EDITOR'S NOTE: We inaugurate here a new feature of *JBS* entitled "Backcountry Book Chapters in Progress." This article will be Chapter Five in *Humility before the Past: Political Moderation in American History, 1713-1913,* now under consideration at Cambridge University Press.

Ordered Liberty in the Southern Backcountry and the Middle-West

BY ROBERT CALHOON

"We are more moral and religious and less absorbed in business and care of the world than the people of west Tennessee or any cotton country. . . . Where all of the work, or nearly all, is performed by slaves, a consequent inaction and idleness are characteristic of the whites, and anyone knows that there is no surer way of vitiating a man than to leave him with nothing to do." David Anderson Deaderick, 1825

John Sevier wanted a drink in the worst way. He and his companions had been riding hard all day on November 10, 1788, trying desperately to salvage their movement to break off the Blue Ridge mountains and the Appalachian pleateau beyond from North Carolina and Virginia and create in that territory a new state of Franklin. Even as Sevier rode from one settlement to another, the North Carolina legislature debated whether to thwart his efforts by ceding its western territory to the Continental Congress and whether to punish Sevier for taking the law into his own hands.[1]

Coming to David Deaderick's tavern in Jonesborough, in what became east Tennessee, at about seven in the evening, Sevier found the door shut and locked. Deaderick, a prominent foe of the Franklin separatists, had closed for the night and was sitting in an adjoining shed talking to his neighbor, Andrew Caldwell, who ran a country store next door. Deaderick's son heard Sevier knocking and ran to tell his father. With Caldwell in tow, Deaderick strolled deliberately through the darkened tavern, whistling as he went, and opened the door to face an impatient Sevier. The intruder bluntly announced, "we want no whistling here. We want whiskey or rum." Deaderick replied that "as to whistling, I hope I may do as I please, but whiskey or rum I have none." Sevier said he was prepared to pay for his liquor and demanded to be served. Deaderick stood his ground. Sevier asked Caldwell to sell him a drink and Caldwell likewise refused. "After hesitating a very little time," Deaderick later testified, Sevier "began to abuse this place, then its inhabitants without distinction, until [Deaderick] thought to abuse so pointedly leveled at him that he asked Sevier" if that was the case. "Yes, at you or [glaring at Caldwell] anyone else."[2]

After exchanging what Deaderick called "several high words," Sevier called Deaderick "a son of a bitch." "I am a damned son of a bitch," Deaderick shot back and stepped close enough to thrust his face close to Sevier, who "immediately drew his pistols." "Oh, if you are for that," Deaderick shouted, "I have pistols too." Deaderick went back into the tavern and returned with pistols in both hands to find his way blocked by Caldwell, "lest they abuse you." After glaring at Caldwell for a moment, Deaderick

[1] David C. Hsiung, *Two Worlds in the Tennessee Mountains: Exploring the Origins of Appalachian Stereotypes* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1997), pp. 49-50.

[2] Hsiung, *Two Worlds*, pp. 50-51.

brushed past him to find himself staring directly into the barrels of Sevier's guns, just fifteen feet away. Caldwell came to Deaderick's defense, demanding that Sevier pay an old debt. Sevier denied owing it. Caldwell called him "a damned eternal liar." "By God! I will shoot you," now aiming one of his guns at Caldwell. In the confusion a gun went off, wounding a bystander named Richard Collier. Sevier and his party hastily mounted up and rode off.[3]

The confrontation between Deaderick and Sevier was a tableau of moderate and immoderate politics in the southern backcountry. When Deaderick whistled on his way to open his tavern door on that November evening in 1788, he challenged Sevier's manhood. Seven years earlier, Major Patrick Ferguson, British commander of armed loyalists from Pennsylvania and Maryland, had invaded these same North Carolina mountains after issuing a proclamation challenging British supporters in the region not to hide behind their wives' skirts but to come out and support the Crown in the armed struggle with their Whig neighbors. The tactic backfired. Hundreds of aroused, patriot "over the mountain men" came after Ferguson and chased the loyalist force to a slaughter on the slopes of Kings Mountain, southwest of Charlotte. Whistling was a German folkway communicating what one observer called German settlers' "extremely tenacious" defense of family and community "property." For Germans, property rights were familial, communal, and socially constructed—in contrast with the British Lockean concept of property as an individual natural right.[4]

