



A New Description of That Fertile and Pleasant Province of Carolina

John Archdale (1707)

John Archdale was a white Quaker born in England. He crossed the Atlantic and lived in the Province of Carolina (later divided into North and South Carolina) during the 1680s-90s; during the last year he lived there, he served as provincial governor. He thereafter returned to England, where he was elected to Parliament but was not seated because, as a Quaker, he refused to swear the oath of office. The following selection comes from the beginning of a book Archdale published about Carolina after his return to England. In this selection, he interprets the decimation of indigenous North Americans by disease and intertribal warfare as God providentially clearing the land for settlement by the English, who, Archdale says, lacked the cruelty of the Spanish and therefore would not have slaughtered the natives themselves.

Before I give a particular description of Carolina, I think good to make some general remarks on the divine providence of the almighty and omniscient God, who hath so stated the various scenes of nature as to accomplish his divine will in fulfilling whatsoever stands recorded in the holy scriptures. Now, that scene of divine providence which seems to be appropriated to our times is the dawning day for the accomplishment of various promises: not only that Christ should be given as *a light to enlighten the Gentiles* [...] (Rom. 10), but again, that God will give unto Christ *the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession* (Ps. 2), as also that *the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the seas* (Isa. 11) [...], with many more promises of the like nature [...]

And because in all the grand scenes of divine providence, some preparative strokes are generally made as preludiums to what is quickly to ensue, the art of printing, to beget knowledge, hath been reserved for this last age, as also the compass, to convey knowledge, as aforesaid. And the discovery of gunpowder hath been another medium to subdue millions of people that lay under a barbarous and brutish state—as, for example, in Mexico, where was a temple dedicated to their chief idol, larger than Paul's, whose walls were two inches thick bespread or beplastered with human blood, sacrificed to their deities or devils. And although I cannot excuse the barbarity or cruelty of the Spaniards towards them, yet it was justly brought upon them, as on God's part, who thereby gave them their own blood to drink in lieu of what they had most barbarously shed of their neighbors. And indeed, providence seemed wholly to design this bloody work for the Spanish nation and not for the English, who in their natures are not so cruel as the other; witness the Inquisition, its cruelty being most established in Spain.

And, courteous readers, I shall give you some further eminent remark hereupon, and especially in the first settlement of Carolina, where the hand of God was eminently seen in thinning the Indians to make room for the English—as, for example, in Carolina, in which were seated two potent nations called the Westos and Savannahs, which contained many thousands, who broke out into an unusual civil war and thereby reduced themselves into a small number; and the Westos, the more cruel of the two, were at the last forced quite out of that province, and the Savannahs continued good friends and useful neighbors to the English. But again, it at other times pleased Almighty God to send unusual sicknesses amongst them, as the smallpox, etc., to

lessen their numbers, so that the English, in comparison to the Spaniard, have but little Indian blood to answer for. Now, the English at first settling in small numbers, there seemed a necessity of thinning the barbarous Indian nations; and therefore, since our cruelty is not the instrument thereof, it pleases God to send, as I may say, an Assyrian angel to do it himself.

Yet will I not totally excuse the English as being wholly clear of the blood of the Indians in some respects, which I at present pass over. But surely we are all much to blame in being so negligent of executing the proper means for their souls' salvation, which being a gradual work, the introducing a civilized state would be a good and stable preparatory for the gospel state—even as the divine hand of providence prepared us by the Romans, as all historians mention that relate to us.

I shall further add one late, more immediate example of God's more immediate hand, in making a consumption upon some Indian nations in North Carolina (and that was in my time at the river Pamlico) and some nations adjoining; this is a late settlement, begun about eight years since. When I was in the north about eleven years since, I was told then of a great mortality that fell upon the Pamlico Indians; as also, that a nation of Indians called the Coranine, a bloody and barbarous people, were most of them cut off by a neighboring nation. Upon which I said that it seemed to me as if God had an intention speedily to plant an English settlement thereabouts—which accordingly fell out in two or three years, although at that time not one family was there.

Source: John Archdale, *A New Description of That Fertile and Pleasant Province of Carolina* [...] (London, 1707; rpt. Charleston, SC: A. E. Miller, 1822), 5-7, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433081846119>. Public domain, Google-digitized.

Excerpts edited by John-Charles Duffy. Additional paragraph and sentence breaks inserted for readability. A missing chapter number added to a biblical citation. A clause relocated within a sentence for clarity. Grammatical infelicities corrected. Spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and the placement and formatting of biblical citations modernized, Americanized, or otherwise emended for readability, including the spelling of names. Italics omitted except when used to set off biblical quotations. Elided letters spelled out; &c. emended to *etc*. The name of an indigenous nation converted to an unambiguous plural form (*Savannah* → *Savannahs*) for improved parallelism and internal consistency.

For the sake of modernization and readability, various words capitalized in the source publication per antiquated convention have been converted here to lowercase, including the religious terms *divine providence*, *divine will*, *hand of God*, *holy scriptures*, *omniscient*, *angel*, *salvation*, *gospel*, *temple*, *idol*, *deities*, *devils*, and *heathen*. *Almighty* is capitalized here when it appears as part of a divine epithet functioning like a name (*Almighty God*) but not when it is used as a descriptor preceded by an article (*the almighty God*).

These edited excerpts from Archdale's book are intended for **teaching** purposes only. For **research** purposes, you should consult, quote, and cite the source publication listed above.



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