

THE GERMAN ELEMENT IN COLONIAL GEORGIA

By GEORGE F. JONES

For all practical purposes the history of the Germans in Georgia began on March 12, 1734, with the arrival of the first Protestant refugees from Salzburg.¹ It is conceivable that some German mercenary trooper had taken part on De Soto's ill-starred journey through Georgia, or even that some German religious served in one of the sixteenth-century Spanish missions there, but there is no evidence that this was the case. A German Jewish couple, who had arrived eight months earlier, were in Savannah to greet the Salzburger when they arrived; and a German carpenter who joined the party at Charleston left the ship when it reached the mouth of the Savannah River and proceeded to the city ahead of them. But these were individual cases that scarcely affected the main course of German life in the colony.

By the time the Salzburger reached Georgia, Germans had already found their way to all of the older British colonies, sometimes in large numbers; yet they had always come subsequent to, and incidentally to, the founding of the colony. Only in the case of Georgia can they be said to have been a factor in the original plan of colonization; for Georgia's philanthropic founders, the Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia, expressly stated that they were establishing their colony not only as a haven for impecunious Englishmen, but also as "a refuge for the distressed Salzburger and other Protestants." The Salzburger landed one year and six weeks after Oglethorpe first settled his Utopian colony.

Popular concern for persecuted Protestants was prompted by the suffering of the exiles from Salzburg, who had been expelled from their homeland the previous year. The Lutheran Reformation had made early inroads into Salzburg, as into most areas of southern Germany, even though it was a church state under the absolute rule of its Roman Catholic archbishop. Notwithstanding nearly two centuries of persecution, some Salzburger still clung to their heresy and refused obeisance to the established church. Exasperated by their obstinacy and believing the resistance limited to a handful of fanatics, Archbishop Leopold Anton, Count of Firmian, finally decreed in 1731 that all Protestants would have to recant their faith or else leave their country at once. Great was his amazement when, instead of a handful of fanatics, he saw some 25,000 people, nearly a fifth of the entire population, voluntarily abandon their homes rather than desert their faith.

As the first major religious persecution in Europe since the Treaty of Westphalia, this expulsion greatly incensed the Protestant states of northern Germany and persuaded their rulers to aid the expulsees. Moved by piety and policy, the Elector of Brandenburg accepted some 17,000 of the exiles

¹ The two most important sources for the history of the Germans in colonial Georgia are the *Urlsrufer Nachrichten (Ausföhrliche Nachricht von den Saltzburgischen Emigranten, die sich in America niedergelassen haben*, Halle, 1735 ff.) and *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia*, ed. Allen D. Chandler, Atlanta, 1904 ff. Although over a century old and written from an ecclesiastical bias, the best secondary source remains P. A. Strobel, *The Salzburger and their Descendants*, Baltimore, 1865; reprint by U. of Ga. Press, Athens, 1953. Minor errors concerning the expulsion are corrected by A. Prinzing, "Die Ansiedlung der Salzburger im Staate Georgien in Nordamerika," *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde*, XXII, Salzburg, 1882, pp. 1-36. Well written, but contributing little beyond Strobel, is D. M. Gilbert, "The Early History of the Lutheran Church in Georgia," *The Quarterly Review of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, XXVII, Gettysburg, 1897, pp. 155-174.

into his sparsely populated lands in East Prussia, where they made a valuable contribution to his country; and other North German states and the Netherlands accepted smaller numbers of these displaced persons. The plight of the Salzburger was publicized in Protestant England, where the king and his court were German Lutherans in private life. Being the Duke of Hannover as well as the King of England, George II spoke German as a mother tongue and retained a Lutheran chaplain at his court. Propaganda about the Salzburg persecution helped justify the British policy of keeping their colonies Protestant, a policy deemed especially important in Georgia, which was exposed to the Catholic Spaniards in Florida.