Looking back in the 1820s on his and his father's overlapping careers as merchants and advocates of regional consciousness in the southern Appalachian world, David Anderson Deaderick—who as a boy had alerted his father to John Sevier's pounding on the Jonesborough tavern door—noted how commerce, transportation, and economic development generally had the potential of rescuing people from their own demons, more moral and religious, as he put it, and less "vitiated" by slaveholder languor. In his memoirs written half-century later, the younger Deaderick summed up what he and his father had learned about the impact of environment on social character. "Our soil" in east Tennessee,

> is poor in comparison with . . . middle Tennessee or . . . the western district [of the state], yet I believe this to be one of the leading reasons why our country will be the more desirable place of residence. . . . We are more moral and religious and less absorbed in business and care of the world than the people of west Tennessee or any cotton country. . . . Where all the work, or nearly all, is performed by slaves, a consequent inaction and idleness are characteristic of the whites, and anyone knows that *there is no better way of vitiating a man that to leave him with nothing to do.*[5]

The Deaderick family's German Calvinist heritage elevated to the level of sacred duty their vocation as merchants and developers of regional economic strength.

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[3] Hsiung, Two Worlds, pp. 51-52.

[4] A. G. Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty, and Property: The German Lutherans in Colonial British America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 1.

[5] Samuel C. Miller, ed., "Journal of Events (1825-1873) of David Anderson Deaderick," *East Tennessee Historical Society Publications*, 8 (1936), 134, emphasis added.

The southern backcountry was an incubator of moderate politics, not because the region was a Garden of Eden—though William Byrd called it an Eden when he explored the North Carolina-Virginia border country in 1728. The backcountry was moderate because it was conflicted, and conflicted because it was demographically dynamic. Between the conclusion of Queen Anne's War (1713) and the eve of the American Revolution in 1774, more than a million people moved into the backcountry, into the elongated stretches of land from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, south and south westward into Botetourt County, Virginia and then spreading out in the North Carolina piedmont, the South Carolina up country, and along the west bank of the Savannah River in Georgia. From the beginning, south central Pennsylvania served as the gateway to the backcountry. By the 1780s the region extended westward into the bluegrass region of Kentucky, east Tennessee, and northeastern Alabama.[6]

Of the million people who settled the backcountry or were born into settler families, some 900,000 were European Americans, emigrants from Scotland, Ireland, and the north British borderland, from Quaker and Moravians communities in Pennsylvania, plus German Lutherans from Salzburg who entered Georgia through Savannah, and English stock settlers from piedmont of Maryland and Virginia. Continental European settlement in the Shenandoah Valley began in the 1730s when Jost Hite, a Lutheran immigrant from Straussburg, purchased from the royal government of Virginia 140,000 acres condition that he would recruit one hundred and forty settlers to firm up British control of the Valley. Within a year, Hite brought more than a hundred German settlers, and he built a large tavern facing Opequon Creek where, among his patrons, were sojourning Iroquois Indians. The creek, running through fertile limestone land and following an ancient Indian trail, became the lifeline of the community Hite helped to build. Hite sold twelve tracts of land along Opequon Creek, ranging in size from one hundred to more than a thousand acres, to twelve families, some German, others English.[7]

Just as the backcountry was multi-cultural, peopled by a wide array of people from Europe and the British Isles, it was also tri-racial. Some 80,000 backcountry people were Africans, mainly the slave property of white settlers but including some free people of color who made their way west from the Atlantic coast. And fifteen to twenty thousand were Catawba Indians drawn to the available lands on the Carolina frontier depopulated of native people by the Indian slave trade, the ravages disease, and casualties of the Yamasee War (1715-1728). The Catawbas sought a secure role as middle men trading with English settlers and avoiding involvement in Indian warfare. Following the Revolution, the Cherokees in western Georgia and North Carolina took Thomas Jefferson at his word when he recommended in *Notes on Virginia* that all Indians needed to do to

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[6] Carl Bridenbaugh, *Myths and Realities: Societies of the Colonial South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1952); Robert D. Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977); Richard R. Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry: A Case Study of Lunenberg County, Virginia, 1746-1832* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984); Ronald Hoffman, Peter Alberts, and Thad Tate, eds., *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1982); Rachel Klein, … Warren Hofstra, *The Planting of New Virginia: Settlementand Landscape in the Shenandoah Valley* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

[7] Hofstra, *Planting New Virginia*, pp. 99-100.

have a place in his agrarian republic was to become yeoman farmers, live in towns, and convert to Protestant Christianity.

