CONSTRUCTING MODERNITY:
HISTORICAL IMAGERY AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITY
IN CHARLESTON'S GREAT AWAKENING

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ON MARCH 14, 1740, ALEXANDER GARDEN, THE ANGLICAN
Commissary of South Carolina, flew into “a very great rage” and threw
evangelical itinerant George Whitefield out of his Charleston home.1 The
violent shouting match, in which Garden “rebuked” his opponent “sharply”
with “some Emotion and Earnestness,” was but one chapter in an ongoing
battle between the commissary of the established church and his evangelical
nemesis.2 Fighting against the incursion of Whitefieldian revivalism into
South Carolina, Alexander Garden spoke out against the Anglican itinerant’s
anticlericalism, his dramatic open-air preaching, and his insistence upon
emotional conversion experiences as the sole signs of spiritual regeneration.
When bombastic sermons, polemical newspaper attacks, and even shouting
matches failed to deter Whitefield from preaching, Garden summoned him
before an ecclesiastical court. Complaining loudly of persecution and ap-
pealing his case to the bishop of London, Whitefield promptly left Charle-
ston in July 1740.3

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Eighteenth-Century Studies.

1 George Whitefield, George Whitefield's Journals (1737–1741) To Which is Prefixed
his Short Account (1746) and Further Account (1747), ed. William Wales (Gainesville,
Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1969), 398.

2 Alexander Garden, Take Heed How Ye Hear (New York, 1742), 19. Emphasis is
in original. Hereafter, unless noted, all emphases in quotations are original.

3 The Garden–Whitefield controversy has been historiographically addressed in
Edgar Legare Pennington, “The Reverend Alexander Garden,” Historical Magazine
William Howland Kenney III, “Alexander Garden and George Whitefield: The
Significance of Revivalism in South Carolina, 1738–1741,” South Carolina Historical
Carolina, 1740–1775,” South Atlantic Quarterly 70 (1971): 595-606; David T. Morgan,
Jr., “The Consequences of George Whitefield’s Ministry in the Carolinas and Geo-
“George Whitefield and the Great Awakening in the Carolinas and Georgia, 1739–
1740,” Georgia Historical Quarterly 54 (1970): 517-539; James Barney Hawkins IV,
“Alexander Garden: The Commissary in Church and State” (Ph.D. diss., Duke
University, 1981); Charles Bolton, Southern Anglicanism: The Church of England in

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Although he silenced George Whitefield for a time, Alexander Garden has suffered from a disreputable historiographic reputation. Whereas generations of scholars have depicted George Whitefield in “modern” terms as the harbinger of American democracy and free-market capitalism, Garden and his ecclesiastical court are viewed as decidedly retrogressive. Indeed, almost universally, historians have connected Whitefield’s Great Awakening to later sociocultural developments. Alan Heimert, Gary Nash, Rhys Isaac, and Patricia Bonomi saw Revolutionary egalitarianism in the actions and rhetoric of the revivals. And, while recent research on Whitefield’s staunch Calvinism has subdued his historiographic connection to Revolutionary equality, Erskine Clarke and Nancy Ruttenburg have, nevertheless, championed the Itinerant’s “modern” commitment to democratic individualism. Similarly, Harry Stout and Frank Lambert have lauded his “modern” understanding of market forces. By using newspapers, widely circulated books, and dramatic oratory to peddle the gospel on an imperial scale, Whitefield was “very much a ‘modern’ . . . figure.” For Harry Stout, Whitefield’s ability to “make religion popular” made him “the symbol for a dawning age;” in this regard, he presaged “Billy Sunday, Aimee Semple McPherson, Oral Roberts, Billy Graham, and Jimmy Swaggart.”

Colonial South Carolina (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982); Samuel C. Smith, “‘Through the eye of a needle’: The Role of Pietistic and Mystical Thought among the Anglican Elite in the Eighteenth Century Lowcountry South” (Ph.D. diss., University of South Carolina, 1999), 87-129.


7Stout, Divine Dramatist, xvi, xiv. Another avenue of possible Whitefieldian modernity is the Itinerant’s response to slavery. Indeed, immediately following his January 1740 trip to Charleston, Whitefield anonymously published a mildly threatening rebuke of white planters for their mistreatment of slaves. Garden
While Erskine Clarke declared Whitefield’s revival “the harbinger of modernity,” and Perry Miller and Alan Heimert saw the Itinerant’s message of emotional, individual salvation as “America’s final break with the Middle Ages,” William Howland Kenney III wrote that Alexander Garden was “steeped in the old ways of theological conformity.” Describing him as a rigid son of the establishment, historians have connected Garden to the past. Indeed, unlike Whitefield, whose ascribed modernity has shifted from egalitarianism to individualism to market capitalism, Garden’s reputation for retrogression has remained static. Including a brief description of the Commissary in his immensely popular *Journal*, George Whitefield depicted his opponent as “strict in the outward discipline of the Church.” Writing in 1784, David Ramsay noted that Commissary Garden was “a strict observer of rules and forms, and would not lightly depart from them.” Similarly, in 1926 Guli Elma Melton Kaminer described him as “a very strict high church-

responded briefly to Whitefield’s pamphlet by claiming that reforms were already underway. In Charleston as elsewhere, Whitefield condemned masters for mistreating their slaves, welcomed enslaved people to his revivals, and encouraged masters to provide slaves with religious education. It was not, however, until after Whitefield left Charleston in 1740—and thus, outside the chronological scope of this essay—that evangelical emphases upon spiritual equality and education exploded in Hugh Bryan’s charismatic and—in the eyes of the colonial government—threatening attempts to gather and educate large groups of slaves. Nevertheless, to argue that Whitefield and Bryan represented “modernity” in their advocacy of humanitarianism and religious education is to neglect both George Whitefield’s often ambivalent relationship with slavery (he was a slave owner) and the longstanding educational and humanitarian efforts of Anglican organizations such as the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) and the Associates of Dr. Bray (of which Hugh Bryan was a member). While only minimally successful before the Great Awakening, these organizations had a presence in South Carolina, and their work was invigorated after Whitefield’s visit with Alexander Garden’s establishment of a school for slaves in Charleston. For more on the role of slavery in Charleston’s Great Awakening, see Harvey H. Jackson, “Hugh Bryan and the Evangelical Movement in Colonial South Carolina,” *Williams and Mary Quarterly* 43 (1986): 594-614; Allan Gallay, “The Origins of Slaveholders’ Paternalism: George Whitefield, the Bryan Family, and the Great Awakening in the South,” *Journal of Southern History* 53 (1987): 369-394; Stephen J. Stein, “George Whitefield on Slavery: Some New Evidence,” *Church History* 42 (1973): 243-256; Frank Lambert, “I Saw the Book Talk: Slave Readings of the First Great Awakening,” *Journal of Negro History* 77 (1992): 185-198.