The leading English missionary movement at the time, the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, collaborated wholeheartedly with the Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia in arranging to recruit and transport those Salzburger who wished to emigrate to the new colony and to maintain them there until they should be self-sustaining. Correspondence was begun with various Protestant clergymen in Germany, especially with Rev. Samuel Urlsperger, the Senior of St. Anne's Church in Augsburg, who remained for many years the Georgia Salzburger's chief benefactor on the Continent. To him we owe the *Urlspurger Nachrichten*, a voluminous series of pamphlets concerning the Georgia Salzburger and their experiences, which were published from time to time for the information of German well-wishers.²

Word was soon spread that free passage to Georgia, fifty acres of land in freehold, and a year's provisions were available to all worthy Salzburger who wished to emigrate. As soon as forty-two volunteers were assembled at Augsburg, they set out on the long journey to Georgia under the leadership of a young gentleman named Philipp Georg Friedrich von Reck.³ Passing through Rothenburg, the exiles proceeded to Markt Steft, where they went aboard ship for the trip down the River Main and then down the Rhine to Rotterdam. Parading through all the Protestant cities along the way, they sang their exiles' song and presented an inspiring sight to their co-religionists, who contributed generously to their cause. This pious procession delighted the Protestant clergy, who could hold up the exiles' faith as a shining example for their own complacent congregations. The Salzburger's arrival at a village near Frankfurt was later immortalized by none other than Goethe himself, albeit in a somewhat disguised form; for his idyllic epic, *Hermann und Dorothea*, was first suggested by an eyewitness account of this reception given to the Salzburger three quarters of a century earlier. Goethe well succeeded in reproducing the solemnity of the original account, even though he altered the facts and let his exiles flee from French devastation in the Palatinate instead of from religious intolerance in Salzburg. Goethe's poem in turn inspired Longfellow's treatment of the Arcadian expulsion in his *Evangeline*.

In Rotterdam the Salzburger were joined by two young pastors from Halle, who were sent to care for their spiritual needs in the New World. No better selection could have been made; for two more able, willing, and selfless young men could not have been found. Johann Martin Bolzius,⁴ until then superintendent of the Latin school at Halle, was assisted by Israel Christian Gronau, formerly a tutor at that institution. On their way from Halle to Rotterdam they were both ordained into the Lutheran ministry at Wernigerode. This first contingent, or First Transport as it was called,

² See note 1.

³ See von Reck's journal appended to this article.

⁴ Bolzius always used this Latinized form of his family name, which had originally been Boltze.

spent some weeks in England, where it was feted and held up as an illustration of Christian faith and as evidence of Catholic perfidy. These public showings not only excited public sympathy but also elicited immediate gifts as well as future contributions from pious English circles. For example, on Sept. 26, 1735, the Trustees received two hundred pounds, "the benefaction of a Gentlewoman who desires to be unknown . . . to be applied and distributed in sums of forty shillings to each family of the persecuted German Protestants either gone or going to Georgia."

After a rough voyage of nearly three and a half months on the *Purysburg*, the emigrants landed at Charleston, S. C., where they found a small number of Germans already settled. Nine days later they resumed their journey and reached Savannah on March 12. There the exiles were housed in tents, while Bolzius, Gronau, von Reck, and their doctor, Zwiffler, lodged at the home of the absent English clergyman. Five days later the first baby was born to the party, apparently the first German baby born in the colony of Georgia.

Leaving the remainder of the company in Savannah, von Reck, Zwiffler, and Gronau accompanied Oglethorpe and several South Carolinians and Indians to reconnoiter a suitable site for the colony. About thirty miles northwest of Savannah and immediately adjacent to the lands reserved for the *Utchee* Indians they found an area which seemed to fit their needs. Baron von Reck, to whom all firm land must have looked good after more than a hundred days at sea, described the area as follows: "The lands are enclosed between two rivers which fall into the Savannah. The town is to be built near the larger, which is called Ebenezer, in remembrance that God brought them hither. It is navigable, being twelve feet deep. A little brook, whose water is as clear as crystal, glides by the town. Another one runs through it, and both fall into the Ebenezer. The woods here are not so thick as in other places. The sweet zephirs preserve a delicious coolness, notwithstanding the scorching beams of the sun. There are very fine meadows, in which a great quantity of hay might be made with very little effort. The hillocks are also very suitable for vines. Cedar, walnut, pine, cypress, and oak comprise the greatest part of the woods. There are likewise a great quantity of myrtle-trees, out of which they extract, by boiling the berries, a green wax very suitable for making candles. There is much sassafrass and a great quantity of those plants of which indigo is made, and an abundance of China root. The earth is so fertile that it will produce anything that can be sown or planted in it, whether fruit, herbs, or trees. There are wild vines running up to the tops of the tallest trees, and the country is so good that you can ride twenty or thirty miles at a full gallop. As to game, there are eagles, wild turkeys, roebucks, wild goats, stags, wild cows, horses, hares, partridges, and buffaloes."

