POLITICAL PIETY: EVANGELICALS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN SOUTH CAROLINA AND GEORGIA

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

David E. Hollingsworth

The Graduate School
The University of Kentucky
2009
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Kentucky

By David E. Hollingsworth

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Daniel Blake Smith, Professor of History

Lexington, Kentucky

2009

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The study of southern evangelicals during the late colonial and revolutionary eras of American history has focused primarily on the social antagonisms that separated evangelicals from southern elites and has concluded that the rapid growth of post-war evangelicalism came as a result of evangelical acquiescence to southern gentry mores. Most study of southern evangelicals has concentrated on the upper South missing important developments in the Deep South which contradict historical assumptions of Separate triumph and the subsequent subversion of radical evangelicalism by evangelical leaders eager for societal acceptance. Evangelicals were not a monolithic movement. Key doctrines, primarily the need for conversion, united them, but the social range of evangelical groups included outcast Separate Baptists to elite members of Charleston and Savannah society. Because evangelicals have been viewed as outside the mainstream of southern society, evangelical contributions to the revolutionary cause have gone mostly unnoticed. This work seeks to illuminate the contributions of evangelicals to the American Revolution by examining the roles of evangelicals in the Imperial Crisis and in the war itself. Evangelical leaders were strong proponents of American rights. Far from being outcasts, many evangelicals enjoyed positions of prominence in southern society and several served in the governments of South Carolina and Georgia. Almost all evangelicals in this region supported the American cause and were viewed by many elite revolutionaries as indispensable to solidifying the unity necessary to fight Great Britain. Evangelicals and Anglican elites worked together to cement support for provincial government and bring about the disestablishment of the Anglican Church. Evangelicals also served an important role in winning the American Revolution in the South. Evangelicals, particularly New Light Presbyterians and Regular Baptists, formed a major portion of the militia that rose to bedevil Lord Cornwallis’s attempts to implement British strategic goals. His failure in South Carolina led to his ultimate downfall at Yorktown. In the final chapter, this work examines the proud, if divided, republicanism of southern evangelicals, highlights their political activity, and explores the beginning of the evangelical ascent to religious dominance in the Deep South.
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By

David E. Hollingsworth

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April 16, 2009
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To William E. Hollingsworth, a southern man who loved Jesus and me.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The great convulsion which rent the thirteen American colonies from the British Empire has fascinated historians since the acceptance of the Treaty of Paris. Searching for the causes which propelled the colonists into open rebellion and those which sustained their will to fight, historians of different stripes have delved into the minds and pocketbooks of elite and ordinary British American citizens to ferret out clues to the elusive glue which held a confederacy of thirteen divergent states together in the struggle against the world’s mightiest empire. The historiography of the American Revolution is a battleground primarily between those who depict the struggle as economic and social in nature and those who see deep ideological forces at work. Economic and social historians link the impetus and sustenance of the Revolution to the desire by the colonists for greater control of their lives financially and politically. Ideological historians argue that it was the great body of ideas handed down through British history that steeled the will of those who led the fight against the Crown. Both schools provide valuable insight into the minds and actions of American combatants and provide ample room for continued exploration.

The role of religion in the onset and sustenance of the American Revolution falls into both categories for religion is a set of ideological suppositions and a powerful influence on social behavior. As a component of revolutionary studies, it is not an unplowed field. Over the past fifty years, many of the greatest American historians have put their hands to the plow in attempt to understand what, if any, significance religious ideas or the members of the varying religious sects had to the coming and prosecution of the war. These studies have clarified our picture of the religious ideas which animated
believers to fight for and against Great Britain, but they have focused primarily on religious groups from the northern colonies, debated the role of the Great Awakening on the coming of the American Revolution, or skirmished over the growth or declension of religion in late colonial and revolutionary America.

Another vein of religious studies emerged, beginning in the 1970’s, seeking to understand the rise of evangelicalism in the South during the late colonial period. These studies outlined the explosive growth of evangelicalism in the South and purported to show the social reasons for the growth of evangelicalism, namely the evangelical egalitarian challenge to traditional loci of authority and the opportunities for psychological comfort proffered by evangelical fellowship. These studies have been especially helpful in marking out the societal fractures occasioned by the rise of Separate Baptists, but they have focused mostly on the fertile grounds of the upper South, most notably Virginia.

This work, hoping to fill in gaps left by the current historiography, is a study combining the rise of evangelicalism in the Deep South with the influence of evangelicals on the coming, prosecuting, and winning of the American Revolution. The growth of evangelicalism in the South coincided with the growing crisis with Great Britain. This study seeks to outline the growth of evangelicalism in South Carolina and Georgia, place these evangelicals contextually within the societies of South Carolina and Georgia, and highlight the roles and accomplishments of these evangelicals in the War of American Independence. The thesis is that evangelicals in South Carolina and Georgia played more influential and sizeable roles in the societies of these two colonies, the constitutional arguments leading to war, the establishment of provincial governments, and the successful prosecution of the American cause in the South than has heretofore been acknowledged, by
the most influential works of the past forty years.