On Opequon Creek, Jost Hite had begun the process of making the southern backcountry into an Anglo-German region. The Moravian settlement in Bethlehem in Pennsylvania took a larger step in that direction when, in 1753, they purchased a million acres of the Earl of Granville's land in North Carolina. Keeping to themselves religiously and communally during the first two years of settlement but interacting commercially with the surrounding English speaking population, the North Carolina Moravian craftsmen in Salem—black smiths, shoemakers, mill wrights, carpenters, as well as a cooper, a sievemaker, a tanner, and a baker—not only supplied the communal economy, "the *gemein Ort*," but also traded with English and Scots Irish neighbors as far south as Salisbury and north Saura Town.

The moderation of conflict in the backcountry was thus socially constructed by the leaders of settler communities. Communities built around colleges and universities were prime examples of moderate politics in action, beginning in 1793 with the formation of the University of North Carolina, at Chapel Hill, the first state university in the new nation. Like the clash at Hillsborough between David Caldwell and James Iredell, over ratification of the Constitution, the creation of a public university in rural hinterland aroused deep anxieties as well as inspiring soaring hopes about the capacity of enlightenment philosophy and Protestant moral idealism could actually tame a rude environment.

William Richardson Davie vs. Samuel Eusebius McCorkle

Those hopes and anxieties ignited significant disagreement between two North Carolina moderates: Trustees William R. Davie and Samuel McCorkle. Allies in the creation in 1795 of a university on what was known locally as "the Chappel Hill" for an early Baptist church in southern Orange County, the two men, both Princeton graduates (McCorkle class of 1772, Davie, 1776), agreed that religion and republicanism were integral and moderating structures of public life and higher education. Davie wanted to moderate the Christian republic by making it useful to society; McCorkle sought to moderate republican society by imbuing its leadership with Christian piety and moral discipline. Though McCorkle's flamboyant, awkward religious agenda clashed with Davie's subdued and politically skilled use of religion, McCorkle's loose cannon behavior was an ill-considered effort to moderate religion and government by keeping both in the hands of well educated Presbyterians. And, it should be remembered, McCorkle along with Aedanus Burke was one of the most conscientious and astute political ethicists and critics of anti-Tory retribution in the post-Revolutionary South and for that ground alone, arguably a moderate. As a recent student of his ideas and writings positions him accurately:

> McCorkle was born into a Presbyterian church divided by the schism of 1741. This tension between New Side and Old Side, between conservative orthodoxy and evangelical pietism, would dominated Presbyterianism and McCorkle for the

> last half of the eighteenth century and beyond. It was a tension of he would always be aware of, the dangers of which he would always feel.[8]

Those polarities and that conjunction of character and circumstance were the classic profile of a religiously grounded political moderate.

As a founding Trustee of the University, McCorkle drafted both a curriculum and a code of student discipline. The disciplinary code consisting of twenty-seven numbered rules each student (rule # 21) had to copy into his notebook. The discipline described the academic world in which students lived: morning prayers at sunrise, study until breakfast at eight, followed by "amusement" time until nine when three hours of lectures and recitations began. After lunch, "quiet time" extended from two to five in the afternoon "after which time, . . . vacation until eight" in the evening "when students shall retire to their . . . lodgings" and "stay there until morning prayers. On Saturday mornings students delivered orations or gave readings and had afternoons free for "amusement."

Reinforcing this regime were mandatory Sunday evening lectures on "general principles of morality and religion" and prohibitions against possession or consumption of "ardent spirits," gambling, profanity, association with "evil company," insubordination toward professors, and comments disrespectful of religion. The curriculum divided the student body into four "literary" classes depending on the level of their preparation in the classics. The first class entered the University with demonstrated competence in Latin prose and Greek grammar and studied Roman history and oratory and the Greek New Testament; Second, Third, and Fourth classes met lower entrance requirements and studied a variety of subjects including Greek history and culture, mathematics, science, history, literature, and moral philosophy. Almost beyond the pale was an unnumbered class qualified only to study the sciences and the English language.[9]

McCorkle's scheme set Davie's teeth on edge. He soon persuaded fellow trustees to supplant McCorkle's curriculum with one of his own emphasizing moral philosophy, French, written and spoken English, and science. Outvoted, McCorkle grudgingly went along with these changes but became increasingly prickly and hostile. Accustomed at the Thyatira Presbyterian Church and Zion-Parnassus Academy in Salisbury to getting his own way, McCorkle found himself at Chapel Hill out maneuvered by Davie, who had a legislator's knack at getting things done and a protective veneer of civility which wore thin in dealing with McCorkle: "Nothing, it seems, goes well that these men of God have not got some hand in."[10]

As soon as he knew he had the backing of most of his fellow Trustees, Davie pressed his advantage. "English exercises shall be regularly continued," he directed; "the

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[8] Thomas Templeton Taylor, "Essays on the Career and Thought of Samuel Eusebius McCorkle," MA thesis, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1978), 1. Taylor was the first historian to associate McCorkle with moderation, calling him "a moderate Calvinist, like Witherspoon," "Samuel E. McCorkle and a Christian Republic, 1792-1802," *American Presbyterians: The Journal of Presbyterian History* 63 (1985), 375-376. Taylor was the first historian to associate McCorkle with moderation, calling him"moderate Calvinist, like Witherspoon." See also Calhoon, *Evangelicals and Conservatives*, 116-119, 122-123.

