referred to chattel slavery are F. Nwabueze Okoye, "Chattel Slavery as the Nightmare of the American Revolutionaries" in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd. Ser., Vol. XXXVII, no. 1 (January 1980), 3-28 and Patricia Bradley, *Slavery, Propaganda,*

white South Carolinians, at least, there was another important association with the term slavery: “popery” and slavery were mentioned together in the contexts of both political *and* chattel slavery. On the one hand, Britain’s Catholic enemies were ruled by absolute monarchs, whose subjects were thought to be in a state of political slavery. These Catholic powers were attempting to impose that political slavery on the British Empire, through conquest or through the reintroduction of the Stuarts. For example, the Virginia House of Burgesses noted that their frontier was being attacked by “a barbarous and inhuman enemy, the slaves of arbitrary power.”<sup>169</sup> Virginia’s governor used the same term, exhorting Virginians not to let their posterity groan “under the galling yoke of civil and religious slavery.”<sup>170</sup> The *Gazette* also portrayed the Catholic powers as aiming at reducing at least some of the colonists to chattel slavery. The French in Canada, it was reported, were eager to purchase captured British colonists from the Indians. The incentive of payment, the *Gazette* claimed, was the only reason the Indians raided frontier settlements and dragged some of the settlers into captivity. Once in Canada, these Britons were enslaved, being forced to labor without recompense. They could be ransomed, but, significantly, the price demanded was the equivalent of the cost of an African slave.<sup>171</sup> There was even a disturbing report of “French” Indians who had been apprehended in South Carolina having on their persons leading strings for binding slaves: it was not clear whether the Indians sought white or black slaves.<sup>172</sup> Both the fear of political slavery in British and European political thought, and the institution of chattel slavery imposed on Africans were too narrow by themselves to comprehend the full range of associations made by white colonists with the term “slavery.” “Popery,” however, was a concept broad enough to embrace the many meanings of this term.

### **British Imperial Nationalism in Colonial South Carolina: Broader Implications**

Scholars who study the general characteristics of nationalism agree that nationalism is in some way a product of modernization. Hobsbawm and Gellner place the emergence of nationalism in the nineteenth century, when national governments had become powerful and wealthy enough to offer employment or other benefits to a significant proportion of the population. Such government opportunities meant that the private interest of ordinary people and the public success of the state became linked, generating loyalty to the nation. The present study suggests that the emergence of nationalism, in the Anglophone world at least, took place at an earlier stage of the process of modernization. The communications infrastructure in the eighteenth-century British Empire was sufficiently developed to keep literate Britons and British colonists in sustained, imagined contact with their fellow nationals, while the prevailing mercantilist political philosophy supplied a connection between individual and national interests: while the state could not promise employment or a rising standard of living to any but a tiny minority of Britons, it could provide safety from a ruthless, savage enemy. The economic behavior of individual Britons contributed to or damaged the nation’s defensive capabilities, linking ordinary, daily activities of millions of subjects with the interests of the nation as a whole.

Another implication of this study is that nationalism is in some sense an outgrowth of religious identity. The anti-popery manifested in the *South-Carolina Gazette* was imbued with many secular concerns, but it also rested on the notion that Catholic theology helped to shape the

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*and the American Revolution*. (University Press of Mississippi, 1998). The prime example of a scholar who has argued that the colonists used “slavery” to mean political slavery only is Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1967).

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, September 19, 1755.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, January 23, 1755.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, September 19, 1754 and October 3, 1754.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, June 18, 1753.

vicious national character of Catholic nations. In those nations, religion (in the opinion of British Protestants) stimulated an internalized, conscience-driven loyalty that foreshadowed the loyalties of modern nationalism. Catholic and Protestant theologies, converted by the secular philosophy of the Enlightenment into competing epistemologies, provided an early sense of a profound, unbridgeable difference between Britain and its rivals that later nationalism drew from racially-based ideas.

The existence of a well-developed British imperial nationalism raises obvious questions about the causes of the American Revolution. The findings of this study confirm what Tim Breen and Jack Greene have recently argued: the American Revolution was not caused by the gradual emergence of an American, regional loyalty that ultimately displaced colonists' loyalty to the larger empire.<sup>173</sup> Instead, colonists may have found their imperial nationalism stimulated to a point where the empire was unable to meet the colonists' desire to be regarded as fully integrated members of the British nation. The barrier to colonists' British national aspirations may have lain, as Tim Breen has argued, in the parochial interpretation of "Britishness" by residents of Great Britain itself, who treated the colonists as non-British, and by doing so, ultimately forced them out of the empire.<sup>174</sup>

The existence of a well-developed sense of British national identity in America during the mid-eighteenth century also has implications for the interpretation of the history of the early republic. The "American" revolution should, perhaps, be better understood as a failed realization of British identity, instead of as a nationalistic movement. The new nation was far less coherent than the old British Empire had been: it lacked, for instance, the integrated mercantilist economy and the sense of a single, national foe that had helped tie British subjects to the Empire in the 1750s. The problems of unity faced by the new nation make sense if one accepts the argument that nationalism is connected, somehow, to economic modernization: the independent United States was, in many ways, less economically modern than the British Empire, with less industry, a higher proportion of rural to urban population, and a more confined overseas trade. Yet the memory of living in an empire with a strong sense of national unity remained. The citizens of the United States were not simply starting anew, as they set about nation-building: the former colonies had to cope with a severe incompatibility between the state of their economic and social development and their memory of what coherent national community should be. Instead of nationalism developing gradually in the United States as its economy and media developed, U.S. leaders were always aspiring to a more developed national consciousness than was possible in a politically decentralized, largely agrarian state. This self-conscious seeking of nationhood under the unfavorable conditions of underdevelopment may shed light on many important aspects of early United States history, including the emergence of a peculiar nationalistic ideology based on opposition to the national government.

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<sup>173</sup> Jack Greene, "Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. II, *The Eighteenth Century*. Ed. P.J. Marshall. (Oxford University, 1998), 208-230.

<sup>174</sup> T.H. Breen, "Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions *Once More* in Need of Revising" in *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 84, No. 1 (June 1997), 13-19.