



God's Fields: Landscape, Religion, and Race in Moravian Wachovia (Cultural Heritage Studies)

Leland Ferguson

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"Provides a fascinating and nuanced study of the transformations in religious and social ideals among Moravians as they worked to implement their aspirations in the harsh realities of a North Carolina landscape shaped by racism. Ferguson reveals the intersecting dynamics of religious aspirations, sectarian prejudices, conflicting designs across cultural landscapes, paradoxical divergences of religious ideals and social realities, and the life stories of African Americans working to navigate such contested terrain."--Christopher C. Fennell, author of *Crossroads and Cosmologies*

"A fascinating examination of the tension of race relations in the antebellum South. *God's Fields* unfolds like a murder mystery and is hard to put down."--Christopher E. Hendricks, author of *The Backcountry Towns of Colonial Virginia*

The Moravian community of Salem, North Carolina, was founded in 1766, and the town--the hub of nearly 100,000 piedmont acres purchased thirteen years before and named "Wachovia"--quickly became the focal point for the church's colonial presence in the South.

While the brethren preached the unity of all humans under God, a careful analysis of the birth and growth of their Salem settlement reveals that the group gradually embraced the institutions of slavery and racial segregation in opposition to their religious beliefs. Although Salem's still-active community includes one of the oldest African American congregations in the nation, the evidence contained in *God's Fields* reveals that during much of the twentieth century, the church's segregationist past was intentionally concealed.

Leland Ferguson's work reconstructing this "secret history" through years of archaeological fieldwork was part of a historical preservation program that helped convince the Moravian Church in North America to formally apologize in 2006 for its participation in slavery and clear a way for racial reconciliation.

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