Evangelicals, then as now, were not monolithic in doctrine and practice, but eighteenth century evangelicals did generally follow four basic tenants. They believed that the Bible was the ultimate authority in defining matters of faith and practice. They stressed the need for regeneration through conversion. They taught that the individual was responsible to God for his or her own moral actions and that the redeeming work of Christ on the cross was the essence of Christianity.¹ The most obvious feature that each eighteenth-century evangelical group in the Deep South believed and preached was that the individual must come to Christ for salvation by faith in a process called conversion or the “new birth”.² “Saving faith came only at the behest of divine mercy…Such was the essence of evangelical faith.”³ Practitioners of true religion were marked by “conviction of personal wickedness,” “joyful release of ‘conversion,’” and “the assurance of having received the grace to believe in Jesus.”⁴ This “understanding of what made men and women truly religious unified all evangelicals in the early American South.”⁵ Evangelical believers came from a number of different Christian sects, including Anglicans and German pietists, in late colonial South Carolina and Georgia, but the primary agents of evangelical preaching were Presbyterians and Baptists. Though most evangelicals supported the patriot cause, it must be stressed that not all evangelicals rallied to the fight

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³ Heyrman, 4.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
Key areas of colonial and revolutionary historiography must be addressed to set this work in its proper context. First, studies which focus on the role of religion, particularly other studies including evangelicalism, in the advent and prosecution of the American Revolution. Second, studies which evaluate the overall strength of American Christianity leading to the Revolution. Third, but of primary importance, are religious studies which have made the American South the primary thrust of investigation.

With the coming of the Great Awakening, evangelicalism exploded into the consciousness of British American colonists. The primary historiographical discussion of the role of religion in the American Revolution has focused on the Great Awakening and any possible connection it had to the Revolution. Perry Miller claimed that the Great Awakening freed Americans from a dependence upon European social philosophies and passive acceptance of old views regarding authority. Americans, he argued, realized after the Awakening that they could formulate a society best crafted to uphold their own welfare.6 Alan Heimert placed the Great Awakening as the fundamental line at which late colonial society divided. Society split between the evangelical, Calvinist revivalists and the rationalist, Arminian liberals. The debate between these camps dominated the era between the Great Awakening and the Revolution.7 Rationalists, Heimert contended, may have declared independence, but they did not supply the determination to fight for it.8 Heimert argued that the “voluntary allegiance” of evangelicals to their preachers, the expertise of their oral communications, “the democratization of the deity” by proclaiming individual

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8  Ibid.,15-8.
responsibility to God alone, and the democracy within evangelical congregations and the lay power which it engendered served as the foundational pillars for an emerging “American democracy.” Heimert drew a direct link between the Great Awakening and the American Revolution. He stated that the competition between the rationalists and the evangelicals for the minds of Americans made the Revolution “inevitable.” In the end the evangelical revivalists were more responsible for the Revolution because it was not “the result of [the] reasoned thought” of the rationalists but an “emotional outburst similar to a religious revival.”

Heimert’s work received blistering criticism soon after its publication. Though much of his work regarding the primacy of evangelicals in the initiation of the Revolution was discredited, authors began to resurrect portions of his argument, namely that there was a connection between the Great Awakening and the ensuing changes in colonial society that led to the Revolution.

William McLoughlin argued that the Revolution was “a religious as well as a political movement.” Reviving a portion of Heimert’s thesis, he posited in the Great Awakening the beginnings of an American national identity. This realization by Americans of their own, separate identity from Britain was the “starting point of the Revolution.” It marked a “watershed in the self-image” of Americans which led them to challenge the hierarchical nature of society. The Great Awakening brought with it the evangelical Calvinistic message of individual responsibility to and experience with God and the realization that the state and the church were creations of the people and thus subject to

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9 Ibid., 18-9.
10 Ibid., 20-1.
popular authority. McLoughlin, diverging from Heimert, combined the importance of this “pietistic individualism” with that of natural rights philosophy and “radical whig ideology” in the formation of the “national assertion” that was necessary for Americans to contemplate revolt. The Revolution, therefore, was a combination of rationalist thought and evangelical fervor.\textsuperscript{12}

Jon Butler took direct aim at earlier historians who saw a causal linkage between the Great Awakening and the American Revolution by questioning the existence of the Great Awakening. In his “Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction,” Butler challenged the notion that the revivals in mid-eighteenth-century America constituted an inter-colonial phenomenon. He based his argument on the lack of contemporary description of the revivals as a “Great Awakening” and the diffuse nature of the revivals. Butler contended that the Heimertian historiography “distort[ed] the extent, nature, and cohesion” of the revivals producing “unwarranted claims for their effects on colonial society while exaggerat[ing] their influence on the coming and character of the American Revolution.”\textsuperscript{13} Butler leveled a broad attack at previous contentions that the Great Awakening was Calvinist, colonies-wide, and affected all areas of society in late colonial America. If there was a Great Awakening, it only occurred in the “short-lived Calvinist revivals of New England during the early 1740s.”\textsuperscript{14} In his analysis, Butler saw the colonial revivals as regional, pointed to a need to study them in their transatlantic context, and claimed no real link between the Awakening and the


\textsuperscript{13} Jon Butler, “Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction,” \textit{The Journal of American History} 69, no. 2 (September, 1982), 307-308.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 308-09.
Revolution.  

John Murrin continued to assault the linkage of the Great Awakening in his “No Awakening, No Revolution? More Counterfactual Speculations.” Heimert was wrong, he contended, about the rationalists because they provided nearly all the leadership positions in the revolutionary cause. Murrin argued that the Imperial Crisis of the 1760s and 1770s would have occurred without the Great Awakening. American colonials universally opposed British measures without any need for revivalist influence. In fact, Murrin contends that loyalism may have grown more due to the growth of Anglicanism, most of whose membership remained loyal to the crown, which occurred as a reaction to the Great Awakening. Murrin argued that the American Revolution would have occurred without the Great Awakening. Evangelical leadership was only crucial in New Jersey. In spite of Heimert’s wrong conclusions regarding the role of evangelicals in bringing on the Revolution, Murrin does acknowledge that his assertion that evangelicals were necessary to successfully prosecute the Revolution probably holds value. Murrin concluded, with Heimert, that evangelicals helped win the war because of the clear fact that most evangelicals became ardent patriots.