[9] R.D.W. Connor, comp., Louis R. Wilson and Hugh T. Lefler, eds., *A Documentary History of the University of North Carolina, 1776-1799*, Vol. 1, pp. 375-379.

[10] Wilson and Lefler, eds., *Documentary History*, Vol. 2, p. 5, note 7.

other languages [are] but auxilaries."[11] Davie appreciated classical learning, to be sure, as a means of teaching future leaders to write and speak persuasively and of imparting valuable information about history and philosophy, but he had no desire to steer students to the Greek New Testament or to Latin writings of the church fathers so revered by McCorkle's parents that they named him for both Samuel the Old Testament judge and for Eusebius, the first historian of Christianity (identities that McCorkle slavishly adopted). McCorkle's plans for religious indoctrination struck Davie as wholly inappropriate. But what rankled McCorkle the most about Davie's reforms—and went to the heart of the conflict between these two very different moderates—was Davie's syllabus for the Moral Philosophy course: "Paley, Montesquieu, Adams, Delolme, Vattell, Burlamaqui, Priestly, Millot, Hume, and the constitutional documents of the United States and major European nations."[12]

By giving pride of place to William Paley, Davie had sought to cut McCorkle off at the pass. Paley's *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (1785) seemed to educated American Protestants a book too good to be true. As the author of an orthodox vindication of Christianity, *Evidences of Christianity* (1794), Paley almost singlehandedly made the Christian religion intellectually respectable:

> Paley . . . deduced the watchmaker from the watch, proving the existence of a divine and and benevolent providence by using his reason. He provided an age which had come to demand rational empirical justification for its beliefs with . . . evidence . . . of the existence of God and the validity of Christianity. He found in the finite, the proof of the infinite; he argued from experience rather than faith.[13]

But in so doing, Paley disturbed orthodox Christians, even those who valued their enlightenment educations, as much as he pleased those nervous about the plausibility of a rationalist view of the universe. McCorkle feared that Paley would infect naïve undergraduates with a false reliance on reason. Though he had been a student at the College of New Jersey under Witherspoon, McCorkle never embraced Witherspoon's glib mixture of Augustinian human nature, Scottish moralism, and American patriotism though he found much to admire in each of those views. By employing rationalism to defend divine truth, McCorkle countered, Paley represented a cheap substitute for Greek and Latin texts of Scripture and other ancient Christian writings. In Davie's ideal of an American university, as in Witherspoon's future statesmen needed to acquire historical consciousness, intellectual discipline, and verbal and written eloquence; in McCorkle's, they absorbed piety, moral discipline, and respect for the paramount role of the Creator in the world of knowledge.

McCorkle served that vision poorly. He was anything but collegial. After delivering an eloquent, and potentially influential, oration at the laying of the University cornerstone on October 12, 1793, he suffered one rebuff after another from his fellow Trustees, none of which he accepted graciously. Not only did they replace his curriculum and fail to enforce his disciplinary rules with Davie's educational policies, they offered

[11] "Davie's Plan of Education," Appendix C, Blackwell P. Robinson, *William R. Davie* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957), 406-410.
[12] "Davie's Plan," 408.
[13] Wendell Glick, "Bishop Paley in America," *New England Quarterly*, 27 (1954), 350.

him a prestigious Professorship of Moral and Political Philosophy and History without meeting McCorkle's demands for an adequate housing allowance, a humiliation he blamed on Davie. He was appalled when a mathematics professor denounced the teaching of the classics and espoused in their place the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft who believed in an "education" that "teaches young people how to think." McCorkle watched with horror as student defied his rules against profanity, gambling, and drunkenness, and, in 1798, physically assaulted two professors and horsewhipped the faculty President, David Ker. Embittered, McCorkle left Chapel Hill convinced that hedonistic French rationalism, "Jacobin morality," and flagrant irreligion—especially the discarding" Sunday evening . . . examinations of divinity"—was destroying the University.[14] In 1800, he alleged, that under the influence of Paley, students were being taught that "human happiness" rather than "the obligation of virtue" found in the "precepts of laws of God" has become standard educational fare.[15]