Unfortunately the young baron was a poor judge of real estate, for most of his observations were erroneous. The stream was not twelve feet deep, not even during freshets; and much of the year it was nearly dry. It was never really navigable even when flooded, being obstructed with cypress trees; and it meandered for twenty-five miles to reach the Savannah River at a point four miles away. The crystal clear brook dried up early in the summer, and all drinking water was impure. To be sure, the woods were less thick than elsewhere, but only because the soil was too poor to support trees. The meadows produced much broom sedge, but little nourishing hay; and the soil was so sandy that it bore weeds rather than crops. Von Reck made a mistake subsequently repeated by many optimistic European settlers in tropical America and Africa, who have mistaken

luxuriance for fertility. Land that supports rank foliage may fail to produce crops; and lands abounding in game may be unable to support cattle. This initial choice of location was a most tragic blunder, for it made the Salzburger waste two whole years in a costly but futile effort to develop a sterile and inaccessible wasteland.

Their putative promised land having been chosen, Pastor Gronau led a forward echelon up to the site, which they named Ebenezer, or "Stone of Help," even though there were no stones in that sandy area. This advanced party worked feverishly to erect huts for the remainder of the group, while von Reck and some other members of the rear echelon tried to locate the point at which Ebenezer Creek flowed into the Savannah. Although aided by Monsieur Jonas, as they called the colony's surveyor, Noble Jones, they were unable to blaze a channel through the overgrown course of the creek. At last they resigned themselves to the fact that supplies would have to be unloaded at Abercorn, a settlement some twenty miles upstream from Savannah, and then transported overland to Ebenezer. Because of this, a large part of the Salzburger's time and energy during the next year and a half was consumed in carrying supplies on their backs or dragging them on sledges through boggy and overgrown swamps.

When the Second Transport of fifty-seven Salzburger arrived nearly a year later under the conduct of Commissary Johann Vat, they found little accomplished. Besides that, all the earlier settlers had suffered severely from fever, and more than ten per cent had succumbed to dysentery. Yet, undaunted, the second group pitched right in; and construction was considerably speeded by the skill of several carpenters among the new arrivals. Despite their many handicaps and obstacles, the Salzburger's progress impressed the English settlers in Savannah favorably; and every commentator extolled their diligence and endurance. Space would not allow us to cite even a fraction of these eulogies, so suffice it to say that everyone praised them and unanimously agreed that they were the most desirable settlers in Georgia. As a result of these good reports, the Trustees determined to enlist more Salzburger and invited a hundred more to come to the colony at the Trustees' expense. In response to this invitation a Third Transport was collected at Regensburg and dispatched via Rotterdam to England under the guidance of Baron von Reck and a Capt. Hermsdorf. In the same convoy with the Salzburger was a group of twenty-seven Moravians, of whom we shall speak later.

Before the Third Transport reached Georgia, the first two groups were finally convinced that the land they had chosen would not support them. Carolina planters passing through Ebenezer had insisted that the sandy soil would not produce crops, and experience soon proved them right. For example, sweet potatoes would send out magnificent vines but never develop any tubers, and the corn produced large stalks but little or no ears. In collecting acorns for their pigs along the bank of the Savannah River at the mouth of Ebenezer Creek, the Salzburger had found a wooded area, called Red Bluff from the color of its soil, which was obviously more fertile than that around Ebenezer. Bolzius, as absolute ruler of this little theocracy, refused to let the Salzburger move until Oglethorpe should return and give permission, for he was a good enough Lutheran to accept secular authority as the will of God. Oglethorpe was disappointed that the Salzburger preferred to abandon their settlement at Ebenezer after having sacrificed so much toil and so many lives in developing it. However, being truly concerned for the welfare of his colonists, he gave his reluctant permission for the removal. Still convinced that Ebenezer was the better

location, he generously compensated the Salzburger for much of their improvements on their old land, which was then taken over by the Trustees as a cattle ranch. The displacement having been authorized, von Reck brought the bulk of the Third Transport directly to the Red Bluff, where they were gradually joined by the earlier settlers from Ebenezer.

Oglethorpe had hoped to deflect the Third Transport to Frederica, a settlement he was building on St. Simons Island as an outpost against the Spaniards in St. Augustine. In this he failed, since most of the Salzburger preferred to go on to Ebenezer as planned, both to avoid military service and to be with their Lutheran clergymen. However, Capt. Hermsdorf and a few volunteers accompanied Oglethorpe to Frederica and formed a small German community, which prospered as long as the garrison remained but disappeared soon after the British troops were withdrawn. The German village did flourish long enough to persuade the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge to send them a Lutheran pastor for their congregation of sixty-two, and Rev. Ulrich Dreisler was thereupon sent over. After serving two years, Dreisler died and was succeeded by Johann Joachim Zubly of St. Gall in Switzerland, who remained only a short time before moving to South Carolina. When Frederica was abandoned, most of the German residents rejoined their fellows in and around Ebenezer.