16 David Ramsay, *Ramsay’s History of South Carolina* (Newberry, S.C.: W. J. Duffie, 1858), 2: 256. This description of Alexander Garden was also quoted by Frederick Delmho in *An Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South Carolina* (Charleston, S.C.: E. Thayer, 1820), 176-178.
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For James Barney Hawkins IV, writing in 1981, Garden possessed “strict conformity to the canons and rubrics of the Anglican church.” That the word “strict” was applied in historiographic descriptions of Garden from 1740 until 1981 indicates that a stark contrast between old and new—between the “modern” revivalistic freedom of the future and the strict ecclesiastical conformity of the past—is a standard trope in narrative treatments of South Carolina’s Great Awakening. Perhaps David Duncan Wallace articulated this historiographic trend best when he noted that Whitefield’s Charleston revival was “an illustration of how new wine was bursting old bottles.”

The historiographic apotheosis of Whitefield as prototypically modern assumes that modernity can be assessed by comparing past and present. Thus, finding in Whitefield’s marketing techniques comfortable reminders of twentieth-century televangelists, or sensing the incipient democratic equality of the Itinerant’s open-air preaching, historians have heralded him as “modern.” However, by making Whitefield the first link in a chain of comparative modernity stretching to the present, scholars have divorced the Itinerant from his eighteenth-century context. Departing from recent historiography, this essay argues that ascriptions of modernity are only useful when seen as functions of textuality within the writings of historical protagonists. Recognizing that historians were not the first to debate questions of modernity, this essay listens to Garden and Whitefield’s own understandings of the modern.

The desire to gauge eighteenth-century conceptions of modernity motivated Joyce E. Chaplin’s careful study of agriculture in the Lower South. Importantly, Chaplin’s An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815 contends that southern agriculturalists defined “the modern” in ambivalent terms. Although her work shows a region adept at agricultural innovation in times of political or economic necessity, Chaplin portrays a society generally wary of embracing the modern conceptions of capitalism too closely. The South that emerges from Chaplin’s study embraces mills and cotton gins yet eschews coarser forms of capitalistic exploitation such as land speculation, all the while preserving and extending a pre-modern form of coercive labor. Yet, despite their ambivalence to capitalistic modernity, Chaplin argues that colonial southerners were adamantly opposed to retrogression. Their physical alter-

ations to the natural landscape and their imposition of social hierarchies and cultural values upon the people who lived there made planters defensive to the threat of cultural backsliding. Speaking of white southerners, Chaplin writes, “They worried that their society, faltering between rudeness and civility, might slip back into the savagery they observed in nearby Indian societies.” Contended with the world they had created yet fearful that their wealth would induce indolence and, eventually, “savage” degeneration, southern planters fled from a pioneering past and found comfort in a “modernity” centered on the diligent, albeit cautious, improvement of their contrived kingdoms.

Building on Chaplin’s work, this essay argues that “modernity” can signify a fear of retrogression as much as an embrace of progress. Indeed, it is only in the light of the past that any vision of a “modern” present can be constructed. Consequently, because Alexander Garden and George Whitefield were unaware of the future implications of their ideas, their conceptions of modernity were shaped by a shared fear of retrogression, divergently articulated by selective readings of the past. It was in the comparative use of specific historical examples, embedded within their texts, that these men constructed “modernity.” Combing English history to find analogies for their opponents, the two men cast themselves as “modern” in contrast to their rival’s dangerous repetition of the past. Employing competing historical interpretations to castigate each other as retrogressive, Garden and Whitefield used the past to construct contemporary views of “modernity.” Long ignored by historians, who have preferred to stress their own conceptions of the modern, contemporary textual understandings of modernity played an integral role in the development of eighteenth-century religious identities. Using Charleston’s 1740 revival as a window to the past, this essay reveals the importance of contemporary definitions of “modernity” in the experience of the Great Awakening.

Although recent historiography has anachronistically associated Whitefield with Billy Sunday, it has, nonetheless, provided a methodological approach for analyzing the construction of modernity within contemporary texts. Challenging historians to view the Great Awakening as the creation of nineteenth-century historian Joseph Tracy, and not as a unified series of historic events, Jon Butler’s seminal 1982 essay “Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction” introduced a constructionist argument to studies of the revivals. According to Butler, the “Great Awakening” remained confined


to regional and local levels until Tracy constructed the analytical framework for a united, intercolonial revival in the 1840s. Supported by Joseph Conforti, Butler’s thesis was recently revised by Frank Lambert. Agreeing that the revivals were constructed, Lambert moved Butler’s timetable backward one hundred years, arguing that the “Awakening” was cleverly produced by George Whitefield and other contemporary promoters. Making full use of the growth of eighteenth-century printing trades, Whitefield’s published journals and religious tracts united various regional revivals around common evangelical positions such as solafideism and spiritual regeneration. Establishing a lexicon and template for evangelical discussion and experience, widely circulated conversion narratives and revival accounts helped create a unified “Awakening” along Whitefieldian ecclesiological lines. In Lambert’s account, the Grand Itinerant emerges as a cunning manipulator of both press and pulpit, fashioning localized revivals in his own image and selling them to an imperial audience.

Frank Lambert’s constructionalist approach is helpful, not only in elucidating the formulation and dissemination of revival ecclesiology, but in also providing a model for the spread of common understandings of modernity. In their texts, both George Whitefield and Alexander Garden defined Christian belief in theological and historical terms. Moreover, both men drew upon specific historical references to portray their ideas as modern in comparison with the antiquated beliefs of the past. Providing their readers with a common ecclesiology and a historicized sense of modernity, both the Itinerant and the Commissary used the past to construct visions of the modern.