Joseph Caldwell

The debilitating conflict between Davie and McCorkle in 1795-1796 and the breakdown of discipline and deference in the University in 1799 left scars on the University. Healing those wounds, however, became the agenda for the University's first full-time President, Joseph Caldwell (1805-1812 and 1817-1835). Caldwell had come joined the faculty in 1796 to teach mathematics. A Princeton graduate and Presbyterian minister, Caldwell steered clear of controversy during his early years on the faculty and impressed the Trustees with his scholarly prowess, leadership ability, dignified sermons, and moral presence—which they hoped would tame student rebelliousness. As president, Caldwell strengthened the curriculum in ways that would have pleased both McCorkle and Davie by placing classical languages and study at the core of the academic program while also making room for the kind of practical training in mathematics, oratory, English composition—making Chapel Hill competitive with other colleges and universities.

The most serious test of Joseph Caldwell's moderation came early in his Presidency when the Trustees, long accustomed to interfering in university management and now acting behind Caldwell's back, created a board of student Monitors, armed with autocratic authority to spy on misbehaving fellow students and report misconduct to the Trustees. The students regarded this heavy-handed disciplinary apparatus an affront to their honor. Caldwell won them over by calmly questioning the necessity of imposing oaths on members of the student body. From this position of strength, he then persuaded the Trustees to place the Monitors under his effective administrative control.[16] During the interim between his first and second presidential appointments, Caldwell completed and published a widely respected Geometry textbook, thus adding considerably to the

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[14] McCorkle to John Haywood, Dec. 20, 1799, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Stephen J. Novak, *The Rights of Youth: American Colleges and Student Revolts, 1798-1815* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 109-112.

[15] Samuel E. McCorkle, *True Greatness: A Sermon on the Death of General George Washington* (Lincolnton, 1800), appendix, [28-29].

[16] Darryl L. Peterkin, " 'Lux, Libertas, and Learning': The First State University and the Transformation of North Carolina, 1789-1816," Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1995, 174-204.

academic prestige of the institution. His Presidency confirmed the classical and Presbyterian character of the University.

Henry Pattillo

Presbyterians considered learning and worship complementary, moderating, activities because Scripture and history demonstrated that all human interaction, occurring within a structure of morality and reverence, was inherently instructive. Henry Pattillo, Presbyterian minister and educator in Granville County, North Carolina, capitalized on this perception when, media savvy, he recognized the cultural potency of the book trade in the new nation. Books, he reckoned, could convert every household, prosperous enough to acquire a few books and blessed with pious parents, into a little seminary of learning. In 1786, he approached the largest publisher in the state, James Adams of Wilmington, with a book manuscript that would appeal to a large audience: *The Plain Planter's Family Assistant: Containing an Address to Husbands and Wives, Children and Servants; with Helps for Instruction by Catechisms and Examples of Devotions for Families, with a brief paraphrase on the Lord's Prayer.* This devotional handbook carried an important social and ideological sub-text. *The Plain Planter's Family Assistant* addressed male heads of household who were prosperous farmers, married with young children, who owned slaves, and who cared about their local reputations of pillars of order and morality in their neighborhood. Pattillo saw in this social profile a striving for rural gentility among young men in the Carolinas who, in Pattillo's observant word, were "anxious" about public affairs in the young republic and therefore ready to join the lowcountry aristocracy in presiding particular agrarian households which constituted republican society.[17]

Patriarchal power over wives, children, slaves, and dependent relatives and neighbors was a social force fraught with potential havoc.[18] Pattillo sought to channel, sanctify, dignify, and in the end, moderate, that energy. "Nothing can more strong[ly] indicate . . . the spirit of a humble worshipper," he explained, "than a studied eloquence in our addresses to God."[19] "Our addresses" meant those the husband prayed in his own and his wife's behalf. *The Plain Planter's Family Assistant* contained prayers for children, for adolescents, for slaves, and for husbands leading family worship. To be sure, Pattillo envisioned times when the husband would be absent and his wife would gather the household around her for family devotions—but only as her husband's surrogate.[20] Everything else about married women in agrarian family households had to be deduced from two sets of controlling considerations: first, marital reciprocity and, second, repentance for those sins to which women were uniquely prone. Reciprocity arose from the husband's choice of his wife: "She is the woman of your choice," Pattillo stipulated, "and careful nurse of thy children. . . . Look on her again: her very meekness is amiable. That [something, was it that amiability? or that implied vulnerability? The object of

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[17] Henry Pattillo, *The Plain Planter's Family Assistant* (Wilmington: James Adams, 1787), iii. The first sentence of Pattillo's lengthy preface spoke of public "anxiety" arising from the fiscal uncertainties about public debt and taxation—key issues in the campaign for a new constitution.