Although the Savannah River offered a good route of access to New Ebenezer, as the settlement on Red Bluff was first called, supplies were slow in reaching the Third Transport, and much time was lost for lack of tools. Also, as the summer heat increased, the tropical ailments reappeared, and the new-comers began dying off as rapidly as their predecessors had in their first year. By early autumn of 1736 everyone had completed the move from Old Ebenezer to New Ebenezer, yet Bolzius was unable to find four able-bodied men in the entire colony to take the heavy barge down to Savannah for provisions. Tertiary fever was so widespread that few settlers could work in their fields to plant their winter crops. Nevertheless, by July 27, 1737, John Wesley wrote in his journal: "In the evening, we came to New-Ebenezer, where the poor Salzburger are settled. The industry of this people is quite surprising. Their sixty huts are neatly and regularly built, and all of the little spots of ground between them improved to the best advantage. On one side of the town is a field of Indian corn; on the other, are the plantations of several private persons; all which together one would scarce think it possible for a handful of people to have done in one year."

In view of so much sickness and death, it is amazing that none of the Salzburger deserted the colony, as so many of the English settlers were doing. Zwiffler, the doctor who accompanied them, finally lost heart. Although he had worked night and day bleeding his patients and concocting dubious herbs to replace his exhausted medical supplies, he had already lost forty patients, including his own wife; and now he despaired and left the colony.⁵ Two unmarried men considered trying their luck in Pennsylvania, as so many indentured Germans in Savannah were doing; but they seem to have been dissuaded by Bolzius' warnings of the spiritual dangers incurred by seeking worldly goals. The losses from death were partially offset by additions from South Carolina. A German glazier named Rheinländer, who had met the Salzburger in Charleston, resolved to join them because he was finding it difficult to support his large family there. This he did, even though his family burden had been lightened the

⁵ This was doubtlessly the Zwiffler whom H. M. Muhlenberg found living in Philadelphia seven years later (*The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg*, trans. T. Tappert & J. Doberstein, Philadelphia, 1942, I, p. 65).

week before he left Charleston by the death of four of his children. Several more Germans moved from Purysburg, a much advertised but unsuccessful Swiss colony across the Savannah River and a few miles downstream from Ebenezer; and others came from time to time for divine services.

In 1738 the mortality rate suddenly dropped in Ebenezer, and only one adult died. Enough land was under cultivation, and there was actually a small surplus of foodstuffs. Benjamin Martyn, the secretary of the Trustees, wrote in 1739: "Fifteen miles from Purysburg on the Georgia side is Ebenezer, where the Salzburgers are situated. Their houses are neat and regularly set out in streets, and the whole economy of their town, under the influence of their ministers, Mess. Bolzius and Gronau, is very exemplary. For the benefit of their milk cattle, a herdsman is appointed to attend them in the woods all the day, and bring them home in the evening. Their stock of out-lying cattle is also under the care of two other herdsmen, who attend them in their feeding in the day, and drive them into cow-pens at night. This secures the owners from any loss, and the herdsmen are paid by a small contribution among the people. These are very industrious, and subsist comfortably by their labor. Though there is no court of justice, as they live in sobriety, they maintain great order and decency. In case of any difference, the minister calls three or four of the most prudent elders together, who in a summary way hear and determine as they think just, and the parties always acquiesce with content in their judgement. They are very regular in their public worship, which is on week-days in the evening after their work; and in the forenoon and evenings on Sundays. They have built a large and convenient house for the reception of orphans and other poor children, who are maintained by benefactions among the people, and are well taken care of and taught to work according as their age and ability will permit. The number computed by Mr. Bolzius in June, 1738, whereof his congregation consisted, was one hundred and forty-six, and some more have since been settled among them. They are all in general so well pleased with their condition, that not one of their people has abandoned the settlement."