When George Whitefield arrived in Charleston in January 1740, his reputation as an iconoclast had preceded him. Although an ordained member of the Church of England, Whitefield’s deviation from traditional practices and beliefs made him well known throughout the British Empire. In the months before his arrival, Whitefield’s message of emotional conversion reached thousands of hearers in open-air meetings and thousands more through the widespread circulation of his journals. His message was simple: in order to attain salvation, Christians needed to experience the rebirth of the spirit. Ever an ardent Calvinist, Whitefield felt that the certainty of divine election came only through an emotive, experiential connection with God. Denying the theological importance the Anglican

Church placed upon good works and virtuous living in the attainment of salvation, Whitefield argued that “our salvation is all of GOD, from the beginning to the end: it is not of works . . . man has no hand in it.”

17 For Whitefield, salvation came, not through good deeds, but through the unsolicited action of God upon the hearts of believers. Thus, describing a New Jersey revival six weeks before his arrival in Charleston, Whitefield wrote, “In the midst of my discourse, the hearers began to be melted down, and cried much.”

18 Stressing an emotional connection with divinity that transcended rational doctrines, formal liturgies, and Arminian good works, the Itinerant called for believers to be experientially “born again of GOD.”

In addition to his ecclesiology of new birth, Whitefield brought a nuanced understanding of modernity with him to Charleston. Believing that the Church of England had lost its scriptural moorings, the Itinerant used public letters, sermons, and his widely circulated journals to lash out at what he interpreted as “modern divinity.”

19 For Whitefield, the church’s emphasis upon good works in the act of salvation had strayed too far from the “whole tenour of the gospel.”

20 Calling for a return to the “essential truths” of the faith and stressing a firm reliance upon the “doctrines of the Reformation,” Whitefield’s texts united evangelicals in a common crusade against the ecclesiological corruptions of “modern divinity.”

21 Advancing a “claim to represent the true Church of England against its modern self,” the Itinerant saw himself as a modern-day Luther calling the church to penitent reformation.

22 Like Luther, Whitefield’s dispute with modernity took the form of vicious attacks on “unawakened” clergy. Those ministers who did not share his belief in emotional spiritual regeneration were labeled “blind guides,” “false prophets,” and “dry, sapless, unconverted ministers.”

23 Whitefield’s attack on the “modern” Church of England was more nuanced than a simple dichotomy between pure antiquity and corrupt modernity. While, the Itinerant viewed himself as a reformer restoring the ancient teachings of the church, he also considered his own message to be modern. Specifically, Whitefield argued that the “modern divinity” of his enemies was not really modern at all. Rather, in his texts he connected the Arminianism of the Anglican Church to the pre-Reformation doctrines of

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18 Whitefield, Journals, 350.
20 Ibid., 5: 360.
21 Ibid., 4: 16.
22 Ibid., 5: 355; Whitefield, Journals, 347.
the English Catholic Church. Synonymous with England’s religious past and not her future, Whitefield maintained that the established church’s emphasis upon the soteriological importance of good works hearkened back to the days of pre-Reformation Catholicism.

Trumpeting England’s spiritual progress since the Reformation, Whitefield connected his calls for “a national reformation” to the narrative of Protestant redemption. Recounting a historical account well known to English Protestants, a Whitefield sermon described:

The wonderful and surprising manner of GOD’S bringing about a reformation, in the reign of King Henry the Eighth; his carrying it on in the blessed reign of Edward the Sixth; his delivering us out of the bloody hands of Queen Mary, and destroying the Spanish invincible armada, under her immediate protestant successor Queen Elizabeth; his discovery of the popish plot under King James; the glorious revolution by King William and, to come nearer to our own times, his driving away four thousand five hundred Spaniards, from a weak (though important) frontier colony ... his giving us Louisbourg, one of the strongest fortresses of our enemies, contrary to all human probability, but the other day, into our hands.

According to the Itinerant, from the moment of the Reformation through the most recent times—that is, “but the other day”—God had showered divine blessings upon a Protestant England. In response to these “national mercies,” Whitefield argued that it “will render us utterly excusable if they do not . . . incite us all, with one heart, to keep GOD’S statutes, and to observe his laws.” Of course, for Whitefield, proper obedience to divine law entailed “preaching the truth as it is in JESUS.”

Associating his message with the purity of the Reformation, Whitefield compared Anglican Arminianism with England’s history of Catholicism. Labeling followers of the “modern divinity” as “doctrinal papists,” the Itinerant’s letters, sermons, and Journals frequently connected his opponents with a Catholic past. Comparing Anglicans and Catholics, Whitefield wrote, “Were I to convert Papists, my business would be to shew that they were misguided by their priests; and if I want to convince Church of England Protestants, I must prove that the generality of their teachers do not preach or live up to the truth as it is in Jesus.” Similarly associating himself with the reforming tradition, Whitefield wrote, “If I have any regard for the honour of Christ, and good of souls, I must lift up my voice like a trumpet,

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25 Ibid., 5: 92.
26 Ibid., 5: 91-92.
27 Ibid., 5: 92.
28 Ibid., 5: 364.
29 Ibid., 4: 27.
30 Whitefield, Journals, 342.
and shew how sadly our Church ministers are fallen from the doctrines of the Reformation. Taking his historical cues from the Reformation, Whitefield railed against the "clergy's preaching up good works" and noted that, in comparison to the pseudo-Catholic doctrines of the Anglican Church, "mine is a new gospel." While "the generality of the clergy of the church of England" remained mired in popish doctrines of works righteousness, Whitefield "plead[ed] for free justification in the sight of God, by faith alone ... without any regard to works past, present, or to come." For the Itinerant, his message of "justification by faith alone" was "the great fundamental point in which we differ from the church of Rome;" it was the message of the Reformation and the gospel "for which the glorious martyrs of the Church of England burnt in Smithfield." Arguing that Luther would "thunder against" Anglican Arminianism, Whitefield openly compared his critics to the seventeenth-century Catholic apologist Robert Cardinal Bellarmine. Contrasting his message with a religious climate filled with "Bellarmine like," backward-looking "Papists," George Whitefield's sermons and journals drew upon the English Reformation to present the Itinerant's message in the light of Protestant modernity.

Whitefield employed his concept of modernity, well developed by the time he arrived in Charleston in January 1740, in the journalistic account of his confrontations with Alexander Garden. Noting that there was "no stirring among the dry bones" in South Carolina, the Itinerant maintained that Anglican ministers "did not preach justification by faith alone." Complaining publicly to Whitefield, Alexander Garden wrote that the evangelist frequently depicted Anglican clerics as "blind Guides, false Teachers, and [those who were] leading the People to the Gates of Hell." More than rhetorical anticlericalism, Whitefield's textual treatment of Garden and his colleagues used historical parallels drawn from England's Catholic past to portray the Commissary as retrogressive and evangelicalism as modern.