[18] Theodore Rosengarten, *Tombee: Portrait of a Cotton Planter* (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 168-179.

[19] Pattillo, *Plain Planter's Family Assistant*, v.

[20] Pattillo, *Plain Planter's Family Assistant*, 17.

"that" is deliberately ambiguous]. That is the feeble vine which demands you [her husband], the stronger tree, for its support, and it [again undefined, but clearly implyng the mystery of conjugal happiness] richly repays thee." This reciprocal bargain was fed by the husband's vigor and his wife's "amiability," Pattillo's term for her ability to satisfy his needs. Realities of human nature peculiar to women, Pattillo cautioned, undermined his theory of marital reciprocity: "I know your sex are tempted to trust that sweetness of temper [amiability?] you so often possess. But I pray you remember, that it is not a *heavenly* temper. Your greatest danger . . . arises from the trust you have in . . . being innocent. On what a broken reed you are leaning for eternity." The *theory* of marital happiness and the *practice* of contrived innocence blocked any reconciliation of the two save in submission to God's grace—the source of a moderate marriage and household.[21]

Slavery in a Christian household presented Pattillo and his idealized republican farmer patriarchs with their most severe test. Like the standing of pious republican women, slavery required, in Protestant hopuseholds, the articulation of an idealized Providential theory and, like the status women, it reflected a harsh Calvinist reality. In a special catechism masters to use with their slaves, Pattillo offered questions and answers designed to inculcate slaves with precepts of Christian duty and their masters with a convincing answer to anti-slavery rebukes and pangs of conscience. Questions #39-41 of "The Negroes['] Catechism" in *Plain Planter's Family Assistant*, led the planter family and its slaves across across treacherous ground. Pattillo deliveratelyomitted the apostrophe the title of one of his instructional aids, "The Negroes Catechism," because slaves could not technically *possess* religious training any more than they could possess the clothing and housing provided by their master. (Indeed, Pattillo deliberately omitted the apostrophe from "Negroes Catechism" precisely because that punctuation indicated a possessive capacity of a book of questions and answers about God and His human creatures.) Question #39 examined the proposition that slaves could be "happy": "Which do you think is happiest, the master or the slave?" The prescribed answer was that slaves were happier because they were not burdened with their masters' worries and responsibilities. Question # 41 asked if slavery was God's will. Here the prescribed answer directed the slave to invoke St. Paul's language about salvantion being extended to "bond or free" alike.[22]

But that theory of benevolent, pious slaveholding, Pattillo recognized, was at war with human depravity: "Nothing can be right," he asserted in portions of his manual instructing adult white males on their moral duties, "where passion rules and dictates. And thus, the vicious part of our country-men [white males] may storm and rage and act the incarnate fury and then blame the Negroes as the cause of their wickedness. *God, the judge of all,* will form a very different estimate of their own depraved natures." But what was a master to do, Pattillo mused, when his slaves misbehaved so egregiously that he came close to losing his temper? The question of self-control brought the subject back to the contested ground between human theory (slaves as children of God) and depraved practice (white rage and violence). "Perhaps, . . . the truth is that much of your servant's wickedness and deficiency can be ascribed to your own negligence" in failing to incorporate slaves so thoroughly into household devotions that Christian love had an

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[21] Pattillo, *Plan Planter's Family Assistant*, 13-15.
[22] I Cor. 12:13, Eph. 6: 8.

opportunity to reconcile human authority and divine justice. Like the amiable wife, the disobedient slave had to be situated, by the male head of the household, in that confined psychological and social space where only God's Providence mitigated and moderated the consequences of human inequality. Race was always the issue which exposed the social construction of moderation and almost wholly prudential character of white to understand racial differences. Theological principle was not entirely absent from Christian proslavery, speculations like Pattillo's about "vicious" white conduct required courage. Nonetheless, apologies like Pattillo's were moderation as its prudential, self-protective worst.