This description is naturally a bit too rosy, since Mr. Martyn wished to prove the wisdom of the Trustees' policy, and Ebenezer was almost the only evidence he could muster to prove his point. Nevertheless, it appears that the Salzburgers themselves were content, for nearly all of them signed their names to a letter addressed the following year to their former Salzburger acquaintances still lingering in South German cities, whom they urged to come and join them. As a result of this letter, a fourth and final transport was organized, which reached Georgia in 1741. By that time Martyn reported to the Trustees that no less than 1200 German Protestants had come to Georgia, but of course he did not report how many of that number had died of fever or had left the colony for Pennsylvania. How large the German element had grown by 1751 is indicated by how little notice was made when John Gerar William DeBrahm settled 160 Germans at Bethany, near Ebenezer, in that year; for this group was as large as the original Ebenezer colony and was soon joined by that many again. It is to be noted that henceforth all Georgia Germans, no matter what their origins, were included in the term "Salzburger," just as most Pennsylvania Germans were called "Palatines," even if they came from Hesse or Württemberg. On April 11, 1755, the entire white population of Georgia was estimated at only 2,381, of which a good percentage must have been German. If we can trust the figures given by Martyn and DeBrahm, it would seem that more than half the white population was German.

Because of the general lack of prosperity in Georgia, many British colonists, particular a small group of Scottish gentlemen, agitated to have the Trustees withdraw their ban against the introduction of Negro slavery. For this purpose they collected the signatures of most of the freeholders of the colony, but the Salzburghers refused to side with the so-called "Malcontents" in this matter. When the Malcontents complained that Bolzius had been deceitful in refusing to sign their petition, the Earl of Egmont replied indignantly: "It is an outrage scarce to be paraleled thus to defame the character of Mr. Bolzius. There is not a person in the Colony more eminent and more esteemed for piety, integrity and prudence than this clergyman: his letters and journals wrote in the German language for the use of his Countrymen, and his letters to his friends in England are constantly full of praises to God and thanks to the Trustees for the happy condition the Saltsburghers are in, and all who come from the Province and have seen them, declare the same. On the 18 Sept. 1740 Mr. Jones gave an account of these people in a private letter to Mr. Ja. Lyde of London as follows: 'I know of no other settlement in this Colony more desirable, except Ebenezer, a town on the river Savannah at 35 miles distance from hence, inhabited by Saltsburghers and other Germans, under the Pastoral care of Mr. Bolzius and Mr. Gronau, who are discreet worthy men. The town is neatly built, the situation exceeding pleasant; they consist of sixty families or upwards. They live in the greatest harmony with their Ministers, and with one another as one family. They have no idle, drunken, or profligate people among them, but are industrious, many grown wealthy, and their industry has been blessed with remarkable and uncommon success, to the envy of their Carolina neighbours, having great plenty of all the necessary conveniences of life (except clothing) within themselves, and supply this town and other neighbouring places, with bread kind, as also beef, pork, veal, poultry etc.'"

As a result of steady accretion from Europe, as well as of a birth rate that finally surpassed the death rate, Ebenezer continued to grow until the Revolution; and, far more important, most of the surrounding areas were gradually populated and cultivated by Germans. In addition to his arduous chores of ruling and regulating his congregation, Pastor Bolzius also preached in the churches of Goshen and Zion, two outlying German areas, as well as in Savannah, where there was a small but active Lutheran congregation. As well as performing his spiritual duties, Bolzius also served as correspondent and intermediary between his flock and the Trustees, the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, and the Lutheran authorities back in Germany. His carefully kept journal and his voluminous correspondence were faithfully edited and periodically published by Rev. Urlsperger, and the resulting *Urlspurger Nachrichten* still furnish perhaps the richest single source of Georgia colonial history, a source still scarcely tapped and largely ignored by most Georgia historians.

Bolzius was ably assisted in his many labors by Pastor Gronau, who was often compelled to take over all ecclesiastical and administrative duties when his colleague was away or was down with fever. These two worthy men strengthened their tie of friendship even more by marrying two sisters from their Salzburg congregation and thus becoming brothers-in-law. When Gronau died after twelve years of dedicated service, he was replaced by Rev. Hermann H. Lembke, who also came from Halle and lived to serve for nearly thirty years. Lembke married Gronau's widow and thus became Bolzius' brother-in-law too, and these two colleagues collaborated affectionately and effectively for many years. After some time, when his health

had begun to fail, Bolzius turned over the responsibility for the saw-mill, grist-mill, and other glebe property to his colleague Lembke.