Visiting Charleston three times between January and July 1740, Whitefield recorded each trip, and the subsequently unfolding commissarial controversy, in his Journal. Because the Commissary was out of town in

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31 Ibid., 347.
32 Whitefield, Works, 4: 16, 15.
33 Ibid., 4: 16, 116.
34 Ibid., 5: 116, 118.
36 Ibid., 4: 116.
37 Whitefield, Journals, 387, 398.
38 Alexander Garden, Six Letters to The Reverend Mr. George Whitefield (Boston: T. Fleet, 1740), 22.
January, Whitefield’s first confrontation with him came in March. Described in the Journal, the March discussion at Garden’s home provided the Itinerant with an opportunity to compare his opponent to England’s Catholic past.

Noting that Alexander Garden was offended, not only by his enthusiasm and anticlericalism, but also by his temerity at defying ecclesiastical authority, Whitefield portrayed the Commissary as a pompous official. Importantly, his journalistic account used words such as “sneer” to describe the Commissary’s gaze, “cool” to describe his attitude toward the Itinerant, and “passion” and “rage” to refer to Garden’s intense anger. According to Whitefield, Garden greeted him with the pronouncement, “You have got above us;” undoubtedly, the Commissary wanted to bring the errant priest to heel. Such language of inferiority—of hierarchical demarcation—immediately portrayed Garden as a rigid paternalist. Although Whitefield waited for nearly a page until employing Catholic imagery in his description, his initial rendering of the Commissary as an officious ecclesiastical bureaucrat lacks only the red robes of an authoritarian curia.

Connecting Garden to “the generality of the clergy” he spoke against, Whitefield noted that doctrinally he “was as ignorant as the rest.” Yet even the Commissary’s Arminianism was not enough to draw the Itinerant’s memory back to pre-Reformation Catholicism. It was only when Garden warned Whitefield to cease his anticlerical attacks or face clerical suspension that the Itinerant used rhetorical imagery to connect the Commissary’s ecclesiastical office, his theological views, and his threats directly to the Catholic past. “I replied,” Whitefield wrote, “I should regard that [a clerical suspension] as much as I would a Pope’s bull.” As in his previous associations between the Arminianism of the establishment and pre-Reformation Catholicism, Whitefield equated Garden’s pomposity with Rome. Openly flaunting the Commissary’s power, the Itinerant made it plain to his readers that Alexander Garden represented a revived form of Catholic doctrine and authority.

Commissary Garden’s anger at this comparison did not improve his image in the eyes of Whitefield’s readers. Shouting the Itinerant down, he ordered, “Get you out of my house.” Importantly, while the Commissary fumed in his drawing room, the Journal noted that the intrepid Whitefield “drank tea with the Independent [i.e., Congregational] minister, and preached at four in the afternoon, to a large auditory in his meetinghouse.”

Leaving Charleston in mid March, Whitefield returned to the city in early July. Continuing to preach openly against the clergy and stress the

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39 Whitefield, Journals, 397-398.
40 Ibid., 397.
41 Ibid., 397-398.
42 Ibid., 398.
43 Ibid.
necessity of an experiential conversion, the itinerant once again drew the Commissary's wrath. As in March, Whitefield's Journal used the trope of retrogressive Catholicism to depict Garden's opposition. Thus, when the Commissary began a series of vitriolic sermons against Whitefieldian enthusiasm, the itinerant interpreted it through the lenses of religious persecution. Attending services at Garden's St. Philip's Church on July 6, Whitefield noted that he "heard the Commissary preach as virulent...a discourse as ever I heard in my life. His heart seemed full of choler and resentment; and out of the abundance thereof, he poured forth so many bitter words against the Methodists (as he called them) in general, and me in particular, that several, who intended to receive the Sacrament at his hands, withdrew."42 Approach by Garden's clerk and asked "not to come to the Sacrament" until he had spoken with the rector, Whitefield "immediately retired" to his lodgings, "rejoicing that I was accounted worthy to suffer this further degree of contempt for my dear Lord's sake."43 In confiding to a friend that "the commissary denied me the sacrament," Whitefield commented, "Persecution seems to be coming on more and more."44

For George Whitefield, the theme of religious persecution served as a textual vehicle to connect his opponent to a Catholic past. Listening to the Commissary's sermon, and interpreting his remarks as a form of persecution, Whitefield told the readers of his Journal that "I could not help thinking that the preacher was of the same spirit as Bishop Gardiner in Queen Mary's days."45 More than a rhetorical flourish, the itinerant's choice to compare Alexander Garden to a sixteenth-century Catholic bishop directly contributed to his understanding of evangelical modernity. While today literary references to Stephen Gardiner, the Marian bishop of Winchester, fall on largely unfamiliar ears, Whitefield's contemporaries recognized him immediately. Made infamous by John Foxe's popular Book of Martyrs, Bishop Gardiner was among the most ruthless of Catholic persecutors. Importantly, Whitefield had read Foxe's work within six months of his initial arrival in Charleston and was, consequently, clearly aware of the literary power of the Gardiner image.46 The man who crowned Mary Tudor queen of England, Stephen Gardiner was a chief protagonist in the Catholic

41Ibid., 439.
42Ibid.
43Whitefield, Works, 1: 197.
44Whitefield, Journals, 439.
45Whitefield, Works, 1: 64. Describing John Foxe's eighteenth-century popularity, Linda Colley writes that the Book of Martyrs was "one of the few books that one might plausibly expect to find even in a working-class household." First published in 1563, Foxe's work was reissued, in serialized form, throughout the eighteenth century. For more information, see Linda Colley, Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992), 25-28.
persecution of English Protestants and the prototypical representative of the darkest days of Marian religious oppression. Described by John Foxe as a "papistical monster," Gardiner emerged in the *Book of Martyrs* as "ambitious, cruel, and bigoted." In one scathing passage, Foxe notes that Bishop Gardiner "sat down with a joyful heart to dinner" while Protestant saints burned at the stake. More than devilishly cruel, Foxe portrayed Gardiner as blinded by wrath. Relating the bishop's interrogation of accused Protestant Rowland Taylor, John Foxe wrote that Gardiner became inflamed with passion, "exclaim[ing] at one point that "thou art a blasphemous heretic!" It was to John Foxe's image of this man, and the persecutorial past that he represented, that George Whitefield compared his commissarial opponent. Possessing nearly identical names, and equally strong tempers, Garden and Gardiner seemed analogous in the mind of the Itinerant.