Recent works have specifically looked at the role of religion in the American Revolution. Derek Davis in his Religion and The Continental Congress, 1774-1789: Contributions to Original Intent sought primarily to examine “the specific ways in which religion influenced the work of the Congress” while offering analysis to other ways in which religion affected revolutionary society. Davis argued that because Congress

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15 Ibid., 322-24.
17 Ibid., 161, 167-68.
operated during “an epochal war” it believed “divine guidance and approval were essential to its success.” Revolutionary Christians did not believe in nor desire a complete separation of church of state. Due to Puritan influence, many of these Christians rested their obedience to government on the theory of mutual obligation. Biblical texts that prohibited resistance to government were “superseded and overruled” by the belief that Scripture did not condone “unlimited obedience” to rulers who did not meet their obligation to protect the rights of the governed. Christian revolutionaries did not supplant the Bible with political philosophy, but they “accepted, preserved, extended, and popularized various doctrines of political philosophy, but only because they in no way contravened biblical theology.” Because they believed thus, Christians could contemplate and join the Revolution. Davis’s work reaffirmed the contentions of earlier historians to the power of millennialist thought in revolutionary Christian orthodoxy. Combining the sanction of scripture and the purpose of God for the new nation gave Christians a powerful motivation to join in the Revolution. Therefore, for Davis, “orthodox Protestant convictions lay at the root of the revolutionary movement” and provided a grounding “for virtually all Americans” upon which to judge the righteousness or wickedness of the American cause.18

Religious studies have recently re-opened the possibility of connection between commonwealth and religious ideology. Jeffry Morrison turned attention to the Black Regiment, those “American clergy who agitated and sometimes even fought for independence.” Chief among them was John Witherspoon. Morrison highlighted the contributions of Witherspoon to the spread of revolutionary ideology through his work at

Princeton, the “seminary of sedition.” Witherspoon’s advocacy of religious involvement in the new nation forms the centerpiece of Morrison’s research. For Witherspoon as well as most all the founders, national security rested on national virtue. Morrison argued that “it was religion, and especially the virtues that flow from true religion, that gave vigor to the republic” and that civic and religious liberty were inextricable in the minds of the founding generation.\textsuperscript{19}

Works studying the strength and spread of Christianity between the Great Awakening and the American Revolution reveal conflicting conclusions. Two schools emerged. One school, led by Jon Butler, portrayed a declining interest in religion during the late colonial period and a growing laxity toward Christianity. Others, led by Patricia Bonomi, argued that there was no marked declension in the religious affinities of the colonial population.

Bonomi, with Peter Eisenstadt, in “Church Adherence in the Eighteenth-Century British Colonies,” based her argument on a careful study of church construction and congregation building which occurred in the years leading to the American Revolution. These, she argued, kept close pace with the growing population and marked a growing stabilization of religion in American society. The colonial white population attending church did decline, but not in remarkable numbers. Her key contention is that church adherence was not limited to those who formally joined any of the various denominations at their disposal, but included all those who regularly attended. Bonomi stated that historians who see declension falsely equate a growing ecumenicalism toward doctrinal

issues with apathy toward religion in general. In *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America*, Bonomi contended that historians confuse a decline in the utopian vision for the New World held by the Puritan fathers with a decline in the importance of religion to subsequent generations of colonists. In doing so, they miss key elements that attest to the overall health of religion in colonial America. Bonomi contended that the Great Awakening led to a “rising level of religious intensity.”

Immigration also brought new vitality with the influx of colonists bringing their European denominations with them. Finally, Bonomi argued that the “increasing interpenetration of religion and politics” points to a stable period of religious influence upon colonial society.

Jon Butler disagreed. Stressing church membership over mere church attendance, Butler argued that colonial religion declined decidedly. By the American Revolution, religion played a less than vital role in the lives of most Americans. Butler, basing his conclusions on membership, estimated that New England church adherence ranged from a high of sixty percent in the countryside to less than twenty percent in Boston. He highlighted similar findings in the middle colonies, particularly New York. The Anglican Church reeled under a net loss of parishioners after 1750. These observations lead Butler to assert that “religious indifference” was the norm in the years leading to the Revolution.

Studies looking specifically at southern evangelicalism burgeoned beginning with Rhys Isaac’s “Evangelical Revolt: The Nature of the Baptists’ Challenge to the Traditional

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22 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 191-93.
Order in Virginia, 1765 to 1775.” Isaac shifted southern religious historiography by examining the ways in which evangelicals challenged the basic institutions of society. Isaac argued that the Baptists of Virginia offered close support in a harsh age, equality in fellowship, and binding rituals which provided an alternative foundation upon which to build society than that offered by the social elites.25 By highlighting the role of the Great Awakening in initiating the social struggle of which he writes and proposing that the Baptists redefined human relationships with their “popular loci of authority,” Isaac’s research indicates Heimert’s continued influence.26 However, Isaac’s study of social relationships, structures of power (parish church, courthouse, entertainment centers), and the impact of evangelicalism on slaves portended a rise in the number of studies seeking to understand the social impact of late colonial religion. Isaac expanded his work in The Transformation of Virginia: 1740-1790. His work showed the explosive Separate Baptist growth in Virginia during the 1750s and 1760s. These Separates made all other evangelicals look conservative by comparison. The defections made by Anglicans to these evangelical groups caused much anxiety to the colonial authorities during this period. In spite of the growth of their movement, evangelicals realized “that the great majority of Virginia (or anywhere) was composed of non-Christians (that is, persons who had not, and might never, have, a saving experience of God’s grace.”27