A year after the publication of his plantation behavior manual, Pattillo approached Adams with a second book proposal: a companion volume titled simply, *Sermons &c.* Considering this project a riskier proposition, Wilmington printer, James Adams, agreed to publish *Sermons &c.* on the condition that Pattillo secure advance purchase orders for 500 copies. Pattillo optimistically told prospective purchasers that they would wait until September 1788 to mail in their payments, and in the primitive state of the mail in the rural South, the book went to press in the summer of 1788 with only 4?? Copies ordered by 2?? subscribers and a stern note from Pattillo threatening legal action against unnamed individuals who had already boasted about the expected profits from a pirated edition. Pattillo's two-book publishing arrangement with James Adams in 1786-1787 envisioned a revitalization movement for middle class Presbyterian households in the Carolinas and Georgia in the late 1780s. By juxtaposing moral instruction and revelation, by emphasizing both the duties and gratifications arising from patriarchal power, and by offering a disciplined approach to family relations and republican citizenship, the two books confirmed Pattillo's self-image as "a moderate, but settled, Calvinist."[23]

By writing and publishing both books between 1786 and 1788, Pattillo, almost certainly a supporter of the proposed Constitution, sought to elevate public discourse during the formation of the new republic. Viewing the new constitutional order as a Providential moment, Pattillo sought to fill the interstices in backcountry literate culture with unifying, purposeful substance. "Christians of all denominations," he explained, "will always love in proportion as they cultivate acquaintance [and] converse freely on the great doctrines and duties in which they agree. . . . We have many . . . in our [Presbyterian] church who miss having their souls quickened by an honest Baptist or a warm Methodist because they have different views on some Christian doctrines." The process of spiritual socialization, Pattillo was convinced, ought to encourage people with "honest" and "warm" hearts, but undeveloped religious intellects, to claim the benefits of theological rigor. "Had you written clearly," he gently rebuked John Wesley in one of his sermons, "you would have proved your proposition that grace is free to all." But instead of finding common ground with Calvinists, Pattillo lamented, Wesley had simply pandered to the "Arminianism" that "of late, . . . so much abounded among us" and thereby jettisoned "the doctrine of reprobation" essential to a full appreciation of salvation by grace.[24]

William Graham

[23] Henry Pattillo, *Sermons &c.* (Wilmington, NC: James Adams, 1788), viii.
[24] Pattillo, *Sermons &c.*, xi, 167, 178-179.

Permeating backcountry Presbyterian culture was the influence of Witherspoon. His famous course on moral philosophy was, for a generation, the touchstone of middle class morality and ethics among Presbyterians in the middle and southern states. Witherspoon's successor, Samuel Stanhope Smith, believed that the study of moral philosophy should begin in early childhood with instruction in Latin because classical languages were "a kind of experimental way of acquiring the first principles of moral philosophy which consist in tracing the active and intellectual powers of man." Witherspoon also lectured on oratory, by which he meant more than public speaking. By an orator, he meant someone with the intellectual and more credentials to shape the culture in which he lived by his very presence within society, as well as his words and actions. Presence involved voice, body language, and a well cultivated sense of ones public persona. Princeton instilled into its students awareness of how powerfully a "sage, deep-studied" appearance and reputation could radiate throughout a rural society. Princeton tutor and future president, Samuel Stanhope Smith arranged for William Graham, on his graduation in 1773, to manage a "publick school" operated by the Hanover Presbytery in Augusta County, Virginia, which later became Liberty Hall, and in 1796, Washington College, an institution he headed until his death in 1799.

On his arrival in the valley, Graham set about immediately to burnish what seemed to him a deficient public presence by seeking out a "preceptor" to give him dancing lessons and other guidance in "gentlemanly deportment"—"polish in his manners" and "carriage and gesture" when entering or leaving a room "without hesitation and in no ungraceful style." The lessons failed to take. Inveterately awkward, Graham forced his teacher to admit failure: "I do not believe that all the dancing masters in the world would make any alteration in your manners. We must let you go out as you are and make your way through the world in your own way." The very fact that a close observer of Graham's career in Virginia considered the episode of the dancing master significant underscored the familiarity in Presbyterian circles in the South of Witherspoon's teaching that life in the *polis* or public sphere was both a high moral calling and a social act. Ministers and teachers in the backcountry taught by example that form public service involved decisive entry into the social space shared with contemporaries. Graham never shed the awareness of being watched by his neighbors and of having an obligation to be a model for students and parishioners.[25]

When students and faculty at Liberty Hall became active in the movement to create a new state of Franklin in the mountains west of North Carolina, Graham threw himself into the movement. He co-authored a constitution for the new state, which guaranteed freedom of religion but also sought to secure a Protestant political order in which officeholders would affirm belief in the inspiration of Scripture, the Trinity, the judicial role of the creator of the universe who would preside over future rewards and punishments. Thus anchored in Christian orthodoxy, the new state would have extended suffrage to all male citizens; seats in he legislature would have been allocated on the basis of population; voter registration and written ballots would have protected the integrity of the electoral process; annual audits of public spending and submission of bills enacted by the legislature to public referenda would have assured that law and policy reflected the will of the people. Graham's constitution also vested in the legislature the power to name the governor, judges, and other high offices of state, and provided for