Yet if in Whitefield's *Journal* the Commissary emerged as a Catholic persecutor, the Itinerant depicted himself as a faithful Protestant martyr. Associating Alexander Garden's "choler and resentment" with Stephen Gardiner's wrath, the Itinerant simultaneously compared himself with the bishop's persecuted quarry. Although never explicitly naming a Marian martyr, Whitefield's response to the Commissary's "bitter words" mimicked the response of Protestant saint Rowland Taylor to Gardiner's persecution. Familiar as he was with the Gardiner image, Whitefield was undoubtedly familiar with the patient resolve of Foxe's martyrs. For example, when Bishop Gardiner railed against Taylor—even to the point of throwing off his hat—Foxe wrote that the Protestant saint "heard his abuse patiently" and remained "piously collected and severe." Sentenced to death, Taylor rode to the stake "joyful and merry, as one that accounted himself going to a most pleasant banquet or bridal." Calling upon his guards to "repeant and amend their evil and wicked living . . . he caused them to wonder and rejoice, to see him so constant and steadfast, void of all fear, joyful in heart, and glad to die." Representative of the behavior of other saints in Foxe's martyrology, Taylor demonstrated patient self-sacrifice in response to Gardiner's violence and vitriol.

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50 Ibid., 238. In Foxe's rendition, Gardiner took "scarcely . . . a few mouthfuls" of food when he became fatally ill. Lingering for fifteen days in "great torment," the bishop died in 1555.
51 Ibid., 217.
54 Ibid., 218.
55 The point of this comparison is not to connect Taylor directly to Whitefield, but to argue that Taylor exemplified qualities pervasive both in Foxe's treatment of other persecuted martyrs and in Whitefield's self-portrayal in his *Journals*. Because
Like Taylor's reaction to Gardiner, Whitefield's journal demonstrates a similar pattern of behavior in the commissarial controversy. Attending church on the Sunday following his initial comparison between Garden and Gardiner, George Whitefield again experienced the Commissary's wrath. Describing Garden's sermon, the Itinerant wrote, "Had some infernal spirit been sent to draw my picture, I think it scarcely possible that he could have painted me in more horrid colours. I think, if ever, then was the time that all manner of evil was spoken against me falsely for Christ's sake."56 Importantly, however, Whitefield noted that "whilst the Commissary was representing me thus, I felt the Blessed Spirit strengthening and refreshing my soul... I did not feel the least resentment against the preacher. No; I pitied, I prayed for him; and wished, from my soul, that the Lord would convert him, as he once did the persecutor Saul."57 While Whitefield's patient, self-sacrificing resolve could describe nearly all Protestant Marian martyrs, his response to Garden bears a striking resemblance to John Foxe's treatment of Rowland Taylor's reaction to Bishop Gardiner. Like his overt comparisons between Garden and Gardiner, Whitefield's reaction to the Commissary's "persecution" resembles Taylor's saintly patience.

George Whitefield's historical self-representation as a self-sacrificing Marian martyr is consistent with larger literary tropes in his work. Harry Stout's 1991 biography of the Itinerant notes that "Whitefield's great ambition was to characterize and impersonate the world of the biblical saint."58 Indeed, Stout argues that Whitefield's success as a popular preacher stemmed from his dramatic ability to "transform the pulpit into a sacred theater that vitally re-presented the lives of biblical saints and sinners to his captivated listeners."59 And while Stout particularly focuses on Whitefield's mimicry of the Apostle Paul in both "language and peripatetic lifestyle," the Itinerant's own work refers to his admiration of other Christian saints.60 Informing an evangelical colleague in the summer of 1739 that he was "now reading the book of martyrs," Whitefield wrote, "They make me blush to think how little I suffer for Christ's sake. They warm my heart, and

56 Whitefield, Journals, 442.
57 Ibid., 442.
58 Stout, Divine Dramatist, xx.
59 Ibid., 44.
60 Ibid., 56.
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make me think the time long till I am called to resist even unto blood."64 The self-sacrificing zeal of the martyrs inspired the Itinerant to such an extent, writes Harry Stout, that “few words occur with greater frequency in Whitefield’s journal than ‘persecution’.”65 Consequently, whether in direct imitation of Taylor or not, Whitefield’s portrayal of himself as a patient martyr, in contrast to the sharp attacks of Alexander Garden (Stephen Gardiner), complemented his existing pattern of dramatic, historical self-representation.

By casting Alexander Garden as the persecutorial Bishop Gardiner, and subsequently adopting the persona of a Marian saint, George Whitefield’s journal connected the Commissary directly to the repudiated tenets of England’s Catholic past. For the Itinerant, because the Marian martyrs had been vindicated by the ascent of Protestant Elizabeth, both Alexander Garden’s doctrine and his persecution were anachronistic reminders of a defeated and defunct worldview. Thus, in a world where papal bulls, works righteousness, and religious persecution were antiquated, Whitefield defined himself as a modern harbinger of reforming zeal.

George Whitefield was not the only theologian to construct a “modern” self-image. Long labeled as retrogressive and therefore largely ignored, Alexander Garden, nevertheless, offered a decidedly different opinion of the Itinerant’s evangelicism. Like Whitefield, the Commissary constructed his definition of modernity through historical comparison. Describing a sermon Garden delivered at St. Philip’s Church in July 1740, Whitefield remarked, “The Commissary seemed to ransack church history for instances of enthusiasm and abused grace.”66 Just as Whitefield appealed to the theological errors of a Catholic past to describe Garden’s Church, the Commissary turned to history to find a suitable analogue for his evangelical opponent.

Before Garden could draw historical parallels in the construction of Anglican modernity, he needed to articulate his chief disagreements with Whitefieldian evangelicism. In a series of open letters and sermons, Garden vehemently rejected Whitefield’s insistence upon experiential conversion as a sign of spiritual regeneration. Describing the “new birth” in a 1740 sermon, the Commissary noted that evangelicals were “running about the World with their Feelings.”67 In contrast to the instantaneous, and often emotional, nature of evangelical rebirth, Garden maintained that salvation

64 Whitefield, Works, I: 64.
65 Stout, Divine Dramatist, 54.
66 Whitefield, Journals, 442.
was a "gradual and co-operative work of the Holy Spirit joining in with our Understandings, and leading us on by Reason and Persuasion, from one Degree to another, of Faith, good Dispositions, Acts, and Habits of Piety." A lifelong process whereby God's grace cooperated with human works, regeneration was, above all, a rational process. For Garden, God communicated to his parishioners through the stately cadences of scripture and prayer book, not through the unruliness of the passionate conversion experience. Describing a Whitefieldian revival to his congregation, Garden noted that as soon as a handkerchief was brandished, "then there's Conversion—Work, Power, and Success." In contrast to the logic of Anglicanism, Whitefieldian evangelicalism preferred sensory experiences, such as "immediate Revelations... Impulses, Motions, or Impressions of the Holy Spirit on our Minds."