Donald G. Mathews continued the social themes of Isaac. The success of evangelicalism was found in its rejection of traditional authority and the emergence of a new evangelical community. He argued that evangelicalism “enabled a rising

26 Ibid., 346,363.
27 Isaac, Transformation, 168, 173-4, 192, 292. Thousands converted. Isaac estimates Separates grew to include 10% of Virginia’s white population by 1774. Church construction burgeoned from seven church building in 1767 to forty four in 1774.
lower-middle/middle class to achieve identity, and solidarity, rewarding its most committed religious devotees with a sense of personal esteem and liberty.” Though he did discuss evangelical Presbyterians and Regular Baptists, Mathews generally equated the evangelical experience with Separate Baptists who triumphed over their more “traditional” counterparts. Mathews mirrored Heimert’s conclusion regarding the lack of reason within evangelical calls to conversion. “Evangelical preaching rejects the appeal to reason and restrained sensibilities for a direct, psychological assault upon sin and the equally direct and much more comforting offer of personal salvation.” Conversion “was…a rejection of reason and learning and the high status with which these otherwise highly valued qualities were identified.” Evangelicalism, for Mathews, was a way those outside the circle of authority could enjoy elevated self esteem and camaraderie. Mathews argued that early evangelicals believed that their system “liberated thousands from their low estate to establish them as refined and enlightened people.” This goal of refinement caused the evangelicals to change their approach, particularly in regard to slavery, to climb the ladder the societal success.\(^\text{28}\)

Christine Heyrman’s work detailing the rise of evangelicalism in South, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, combined Butler’s thesis regarding a post-Revolutionary “Christianization” of America and Mathews’ claim that evangelicals changed their message in order to win acceptance. Heyrman believed that evangelical transcendence did not occur until evangelicals mollified their social superiors with regard to slavery and authority. Until this was accomplished, few “native” southerners converted

\(^{28}\) Mathews, xiv-ii, 20-5, 27-8, 35, 136, 238. Mathews claims that white evangelicals were ashamed of their retreat from anti-slavery and could never truly understand the liberating power of the suffering Savior as black slaves could. Mathews also states that Regular Baptists “were very suspicious of emotional excesses and revivals.” Though correct regarding emotional excess, most of South Carolina’s Regular leaders were products of revivals. Oliver Hart, the leading Regular Baptist in South Carolina during the colonial and revolutionary era, presided over revivals in his Charleston church.
because they did not like the disruption of the natural social order. Her work also bolstered several of Bonomi’s arguments as well. Heyrman reinforced Bonomi’s claims regarding the impact of immigration on colonial religious life, particularly for southern Presbyterians. She also strengthened Bonomi’s argument by highlighting the rapid church growth in the South during the years preceding the Revolution. Between 1750 and 1776, the Church of England gained one hundred new congregations, while the Presbyterians and the Baptists added four hundred new congregations combined. In spite of these reaffirmations of Bonomi’s claims to explosive church growth, Heyrman fell back on Butler’s rigid test of formal church membership as the final the only measurable indicator of church adherence.29

These works provide a valuable backdrop to the study of religion, politics, and the Revolution in South Carolina and Georgia. However, most, if not all of them, focus on northern Christianity or Christianity in the upper South with only minimal comment on the role of evangelicals in these two states which served as a pivotal battleground in the later stages of the Revolution. Several denominational studies exist which provide valuable, though scattered information, regarding the role each played and the toll the Revolution took on the denomination’s fortune.

Almost all secondary sources dealing with the Revolution in South Carolina and Georgia briefly make a token mention of religion during the conflict, with most highlighting the disestablishment of the Anglican church. The deepest study to date on the role of religion in South Carolina during the Revolution is John Wesley Brinsfield’s work The Separation of Church and State in Colonial South Carolina During the American

29 Heyrman, 5, 10-3, 15, 17, 19, 22, 24, 27. Heyrman claims that only 10% of the white colonial southern population were church members.
Revolution. Thoroughly researched, Brinsfield argued the radical religionists epitomized by William Tennent, the pastor of the Independent Church in Charleston and member of the provincial assembly, utilized the political philosophy of Locke’s *Letters on Toleration* and savvy political maneuvering to end the establishment of the Anglican Church in South Carolina.30 Recent general works on the Revolution in South Carolina have hinted at the power of the religious affiliation in the upsurge of rebellion after the fall of Charleston in 1780.31 The most recent study is a biographical sketch and analysis of the sermons of the Anglican Robert Smith, rector of St. Michael’s Church in Charleston by Charles Wilbanks. In his work, Wilbanks argued that low country elites, such as Smith, did not rebel primarily out of republican zeal to protect property and constitutional rights but as a “reaction to a perceived threat to a paternalistic-patriarchal social structure that viewed as anathema any expression of autonomy from above or below.” Wilbanks contended that economic and ideological theories do not explain the willingness of economically stable men to throw in their lot with revolutionaries. He centered that willingness in the inability of the elite to “brook encroachment of their prerogatives, nor the usurpation of their obligations…because exercising that power was a duty they felt morally bound to exercise.” Backcountry religionists might have been influenced by “northern” ideas of republicanism, but the Revolution in the low country was the result of a dutiful obligation the elite felt to their community.32 As for the influence of religion on the Revolution in Georgia, there is scant attention. Some work has been done on John Joachim Zubly,
minister at Savannah’s Independent Presbyterian Church and delegate to the Second
Continental Congress, but the most comprehensive work still remains Reba Strickland’s
Religion and the State of Georgia in the Eighteenth Century, originally published in 1939.
Strickland highlighted the contributions of Zubly, delved into the controversies over the
installation of an American Anglican bishop and the Quebec Act, and broke down the
participation and alignment of various denominations.33