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[25] Calhoon, *Evangelicals and Conservatives in the Early South*, 84.

popular removal of corrupt officials and for a public university. But his initiative collapsed when the Franklin convention rejected his proposed constitution and the Hanover Presbytery censured him for his involvement in a controversial, potentially insurrectionary, movement. Not surprisingly, he opposed Virginia's ratification of the Federal Constitution in 1788, and at a 1794 meeting of the Virginia Synod criticized the use of troops to put down the Whiskey Rebellion, nearly provoking a riot when militia on their way to Pennsylvania threatened to confront their critic.

For Graham, politics occurred within given dramatic arenas—some within the church, some within civil society, still others within organic substructures of society. Leadership depended upon the needs of particular audiences and the capabilities of those who sprang to the stage. Sometime in the late 1780s Graham entered an essay contest sponsored by Governor Edmund Randolph on the question: "Is it lawful and expedient for the State of Virginia to retain in slavery descendants of the African race?" His composition became a regular lecture in his course on "Human Nature," which he taught at Liberty Hall starting sometime in the late 1780s until 1796.[26]

Graham's lecture on slavery must have been his response to the growing criticism of slavery in the valley of Virginia and the fact that his students, increasingly the sons of farmers owning or renting slaves, needed a Biblically grounded way of engaging the subject. Echoing Witherspoon's contention, from his lectures on moral philosophy, that "I do not think their lies any necessity on those who found men in a state of slavery to make them free to their own ruin," Graham met head-on the religious anti-slavery argument that slavery violated the Golden Rule. Though "one of the finest moral precepts . . . anywhere to be met with," advocates of emancipation had "perverted" Jesus' words by applying them to a "change of state," meaning a change in legal status of slaves. "Christianity was never designed to alter the political or civil state of men, but only to bring them to the love of God and inculcate the performance of the duties of their several stations," among which were those of "master or servant." A slave might well desire his "master's estate or even his wife or daughter," which an instrumental reading of the Golden Rule would require a master to bestow on his slave, assuming that the master could imagine himself in his slave's position. To Graham, the "plain meaning" of the Golden Rule was the duty of "a master to a servant," this is, the obligation to act generously *as a master* in dealing one who *remains a slave* and under no circumstances to "make the caprice of men the rule of duty."[27]

Running through Graham's convoluted proslavery reasoning was his conception of moral philosophy as the ethics of face to face encounters.

> When a man is . . . related to his fellow men, he is either free or bound, that is directed by his own choice or the choice of others. When man is considered as not under the control of an other creature, he is said to be free, but strictly speaking, I

[26] David W. Robson, " 'An Important Question Answered': William Graham's Defense of Slavery in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 37 (1980), 644-648.

[27] Robson, ed., " 'An Important Question Answered,' " pp. 649-652.

> believe no man can be said to be free because all are under the control of the divine will.[28]

Human life, Graham seems to have been telling his students, was a paradox. Men, to be sure, had natural rights (to life, the use of their talents, protection of their reputation, personal liberty, private judgment, and association with others of their choice)[29] but they could not be said to be free because whoever was "several degrees stronger in his faculties" would more aggressive in pressing his social advantages over less gifted contemporaries. "The foundation of civil society," therefore, "is the proneness of man to injure and deprive one another of their natural rights." Civil society itself was then the banding together of "families for their mutual defense against injury." Ethics governed the conduct of such family feuds. "Families should always remember that men are inclined to do injustice, . . . that rulers often make a bad use of that power which has been vested in them, and therefore that government is best where there is a proper balance of power, sufficient on the one hand to repel injury, and on the other to prevent oppression."[30]

Ethics enjoined men, already endowed by social circumstances to know their own natural rights, to hold governments accountable and to know that the divine will could and would correct the abusive or negligent conduct of human governments. Living in that sort of social arena was the gift of Providence. And knowledge of that gift was what historian Daniel J. Boorstin has called "givenness"—that intangible sense of moral entitlement at the core of the American psyche.[31]

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[28] "Lectures on Human Nature Aula Libertatis [and the Dignity of Liberty], Delivered by William Graham, Notes Taken by Joseph Glass, 1796," Leyburn Library, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia, p. 137.

[29] Graham, "Lectures," p. 139.

[30] Graham, "Lectures," p. 141.

[31] Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Genius of American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 8-10, 29-35, 63-66.