More than the emotionalism of the evangelical experience, Garden was troubled by the exclusivity of Whitefield's gospel. The Commissary noted that, from Whitefield's perspective, unless believers "have the same evangelical Feelings," they "cannot be saved." Speaking of Whitefieldian doctrines, the Commissary told his parishioners that if you do not apprehend them sufficiently grounded in the Holy Scriptures, or even taught by the Catholic Church of Christ in any Age, The Reason is, they'll answer you, because you are an unregenerate Person; you have not the Spirit of God dwelling in you, by which alone the Things of the Spirit can be discerned; but you see and judge of spiritual things only by the Eyes of your Carnal and corrupt Reason.

Describing Whitefield directly, Garden preached, "He is sure that the Doctrine is true, he knows it, he feels it, and they are all damned who will not believe it." Taking direct aim at the Itinerant's claims to infallibility in an open letter to Whitefield, the Commissary noted that "if any[one] dares to dispute [you]... let them but remember, it has pleased God to give you the true Knowledge of the Doctrines of Grace." With sarcasm dripping from his pen, Garden wondered how a person could argue with someone who has "God himself speaking inwardly to their Souls; immediately teaching, and infallibly leading them into all Truth." Such claims to infallibility must, the Commissary lamented, "hush every Tongue to Silence."

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65 Ibid., 12.
66 Garden, Take Heed, 25.
67 Garden, Regeneration, 1.
68 Ibid., 21.
69 Ibid., 3.
70 Ibid., 23.
71 Garden, Six Letters, 37.
72 Garden, Regeneration, 2.
CONSTRUCTING MODERNITY

Rejecting irrational emotionalism and prideful infallibility, Alexander Garden historicized Whitefield’s ideas in the context of repudiated doctrines. Where, however, did Garden find historical analogies to Whitefield? In his recent article, “Suppressing the Great Awakening: Alexander Garden’s Use of Anti-Popery against George Whitefield,” John P. Barrington suggests that the Commissary interpreted Whitefield’s message through anti-Catholic lenses. Relying upon Garden’s repeated references to the Itinerant as a “Romish Missionary,” “Jesuit,” and “Romish EMISSARY,” Barrington maintains that Garden “laid [ed] Whitefield’s beliefs and practices to well-established Catholic stereotypes.”

Appealing to popular fears of a Popish menace lurking in Spanish Florida, Barrington argues that Garden connected the Itinerant’s message and style with dogmatic Catholicism. Thus, in response to Whitefield’s experiential “new birth,” Garden warned, the “laying aside of Reason, is a first Doctrine of Popery, the main Foundation of the terrible Fabrick of Rome.”

While Garden’s response to Whitefield certainly drew upon the anti-Catholicism of his community, his placement of the Itinerant in the timeline of ecclesiastical history went beyond accusations of Popery. Although he identified Whitefield with contemporary fears of Papist plots, Garden made no references to Catholic history. Unlike the Itinerant, the Commissary did not mention papal bulls, Protestant martyrs, or Bishop Gardiner. Consequently, when constructing a sense of Anglican modernity, the Commissary compared his opponent, not to a Catholic past, but to the excesses of the English Civil War. Looking back nearly one hundred years, Garden repeatedly connected Whitefield’s “enthusiasm” with that “fatal Evolution, which like a Torrent broke in and overspread the British Dominions, in the Oliverian Days.”

In a widely published 1740 sermon entitled, Regeneration and the Testimony of the Spirit, Alexander Garden used specific historical examples to tie his opponent to the past. Asking his congregation if they heard “any new Gospel or Message from Heaven” from the Itinerant, Garden reminded them that Whitefield’s “crude and Enthusiastic Notions . . . prevailed about the same Period of the last Century.” “Now revived and propagated by Mr. Whitefield,” the enthusiasm of the Civil War threatened orthodox Christianity once again. Noting that “we have had enough of such Pretend-

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25 Ibid., 8.
26 Garden, Take Heed, 26.
27 Garden, Regeneration, 21, i.
28 Ibid., i.
ers and Pretensions to the Spirit,” Garden cautioned his hearers to “look back to the Oliverian Days.” Recalling the perfectionist claims of Commonwealth Puritans, the Commissary reminded his congregation

what Ruin and Desolation such Pretenders brought upon the Kingdom!
How did they swarm throughout the Nation! A Parliament; — even an Army
all Saints, Preachers, spiritual and regenerate Men! And yet alas, how were
they divided and subdivided by the Spirit into a 1000 Sects, Sorts and
Divisions, ‘till nothing but Confusion as a Cloud covered the whole Face
of the Land.  

“Beware,” Garden warned the faithful, “of the old Story over again!” “Be on
your Guard,” he cajoled, “Suffer not your Passions to be moved . . . as your
minds are instructed.”

Garden’s association of Whitefieldian enthusiasm with the religious
excesses of the Commonwealth period was a common theme in his writings.
In *Take Heed How Ye Hear*, a sermon delivered before Whitefield in July 1740,
the Commissary noted that during the English Civil War religious conflicts
“bore down Church and State.” Remembering the horrors of the previous
century, Garden mused, “How did Enthusiasm then rage and prevail in all
Shapes and Degrees. How strangely did it infatuate, and set Men’s Heads a
wandering after purer Worship and better Edification . . . branching into all the
Reveries of Quakers, Ranters, Muggletonians, Antinomians, Seekers, and so
many others.”

In his private correspondence, as in his public sermons, Garden compared Whitefield’s enthusiasm to the excesses of the Protectorate. In a 1740 letter to the Bishop of London, Garden apologized for the tardiness of his letter, noting my pen “has been wholly employ’d in guarding
the People of my Charge, against the fascinating Gibbets of young George
Fox, alias Whitefield.” Describing the Itinerant as a “wild Visionary Youth,
whose Head is filled with a Jumble of Antinomian and Quaker Notions,” the
Commissary noted that “he boasts himself to be some great One indeed,
sent forth from God . . . to give light to the World, and restore the true
Doctrines of the Gospel.” Thus, while Whitefield saw his reforming zeal in a “modern” light, Garden ridiculed the “reformer” for his “Tendency
towards some dogmatical Notions that prevailed in the Oliverian times.”