Though valuable contributions to our historical knowledge, the mosaic that emerges from these authors distorts the reality or leaves gaps in our understanding of
 evangelicalism. Heimert’s separation of Calvinist revivalists from the evangelical fold allowed subsequent historians to ascribe true evangelicalism as that of the more
enthusiastic Separates. Murrin missed the constitutional contributions of evangelicals in
South Carolina and Georgia in the years before the Revolution. Butler’s antagonism
toward an extensive Awakening masked the fact that many of the Deep South’s evangelical
leaders were products of the revival or friends of the leading revivalists. Mathews is wrong
concerning the ultimate triumph of the Separates, at least in South Carolina and Georgia,
and the equation of irrationality to evangelical preaching. A closer reading of Heyrman
reveals several difficulties. Few, if any of her examples, include a sampling of South
Carolina or Georgia evangelicals before the war. Her decision to focus on “native”
southerners automatically eliminated a sizable portion of the populations of these colonies
at the end of the migration trail. The very fact that many Anglicans converted caused much
of the angst of colonial authorities. The thesis of capitulation to slave masters does not fit
the actual beliefs regarding slavery of the pre-war evangelical groups in the deep South.

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This argument seems to be the product of combining the early views of upper South Separates and Methodists, of whom there were only scattered individuals in South Carolina and Georgia until after the Revolution. In short, it appears time to heed Heyrman’s own counsel. “The moment may have arrived to emphasize that evangelicalism has never been a static, monolithic structure of belief and that its adherents have never been an undifferentiated mass.”

Evangelical contribution during the Imperial Crisis and the American Revolution far outweighs that which has been acceded them. Because most studies of religion and the Revolution focused on northern subjects and because most studies of southern colonial evangelicalism have focused on the social message and position of Separate Baptists, the key contributions of evangelicals to the American Revolution have been missed. Hopefully, this research will help give us a fuller view of these contributions. This dissertation is divided into seven chapters subsequent to this introduction. Chapter two focuses on the spread of evangelicalism in South Carolina and Georgia. Though it is impossible to know exact numbers, the proselytizing of evangelicals resulted in the formation of the majority of churches in the two colonies. In addition, the backcountry of South Carolina served as the terminus for the great migration of Scots Irish, many of whom came from the evangelical Presbyterian stronghold of the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. Most of these backcountry Presbyterians organized churches which were served by evangelical pastors graduated from what is today Princeton University. In both the Independent Church in Charleston and the Independent Church in Savannah, the pastors were the evangelical stalwarts William Tennent III and John Zubly. Beginning in the late colonial period, Separate and Regular Baptists, though disagreeing on certain practices,

34 Heyrman, 254.
joined together to further the gospel in South Carolina and Georgia belying a cooperation that has mostly been missed in the historiography. These different evangelical groups and leaders complicates our reliance upon the motif of evangelicals as outcasts in society and discourages the notion that all evangelical calls for conversion were based on the surrender of reason. Though certain evangelicals, namely the Separate Baptists, had a more difficult time being accepted by elites, including some of their evangelical brethren, other southern evangelicals were themselves elites or held the esteem of many of society’s betters. Chapter three examines the roles Tennent and Zubly, two of the evangelical elites, played in stirring their fellow colonists in resistance to British measures deemed unconstitutional. When the American Revolution began, nearly every evangelical leader in South Carolina and Georgia, including supposedly non-political Separate Baptists, found a way to encourage the success of the colonists. Chapter four details the utilization of evangelicals by the South Carolina provincial government to strengthen unity in the colony toward the revolutionary government. Chapter five outlines the involvement of evangelicals, with the aid of reform-minded Anglican elites, in bringing about the disestablishment of the Anglican church in South Carolina. Chapter six addresses the pivotal role evangelical Presbyterian and Baptist militiamen played in ultimately changing Cornwallis’ strategy in the South which led to his move to Yorktown and American triumph. Chapter seven discusses the ways in which evangelicals looked back on the American Revolution and their views on the new republic. Upon the successful conclusion of the war, evangelical leaders in South Carolina and Georgia were proud of their role in ushering in republican government, defended commonwealth ideals, divided over the role of the state in religious issues, and participated in and encouraged the participation of their followers in
governmental activities. Chapter eight summarizes the contributions of evangelicals in South Carolina and Georgia during the revolutionary and early national periods and highlights avenues of future research. Evangelicals in the Deep South played a large role in the fight to preserve constitutional liberties in the years preceding the Revolution, exercised considerable influence regarding political strategy in the provincial government of South Carolina, aided greatly their own deliverance from the bondage of the establishment, made up the key constituency in the partisan warfare which ultimately defeated the Crown’s attempt to re-conquer America through its southern strategy, and reveled publicly in the new republic which they had helped create.