Finding the spiritual and secular needs of the Ebenezer community too great for only two clergymen, the Reverend Fathers in Germany sent a third pastor named Christian Rabenhorst, who in turn took charge of the saw-mill, grist-mill, and other church property and served for twenty-five years. The success of Ebenezer can be largely attributed to the devotion, ability, and longevity of these first four pastors, who held their congregation together with tact and firmness for its first half century. In view of the unhealthy situation, it is a remarkable fact that these first four pastors served effectively for a total of about a hundred years! While Ebenezer never lacked spiritual guidance, the Anglican Church in Savannah had a long series of ministers, most of them unsuccessful, and long periods with no incumbent at all. It is perhaps significant that Ebenezer had three pastors and no tavernkeeper, while Savannah had three tavernkeepers and no pastor. It is sad that Bolzius died just before the building of Jerusalem Church, the handsome brick building which still stands today.

Much of the labor in Savannah was supplied by indentured Germans, mostly from the Palatinate. To pay off their passage, these servants worked for five years for the Trustees or for the earlier settlers, at the end of which time they received fifty acres of land and all the rights of English subjects. However, seeing the unhealthy conditions and the general lack of prosperity in Georgia, many of these servants refused to settle there at the expiration of their indenture but preferred to migrate to Pennsylvania. To stop this loss of manpower, the Trustees had to resort to providing tools, cattle, and provisions in order to persuade the discontented redemptioners to settle. The Trustees had stationed a number of Germans just south of Savannah as gardeners to supply the city with fresh produce. Although this settlement, which was called Hampstead, was soon abandoned, enough of the Germans remained in the area or moved southward to give the name "Dutchtown Road" to one of the main thoroughfares.

Whereas all four transports of Salzburgers had crossed the ocean with no deaths and little sickness, one shipload of 170 German and Swiss redemptioners lost forty en route to Georgia and forty more soon after landing there; and this shows that, in matters of health, the Salzburgers fared better than some. One group of redeemed Swiss and Palatines chose to settle on the Vernon River about ten miles south of Savannah, where they named their community Vernonburg. Being of the Reformed faith, they petitioned the Trustees to supply them a Reformed minister, if possible Pastor Zubly, who resided in South Carolina since leaving Frederica. This request was granted, and Zubly moved to Vernonburg, where he was assisted by the Salzburg schoolmaster Ortmann, who had recently lost favor in Ebenezer because of the worldly behavior of his wife.

Zubly later took orders in the Presbyterian ministry and became spokesman for all dissident groups in their struggle against the encroachments of the Anglican Church, which became the Established Church in Georgia when the Trustees surrendered the colony to the Crown in 1752. Zubly represented Georgia in the Constitutional Convention of 1775 in Philadelphia, where he spoke valiantly against royal injustices and won the esteem of John Adams and other founding fathers. Later he opposed the actual break with England and died dispossessed and disgraced shortly before the end of hostilities.

Another German Swiss clergyman who reached prominence in Georgia was Bartholomäus Zauberbühler, or Bartholomew Zouberbuhler, as he later

called himself. Having taken orders in the Anglican Church in Charleston, Zauberbühler tried to arrogate the Lutheran church in Orangeburg County, where he was defeated by the incumbent, Johann Giessendanner, and his loyal German congregation. Thereupon Zauberbühler returned to Europe to recruit new colonists, and in this he seems to have been successful. In any case, in 1758 he was appointed rector of Christ Church in Savannah, which had become the most influential church in the colony after the establishment of the Anglican Church in 1752. Thus it would seem that, regardless of denomination, all the important theologians then in Georgia spoke German as their mother tongue.

Of the various religious groups in Georgia, perhaps the most unusual were the Moravians or Herrnhuter, whom Count Zinzendorf sent to Georgia in 1735.⁶ This party, totalling forty-seven members, included many artisans and was therefore of great value to the colony. Being content with little and wishing only to serve mankind, they spent most of their energy in the service of other people, not only in building them houses but also in nursing them back to health. Unfortunately they arrived just as the colony was preparing for war against Spanish Florida, and the other inhabitants resented the exemption from military service promised them by Oglethorpe. Rather than go against their convictions, the surviving members of the group transferred to Pennsylvania, where they played a role in the cultural development of that state. Some of them later moved down to North Carolina, where their influence is still felt in the region of Winston-Salem. Perhaps the most lasting influence of this sect was the impression it made on John Wesley when he sailed with a contingent of them, and with the Third Transport of Salzburgers, on his way to Savannah. As he relates in his journal, their piety and fortitude in the face of death first opened his eyes to the true meaning of faith. Later he visited Herrnhut to learn more about their movement, and he was ever after aware of his debt to them.