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77 Ibid., 24.
78 Ibid., 24-25.
79 Ibid., 25.
81 Ibid., 26.
82 Alexander Garden to the Bishop of London, April 24, 1740, in George W.
Williams, ed., “Letters to the Bishop of London from the Commissaries in South
83 Ibid., 297, 296.
84 Ibid., 296.
CONSTRUCTING MODERNITY

Although planting his opponent’s ideas firmly in the past, Garden, nevertheless, relied upon recent examples to make his point. In *Take Heed How Ye Hear*, Garden compared Whitefield to a contemporary group of “deluded” enthusiasts. Drawing double connections both to the past (the Commonwealth) and the present (Whitefieldian evangelicalism), Garden’s treatment of the Dutarte family clearly demonstrated the modern perils of following Protectorate-era enthusiasm.67

Living in Orange Quarter, South Carolina, during the early years of Garden’s ministry, the Dutarte family was “always in low Circumstances,” but “of honest Repute.”68 Influenced at some point by a “strolling . . . Enthusiast” who “filled their Heads with many wild and fantastic Notions,” the family withdrew from society.69 Believing that “they were the alone Family upon Earth who had the true Knowledge and Worship of God,” the Dutartes exchanged “Visions and Revelations” among themselves.69 Led by a man they believed was divinely inspired, Dutarte son-in-law Peter Rombert, the family followed the “spirit’s” guidance into incest and adultery. Eventually, when a group of magistrates approached their home with warrants, the family opened fire. According to Garden, Peter Rombert, the “Prophet,” told the family that “God commanded them to arm and defend themselves ... and that no Weapon formed against them should prosper.”70 Defeated in a pitched battle that claimed the lives of two people, five Dutarte men were arrested, convicted, and sentenced to death. While awaiting their sentence, Commissary Garden visited them in prison and attempted to use reason and logic to convince them of their error. Failing to persuade them, Garden wrote, “They were confident they had the Spirit of God speaking inwardly to their Souls, and who was I to pretend to talk to, or instruct them?”71

Clearly, Garden’s publication of “this Tragical Scene of Enthusiasm” was a carefully directed attack upon Whitefieldian enthusiasm.72 Yet it is important to note that the story was firmly rooted in the past. Indeed, in his sermon, Garden placed the Dutarte example immediately after an analysis of “Oliveters, Ranters, Quakers, [and] French Prophets.”73 Lumping Whitefield

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67 Originally included as an extended example in Garden’s sermon, the tale of the Dutarte family was later published separately as *Brief Account of the Deluded Dutartes; Extracted from a Sermon Preached by the Rev. Mr. Alexander Garden, A.M. At Charlestown, in South-Carolina* (New Haven, Conn.: James Parker and Company, 1762).
69 Ibid., 5.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., 7.
72 Ibid., 8.
73 Ibid.
74 Whitefield, *Journals*, 442.
and the Dutartes together, Garden compared all current enthusiasts to the bogey men of the Commonwealth.

Garden’s repeated references to the English Civil War were designed both to denigrate his opponent as retrogressive and to display his own Church’s modernity. Thus, his selection of the “Oliverian Days” as a historical counterpart to Whitefieldian enthusiasm was especially important. For the Commissary, the Civil War served as the historical benchmark of his faith. Like Whitefield’s use of the Protestant Reformation, the Commonwealth was Garden’s dividing line between past and present. Indeed, Garden’s Church and his entire theological worldview were products of the Restoration. Formulated in response to the excesses of the English Civil War, the postwar Church renounced the regicidal dogmatism and enthusiasm of the previous generation. Termed latitudinarianism by its opponents, the ecclesiology of the Restoration Church of England stressed the harmony of faith and reason. Describing the acceptance of this new ecclesiology, L. P. Curtis noted, “The minds of countless vicars, rectors, and higher clergy stirred to the vision of divine harmony and purpose... They left the defiles of Narrow Puritanism and laudian ritual for whitewash and the sunlight of moderation and sweet reasonableness.”

Filling their ranks with Roundheads and royalists alike, latitudinarian Anglicans eschewed the immoderation of religious enthusiasm and warfare, seeking consensus in commonly held religious beliefs. Central to this new creed was the concept of rational moderation. Sedate, reasonable, and moralistic, latitudinarianism sought to break down dogmatic divisions and foster a unity based on common sense.

While perhaps idealistic, the latitudinarian vision of peaceful rationality became by 1700 the normative expression of Anglican piety. The movement’s success stemmed in part from the overwhelming popularity of John Tillotson. Archbishop of Canterbury from 1691 to 1694, and an outspoken latitudinarian apologist, John Tillotson’s popularly read sermons clearly articulated the latitudinarian commitment to rationality. Indeed, for Tillotson, Christianity was believable only in so much as it was reasonable. “Whatever doctrines,” the Archbishop wrote, “[that] God reveals to men are pronounced to their Understandings, and by this Faculty we are to examine all Doctrines which pretend to be from God.”

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he continued, "as a Divine Doctrine and Revelation, without good evidence that it so: that is, without some argument sufficient to satisfy a prudent and considerate man." Rejecting "implicit Faith," Tillotson argued that "all doctrines [should be] brought into the light."  

Archbishop Tillotson's concern for a rational faith stemmed from his fear of immoderate behavior. Warning his readers to be wary of "the wild freaks of Enthusiasm," Tillotson reminded them that "it is every man's Duty who hath ability and capacity for it, to endeavour to understand the Grounds of his Religion." For Tillotson, the basis for religion rested "upon the plain square of Scripture and Reason." Thus, he argued that "if any man be transported with a wild zeal . . . it is great odds but he is in error: None are so likely to judge amiss, as they whose minds are clouded and blinded by their passions." Maintaining that most claims to revelation were motivated by "mere fancy or gross delusion," Tillotson encouraged his readers to ground their faith in the rational, scriptural promises of a reasonable God.