Sources for this research were both primary and secondary. Archival materials have been gleaned from the South Caroliniana Library, Georgia Historical Society, and the South Carolina State Archives. Spellings and punctuation, for the most part, have been modernized except in direct quotations and when citing source material.
Chapter 2

The Evangelical Presence in Colonial South Carolina and Georgia

South Carolina and Georgia, the southernmost of the original thirteen British American colonies, provided a general haven of religious freedom for the wide diversity of protestant Christian sects who came to call these colonies home. Though both eventually established the Church of England, the lax enforcement of religious regulation encouraged the settlement of a variety of dissenting domestic and European religious groups.

South Carolina, the older and richer of the two colonies, began as a proprietary endeavor. The proprietors, in their Concessions and Agreements, promised in 1665 that those wishing to settle would enjoy “freedom of conscience in matters of religion.”1 The Fundamental Constitution of 1669, authored by John Locke, recognized that different settlers would bring with them varying religious positions. As such, the constitution recognized that any seven persons “agreeing in any Religion shall constitute a church or profession.” Though the constitution guaranteed this civil right, all such churches must worship a deity and hold this worship in a public fashion.2 Though irritations, such as clerical licensing, restrictions on marrying, and the inability to maintain financial trusts, served to remind dissenters of their status after the Anglican church was established in 1706, the colony enjoyed a prolific influx of dissenting groups during the colonial era.3

Georgia, the last of the original thirteen British colonies established, also proved a hospitable place for those seeking to follow their own religious dictates. The Church of England was established in the state in 1758, but tolerance prevailed as the general rule. As

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2 Ibid., 57.
with most of British America, Catholics did not receive the same beneficence.⁴

These groups arrived in South Carolina and Georgia via domestic migration from
the earlier established colonies or through transatlantic passage from Europe. Each brought
with it a particular set of doctrines, cultural flavors, or a mixture of both. Some of these
groups maintained a strict adherence to their old beliefs and segregated themselves from
their neighbors while others, influenced by a variety of factors, including intermarriage and
the emergence of challenging new interpretations of the Bible, morphed into
transformative agents of governmental and cultural change.

At the advent of the crisis with Britain, German Lutherans, Salzburgers, Quakers,
Huguenots, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists resided within the two
colonies.⁵ German Lutherans from the northern colonies primarily settled on granted land
in the Saxe-Gotha region (present day middle South Carolina around Columbia) but could
be found throughout the state, including Charleston, the principal city of colonial South
Carolina.⁶ German-speaking Salzburgers, having fled their native Austria due to
persecution, were among the earliest settlers of Georgia. Pietist Lutherans, they continued
to seek pastors from Germany for their Ebenezer (northwest of Savannah) congregation
until the outbreak of the American Revolution.⁷ The first Quaker settlers arrived in
Charleston from England and the Caribbean in the seventeenth century. Subsequent waves

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⁵ Davis, 199-204; Kenneth Coleman, *The American Revolution in Georgia, 1763-1789* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), 12-4; Nadelhaft, 13-4; Walter Edgar, *Partisans and Redcoats: The Southern Conflict That Turned the Tide of the American Revolution* (New York: William Morrow, 2001), 4-5, 10; Weir, 186,211. This is not a complete listing of all non-establishment religious groups that settled in South Carolina and Georgia, but it encompasses the majority of those who made significant impacts on the colonial and revolutionary histories of these colonies.
⁷ Coleman, 12-4.
scattered into settlements throughout the backcountry. South Carolina’s major Quaker enclaves were found along the Pee Dee River (near present day Florence), the Piedmont (present day Newberry area), the Ninety Six region (present day Saluda and Edgefield), and in the northwest extremities of white settlement (present day Spartanburg and Greenville). In Georgia, the principal Quaker settlement was at Wrightsborough (above Augusta). Huguenots, fleeing persecution in France, settled close to Charleston in the colonies’ early years. A contingent of New England Congregationalists seeking “to encourage the settlement of churches and the promotion of religion in the Southern plantations” moved first to Dorchester, South Carolina before finally establishing a thriving community in St. John’s Parish south of Savannah. Presbyterian strongholds were primarily in the northern part of South Carolina, but Presbyterians communities could be found in all regions of the colony. These Presbyterians came in different varieties and held varying doctrinal views. The earliest were English Presbyterians who settled in Charleston. Most Presbyterian migration occurred via Pennsylvania and Virginia after 1740. With this mid-century influx came “New Lights” who held to the Awakening doctrine of individual conversion and introduced Presbyterian evangelicalism to the backcountry. A final influx of Presbyterians before the Revolution, in the form of Covenanters, emigrated from Scotland to the backcountry in 1772. Both the Independent Church in Charleston and the Independent Church of Savannah, though specifically ecumenical, maintained Presbyterian doctrine. Baptists came early to Charleston settling in the city before 1700. Later waves of Baptist immigration included groups of Particular

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8 William F. Medlin, *Quaker Families of South Carolina and Georgia* (Columbia: Ben Franklin Press, 1982), 1, 35. There were at least 15 meetinghouses scattered throughout South Carolina and Georgia.; Davis, 201. Wrightsborough had 124 families in 1775.
9 Nadelhaft, 13.
11 Davis, 203-4; Nadelhaft, 13; Edgar, 4-5.
Baptists and Separate Baptists from the northern colonies who began to fill the backcountry of both of South Carolina and Georgia.\textsuperscript{12}

Though all of these groups composed significant parts in the cultural, social, and political tapestry that made up colonial and revolutionary South Carolina and Georgia, the focus of this research seeks to flesh out the contributions of evangelicals to the coming and prosecution of the American Revolution. Within this milieu of religious diversity, the two most prominent denominations, both in terms of sheer numbers and of evangelicals composing their fellowship, were the Presbyterians and Baptists.