Whereas most early Germans in Georgia were noted for their piety and docility toward the church, there was one striking exception. This was Christian Priber (or Pryber), a political idealist from Saxony, who undertook to protect the Noble Savage from exploitation and corruption by the White Man.⁷ Arriving in Charleston in 1734, Priber sold his clothes, wigs, and other trappings of civilization and disappeared into the backcountry dressed as a savage. Being well versed in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, German, French, and English, he quickly mastered as many Indian languages as necessary for his purpose, which was to found an ideal commonwealth based on social and economic equality and community of property and wives. When the governor of South Carolina tried to extradite Priber, his Indian friends defended him. Later, however, he was captured by some other Indians and sold to the British, who imprisoned him at Frederica.⁸ There he was held under suspicion of being a French agent and a Jesuit.⁸ Oglethorpe claimed that he had confessed to being a Jesuit, but this has subsequently been disproved.⁹ The Jesuits would hardly have favored his anti-clerical attitudes, or even his doctrine of plurality of wives. While in prison Priber impressed his captors with his vast erudition, which seemed incongruous in a half naked man dressed and shorn like an Indian. On the occasion an arsenal next to his cell exploded with eight thousand bombs,

⁶ The Moravians' sojourn in Georgia has been excellently told by Adelaide L. Fries in *The Moravians in Georgia*, Winston-Salem, N. C., 1905.

⁷ This usually neglected man is well treated by Vernon W. Crane in "A Lost Utopia of the First American Frontier," *Sewanee Review*, 27, 1919, pp. 48-61.

⁸ See Katherine de Baillou, "Oglethorpe's Statement on Christian Pryber" in *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 44, 1960, pp. 100-101.

⁹ By Clemens de Baillou. See his "A Note on Christian Priber" in *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 42, 1958, p. 112.

yet he survived the explosion and did not even try to utilize the chance to escape. A short time later he died of fever, and thus ended his grandiose scheme for reforming society.

In view of the unparalleled generosity of the Trustees and of the British Crown to the Salzburgers, it is hardly to their children's credit that most of them joined their English-speaking neighbors in demanding independence from England. Unlike the New England patriots, most of whom had lived for generations in America and had lost all ties with the mother country, most inhabitants of Georgia were European born or first generation Americans and were therefore obligated to the King for many favors. As a result the population, and even individual families, were sadly divided into Whigs and Tories. This division also rent the congregation at Ebenezer and spoiled its erstwhile harmony. Thus in Ebenezer, as in the rest of Georgia, the Revolution was really a civil war. When the British forces retook Savannah in 1779, the new and controversial young pastor, Christian Triebner, reported to Savannah to take an oath of loyalty to the King and to persuade the British commandant to occupy Ebenezer. This the British did, with the result that many of the inhabitants fled and remained absent during the succeeding two years of internecine strife.

That the majority of the Salzburgers favored the patriot cause is shown by the role played by many of its leading men on the revolutionary side. It is of note that the first governor of the revolutionary government was Johann Adam Treutlen, a deacon of Jerusalem Church. Little is known about Treutlen's origins or his end. Tradition says that he came with his widowed mother from Berchtesgaden; so, if this is true, they must have been Salzburgers even if their name does not appear on any of the transport lists. Although he was a regular communicant of Jerusalem Church, he does not seem to have resided at Ebenezer proper but at Dutchtown or Vernonsburg or some other out-lying area, and this would perhaps explain his complete mastery of English and his insistence that the Salzburgers become rapidly anglicized. Treutlen was not only a deacon of his church, but also a successful planter who had amassed considerable wealth in land and slaves. Unfortunately he disappeared from history as quickly as he entered it. When the British occupied Savannah in 1779, he withdrew to the back-country with the ousted government and soon vanished from view. Rumor says that he was murdered by Tories while recruiting in Orangeburg County, S. C., and that his corpse was thrown on a manure pile. In any case his burial place is unknown, and he is remembered today only by a Georgia county named after him and by a bust in the State Capitol.