Of course, for Tillotson, nothing was more rational than "pleasing God by doing what he commands and avoiding what he forbids." Indeed, the latitudinarian connection between Arminian good works and rationality is a reoccurring theme throughout the Archbishop's work. Placing the ecumenical pursuit of good deeds above the exclusivity of dogmatic creeds, Tillotson argued that virtuous behavior ensured both temporal and eternal happiness. By inducing benevolence, equity, and civility—in the form of righteous deeds and virtuous behavior—religion was "the greatest friend to our temporal interests;" what is more, the charitable and pious believer "lays the foundation of his future happiness to all Eternity." Maintaining that "the practice of all piety and virtue is agreeable to our reason," Tillotson's ecclesiology conflated Arminian good works with rational behavior. Far from dogmatic creadalisism, the Archbishop's rational Arminianism emphasized virtuous living over exclusive confessionalism. Thus, he argued, "I had much rather persuade any one to be a good man, than to be of any party or denomination of Christians whatsoever."
Developed in response to the religious enthusiasm of the Civil War, John Tillotson’s latitudinarian rationality directly influenced Alexander Garden’s faith. Echoing the Archbishop, Garden told his parishioners, “Not more certain is the Light of the Sun at Noon-day to the natural Eye than that of the Gospel is to the rational Mind.”107 Enthusiasm, Garden noted, involved abandoning “natural Reason”; faith, he maintained, must be supported by “rational objective Evidence, or clear and sufficient Proof.”108 Moreover, evidence of personal piety, he argued, should not come from an emotive, instantaneous conversion, but from a life filled with virtuous behavior. Commissary Garden’s adoption of Tillotsonian latitudinarianism was by no means exceptional among colonial clergics. Describing the religious climate of the eighteenth century, Gerald R. Cragg wrote, “Tillotson was dead, but his sermons were the ethical handbook of the new age.”109 In South Carolina, Walter Edgar’s research noted that Tillotson was the most popular religious author in the colony, and Richard Beale Davis has declared him “far and away the most popular writer of sermons in the colonial South.”110 Regularly available from Charleston bookshops, the Archbishop’s works were also routinely quoted in widely circulated secular magazines such as the Tatler and Spectator.111 For Alexander Garden, John Tillotson’s rational gloss on Anglican spirituality saved it from the “Bane of true Religion, Enthusiasm.”112 Separating a modern, inclusive, and reasonable faith from the exclusive, enthusiastic excesses of the past, Tillotson was the bulwark of Anglican modernity. He was, in Garden’s words, “among the most sound, pious, and learned Authors that ever adorned the English Church or Nation.”113

107 Garden, Take Heed, 9.
108 Garden, Regeneration, 1.
111 Although not published outside of Britain in the eighteenth century, Archbishop Tillotson’s works were available from most colonial bookshops. Within a year of the founding of the South Carolina Gazette, the paper’s editor, Peter Timothy, advertised Tillotson’s Works for sale from his printing office. Other individuals or shops that advertised Tillotson’s sermons included Isaac da Costa, Robert Wells, Nicholson and Bampfield, George Wood, and Nicholas Langford. For more information, see South Carolina Gazette, March 24, 1733, February 5, 1753, July 1, 1756, November 5, 1763, July 20, 1767, November 7, 1768, and May 3, 1770.
112 Garden, Take Heed, 5.
113 Garden, Six Letters, 32-33.
What was modern for Garden, however, was retrogressive to Whitefield. While the Commissary lauded Tillotson, Whitefield openly railed against the Archbishop's Arminianism. In an open letter published in the spring of 1740, the Itinerant claimed that Tillotson “knew no more about true Christianity than Mahomet.” For the Itinerant, Tillotson’s reliance upon reason and good works amounted to a Catholic corruption of the gospel. Again relying upon anti-Catholic imagery, the Itinerant compared his assault on the Archbishop with “Luther’s writing and objecting... against the Indulgences of the Pope.” Responding to Whitefield’s attacks, Garden defended Tillotson by noting that “the great and good Archbishop is still quite alive and well (his Works and Memory I mean) and will doubtless long survive in the highest Honour and Esteem, after you and your dirty Pamphlets are sunk into Oblivion.”

In the spring and summer of 1740, both George Whitefield and Alexander Garden constructed conceptions of ecclesiastical modernity. Contrasting each other with specific historical referents, the Commissary and the Itinerant attempted to lay claim to a “modern” present. Whether rational in comparison to the Civil War, or theologically pure in contrast to pre-Reformation Catholicism, their branches of Anglicanism both claimed to be modern. Importantly, while Garden and Whitefield possessed differing views, both understood that modernity was a reflection of historical analysis. The fear of retrogression, rather than the progressive allure of innovation, drove their conceptions of the modern. Unlike recent historians who have found cultural affinities with Whitefield and declared him modern, neither Garden nor Whitefield viewed their modernity in terms of an unforeseen future. Rather, turning to seminal moments in their ecclesiastical history, they embedded their own modernity, and their opponent’s retrogression, in the familiar narratives of the past.

Who, therefore, was most modern? Was George Whitefield truly the “harbinger of modernity”? Did democracy, equality, and Jimmy Swaggart follow in his footsteps? Can we really trace the rise of modern America in the tracks of revival tears? This essay maintains that, historically speaking, modernity can only be assessed through the mouths of the protagonists. Thus, to assume that Whitefield was more “modern” than Garden based on the broad scope of national development since 1740 is both ahistorical and anachronistic. What can be averred, however, is that modernity is as much a creation of historical actors as it is of historians. Moreover, the fact that

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115 Ibid., 12.
116 Garden, Six Letters, 36.
both Alexander Garden and George Whitefield claimed to be modern and that both constructed elaborate views of their modernity and their opponents' retrogression suggests that the ecclesiological controversies surrounding the Great Awakening may have been more than theological disputes. An examination of Charleston's "Awakening" reveals that the Commissary and the Itinerant not only spread religious ideology, but also constructed and disseminated specific visions of the past. Their comparative use of history created identities for their followers that transcended theological positions. Consequently, Whitefield's textual understanding of "modernity" portrayed the faithful as both ecclesiologically born again and as historical heirs of Luther. Similarly, Garden described orthodox Anglicans as the rational pacifiers of Civil War-era lunacy. In their understandings of the past, both Garden and Whitefield laid claim to a tradition of forward-thinking "modernism" that gave historical, retrogressive definition to their foes and "modern" identity to their followers. It is this sense of contemporary, historicized, textualized "modernity" that is sadly lacking in current historiographic treatments of the Great Awakening. Indeed, it seems plausible that Garden and Whitefield's own sense of the modern should have more historiographic weight than those who have spoken for them in the years since 1740.