Figure 1: From http://sc_tories.tripod.com

The Presbyterian population in South Carolina was divided among the different

\textsuperscript{12} Nadelhaft, 13; Weir, 186, 211; Davis, 204.
sects of the denomination. Immigration to Charleston occurred early in the colonial period and consisted mainly of those with close ties to Europe. First Presbyterian Church of Charleston consisted mainly of Scottish immigrants and gave her loyalty to the British authorities during the American Revolution. A number of Huguenot and Congregationalist settlers united to form the Independent Church of Charleston. The second oldest church in the colony, this church refused to be tied down to any particular set of denominational rules preferring “to be upon a broad dissenting bottom.” Though seeking moderation and freedom from entangling doctrinal alliances, “New Light” Presbyterian thought played an important role in the church, particularly in the person of William Tennent III. The grandson of William Tennent, of Log College fame, Tennent belonged to a prominent family of evangelical ministers and educators. Tennent became pastor of the church during the critical years leading to the American Revolution and served in that capacity until his death in 1777.

The Presbyterian presence received augmentation from an influx of northern transplants that moved first into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Many continued their migration into the backcountries of North Carolina and South Carolina. A great concentration of Presbyterians settled in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina (present day Charlotte), while others continued southward into the north central, northeastern, and

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14 Eliza C. K. Fludd, *Biographical Sketches of the Huguenot Solomon Legare* (Charleston: Edward Perry & Co., 1886), 27-9; Howe, 451, 460-61; Morgan, 200; Robert M. Weir, “Robert M. Weir Papers,” South Caroliniana Library, 2. All subsequent references to the South Caroliniana Library will be abbreviated to SCL. “New Side” was the designation given to those Presbyterians influenced by the Great Awakening doctrines, one of which was the need for individual conversion. These were also designated “New Lights.” “Old Side” Presbyterians viewed this as an innovation and sought to maintain European doctrinal standards. The rivalry between the New Sides and Old Sides resulted in a split among Presbyterians. The schism ended in 1758 with reunion under New Side dominance. Several members of the Tennent family were involved in evangelical causes. William Tennent II, William Tennent III’s father, served as vice-president of the College of New Jersey. Tennent’s uncle, Gilbert Tennent, was a famous evangelist.
western regions of South Carolina.\textsuperscript{15}

This mid-century influx was heavily influenced by the teachings of New Light preachers who heralded the necessity of individual conversion. This teaching, made popular in a series of revivals known as the Great Awakening, became the staple of this segment of the Presbyterian population. Though initially introduced by the great Congregationalist preacher Jonathan Edwards, it overspilled this denomination and became a rousing cry to repentance throughout the colonies through the itinerant ministry of George Whitefield, an Anglican minister.\textsuperscript{16} Presbyterian William Tennent became a forceful advocate of the new birth and initiated a program of training preachers to proclaim the message. Tennent began this systematic training at the “Log College” in Bucks County, Pennsylvania before its headquarters moved to the College of New Jersey, later known as Princeton. From these sites, Presbyterian ministers, endued with the calling to preach the gospel, fanned out as missionaries.\textsuperscript{17}

Several of these ministers along with other New Light missionaries made South Carolina their home and exerted profound influence during the revolutionary era. As earlier mentioned, William Tennent, the grandson of the “Log College” founder, arrived in Charleston to take the pastorate of the Independent Church in 1771.\textsuperscript{18} Other New Lights served churches throughout the backcountry. William Richardson served the largest Presbyterian community of Waxhaws (above Camden).\textsuperscript{19} Thomas Reese, a 1768 graduate

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\item \textsuperscript{15} Heyrman, 10-11; Edgar, 4, 10. Presbyterian settlement concentrated in the Catawba (north central) and Savannah River (western) valleys.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Weir Papers, 1-2. For the sake of clarity, “Princeton” will be substituted for the older name of the College of New Jersey.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 1.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Howe, 416-20; Morgan, 202; Marjorie T. Lord, “Loyalist and Anti-British Sentiment in the South Carolina Back Country during the American Revolution, 1775-1782,” MA Thesis, University of South
\end{itemize}
of Princeton, served the Salem church in northeastern South Carolina. John Simpson, Princeton class of 1768 and missionary to Virginia and North Carolina, became the pastor of Fishing Creek Presbyterian in Chester County, South Carolina in 1774. Simpson also supplied ministry to many vacant churches in the backcountry. Joseph Alexander graduated from Princeton in 1760. Licensed to preach in 1767, he was sent south as a missionary. He became pastor to the Bullock’s Creek Church (present day York County) and supplied ministry to a number of vacant pulpits. John Harris, a 1753 graduate, settled in the Abbeville District (South Carolina side of Savannah River, northwest of Augusta, Georgia) and served as pastor of the Long Cane Church. Other New Lights included James Creswell, Francis Cummins, and Alexander Craighead. Creswell served four different churches in the region around Saluda and Newberry. Francis Cummins served Bethel Church (York). Thomas Craighead served Waxhaw until driven out by the British in 1780.