The town of Ebenezer never again reached the prosperity it had enjoyed just before the Revolution. Although most of the inhabitants returned and repaired their houses, few new buildings were added; and many of those still standing were gradually abandoned and allowed to decay. By the middle of the next century only one house was still occupied, and it too was soon deserted and allowed to collapse. For the benefit of their pastor, the congregation of Jerusalem Church built a parsonage in the more salubrious pine barrens some three miles away. The anopheles mosquito had finally won the long-drawn-out battle, and the Red Bluff was again uninhabited as it had been before Bolzius and his exiles first felled its great live oaks. Ebenezer's disappearance does not mean that the Salzburgers failed as colonists. It only means that, in spreading out into the surrounding countryside, their descendants found other areas less subject to "miasmatic vapors," as doctors then tried to explain the cause of malaria. Besides that, once the road to Savannah had been improved, the town of Ebenezer was

no longer necessary, since the Salzburger farmers could cart their produce directly to the city market and thus save the expense of a middle-man. Even the artisans found it more profitable to move to the city, where a larger clientele bid for their wares. By leaving the town to live directly on their holdings, the Salzburgers were merely conforming to the pattern followed by American farmers as opposed to those of Europe. The surprising thing is not that Ebenezer failed, but rather that it lasted as long as it did, for it outlasted Purysburg, the older colony across the river, and also Abercorn, Frederica, Goshen, Hampstead, Highgate, Hardwick, Joseph's Town, Sunbury, and numerous other Georgia towns that had once given much promise and then quietly faded from the map!

The congregation of Jerusalem Church diminished not only because its members changed their residence, but also because they changed their language. As we have mentioned, all five pre-revolutionary pastors at Ebenezer had been provided by the Lutheran Church in Germany. These ministers naturally preferred to preach in their native tongue, which was also that of Luther. For the first half century this policy was certainly advantageous for Jerusalem Church, since a common tongue was the strongest bond uniting the German settlers. Newcomers, even those of the Reformed Church, seem to have preferred to hear Luther's theology preached in their native tongue than to hear Calvin's theology preached in English or in French.

However, while it had been an advantage in the early years of the colony, the use of the German language naturally became disadvantageous as the communicants became anglicized, a process that was completed in less than a century. When the Salzburgers first reached Georgia, the only people with whom they could converse with ease were the two German Jews, who had arrived some eight months earlier. In England Bolzius and Gronau had communicated in Latin, but that was futile in Georgia; and von Reck could converse in French only with the French settlers and with those few Englishmen who knew that language. Consequently they all set out with a will to learn English, and all seem to have succeeded quickly. Rather than to keep his flock linguistically isolated, as so many foreign-born clergymen have tried to do, Bolzius made every effort to have them learn English as rapidly as possible, and he even had an English lad named John Robinson assigned to his orphan home to help the children learn English. When schoolmaster Ortman was dismissed so ignominiously, the excuse given was that he was unable to pronounce English well enough to teach it. Sitting astride the King's highway as it did, Ebenezer was visited by many travelers, and thus the inhabitants could practice their English whenever they wished.

Therefore it is not surprising that the third and fourth generation children preferred to speak English and even had difficulty understanding the language of their ancestors. The use of English was naturally speeded up by the Revolution, when English troops were quartered in Ebenezer and many inhabitants were serving with the American forces or were hiding upcountry in English-speaking districts. Nevertheless, when peace returned and a new pastor was needed to replace Triebner, who had fled with the British, the Reverend Fathers in Germany sent Johann Ernst Bergmann, a fine young scholar who knew Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, but no English. Unwilling to speak of Word of God in broken English, Pastor Bergmann persisted in the use of German even after most of his young parishioners began dropping by the wayside and joining other churches, particularly the new Methodist and Baptist churches that offered a more emotional brand

of religion than he could offer. By the time Bergmann's son and successor finally introduced the use of English in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, most of the Salzburger's descendants were firmly entrenched in the Methodist and other churches.

Still handsome in appearance, but standing alone in a deserted and scarcely accessible wasteland, Jerusalem Church was long used only on special occasions, when the Lutheran congregations from the surrounding areas would assemble to worship. Now, however, the trend has been reversed; and services are held every Sunday. A fine new Sunday School building, containing a museum, has just been added in the style of the original edifice. Paved roads now make the church more accessible, and, far more important, the descendants are developing greater pride and interest in their Salzburg heritage. The annual gathering at Jerusalem Church brings a growing multitude of Descendants, many from distant states. A century ago most people of Effingham County still had Salzburger names. Since then some of these names have been anglicized, and many outlanders have moved into the area. Nevertheless, nearly all inhabitants are descended on one or more sides from the German settlers, and most of them are descended from at least one of the original Salzburg exiles. For the first century and a half of their stay in Georgia, the Salzburger and their descendants were almost exclusively agrarian and remained close to the soil, but recently many of those who have moved to Savannah have entered the professions and reached positions of wealth and prominence. The chief contribution of the Salzburger, the one most prized by the Trustees themselves, has been their pious, industrious, and orderly way of life.