Another Presbyterian sect arrived in South Carolina under the leadership of William Martin. This group, called Covenanters and composed of 467 families, sailed

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20 Howe, 411-12.
21 Ibid., 421-2, 424; “The Records of the Session of the Fishing Creek Church with a Brief Statement of its Origins and Progress Compiled by its Present Pastor, John B. Davids, Acting as the Clerk for the Said Session,” The Southern Presbyterian (Columbia: August 15, 22, and September 5, 1867) in Nancy Crockett Collection, Box 6, SCL. Simpson occasionally filled or rotated to the pulpits at a variety of Presbyterian churches devoid of ministers such Waxhaw, Bethesda (present day York County), and Fairforest (present day Union County).
22 Howe, 430-31. Other churches served by Alexander included Thicketty Creek (York), Beersheba (York), Nazareth (Spartanburg), Long Cane Church (Abbeville).
23 Ibid., 438-43. Harris arrived in 1772. He served as pastor from 1775 to 1779. After the war, he helped organize South Carolina Presbytery in 1785. Long Cane had five branches- Upper Long Cane, Lower Long Cane, Rocky Creek, Bull Town, and Saluda.
25 Howe, 518.
26 Crockett Papers, SCL, Box 6; Howe, 421, 536. Craighead was the son of the noted Mecklenburg County, North Carolina New Light pastor, Alexander Craighead.
directly from Ulster in northern Ireland in September 1772. Upon landing in Charleston, they proceeded to settle along the Catawba River valley in northwestern South Carolina among the earlier established New Lights. Though this group was not a product of the Great Awakening, they shared pulpits with New Light ministers at various churches in South Carolina’s backcountry. Smaller groups of Seceder, or Associate Reformed, Presbyterians also made South Carolina home, particularly in the Ninety Six region near Abbeville.

Presbyterian settlement in Georgia was much smaller than that of South Carolina. Georgia was the youngest colony and was much smaller in population than her sister colony. Settlers could not push deeply into the interior of Georgia due to the territorial holdings of the Creek Indians, and concern over Indian attack wore heavy on backcountry settlers. By 1775, settlement centered near the seacoast towns of Savannah and Sunbury and extended up the Savannah River into present day Wilkes County above Augusta. Scottish Highlanders brought their Presbyterianism when they settled Darien (70 miles south of Savannah), and a limited number of Scots Irish settled near the Quaker settlement of Wrightsborough in backcountry northwest of Augusta. The leading Presbyterian church was the Independent Church in Savannah.

Savannah’s Independent Meeting House functioned much as Charleston’s

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27 Edgar, 4-5. Michael C. Scoggins, *The Day it Rained Militia: Huck’s Defeat and the Revolution in the South Carolina Backcountry, May-July 1780* (Charleston: History Press, 2005), 30. Covenanters were given this name because their forebears had taken an oath to resist practices they viewed as heretical within the Church of England.
28 Howe, 443, 555-6.
29 Nadelhaft, 14; Davis, 204. Nadelhaft estimated that 50,000 people lived in South Carolina’s backcountry in 1775. The population of the whole colony of Georgia stood at 33,000 in 1773 according to Davis.
Independent Church did. Organized in 1755 by Jonathan Bryan, a convert of Whitefield to evangelical Christianity, the church operated independently of any synod. The most notable of its pastors during this era was John Joachim Zubly, a Swiss emigrant who began his career as an ordained minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. After arriving in the Georgia in 1744, he spent several years pastoring a number of Lutheran churches in Georgia and South Carolina before being called by the Independent Church in Savannah. Zubly met Whitefield in 1746, and he aided Whitefield’s orphanage at Bethesda when he took over his duties at the Independent Church. The two remained friends until Whitefield’s death. Known for his broad education and his mastery of the spoken word, Zubly promoted dissenter rights in Georgia and moved among elite circles in both Charleston and Savannah. His preaching style minced few words, but he was known for “liberal admission policies in his church.”

Though no fan of enthusiastic religious expression, Zubly was a staunch evangelical. Princeton conferred upon him both the master and doctor of divinity degrees. His evangelicalism and ardor for Whitefield are evident in his moving funeral oration dedicated to Whitefield. He described Whitefield as “that eminent servant of Jesus Christ,” a “burning and shining light,” and one who had “now overcome by the blood of the Lamb.” As he unfolded his sermon, he stressed the “helpless perishing state of sinners”

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35 Hawes, ix. The masters degree was awarded in 1770. The doctorate was conferred in 1774.
and the need for repentance. “Sin has made us a race of fools; till our eyes are opened we
know nothing as we ought.”37 Zubly hammered home his message using Paul’s text from
Romans 3:10. “There is none righteous, no not one.” True righteousness was that which
could “stand the test in the sight of God” and could only be achieved through the “divine
grace” of Jesus Christ realized by the sinner in his turn to God. Highlighting the
evangelical call for individual conversion, Zubly stated that no action of man could please
God until that individual had turned completely to God. Quoting further from Paul in I
Corinthians and Romans, Zubly stressed that Christ “having become sin for us” became
that righteousness necessary to please God to all those who believed.38 Conversion was
necessary to put on the righteousness of God. “Man cannot be brought from sin unto
righteousness without some very great turn…and this turning is brought about by the
almighty hand of God.”39 Seizing the opportunity presented to him, Zubly turned his
attention to those seated before him who might not have tasted of the divine grace. “Let me
then, my hearers, preach this righteousness even now…and that righteousness which is in
Christ Jesus for sinners, without which men must perish forever.” There were some in
meetinghouse who had converted, and “who from their own experience, can bear witness
that this is true, whom the spirit of God convicted of sin, righteousness and judgment…and
painfully felt, that, by nature and all their endeavors they will come short of the
righteousness which they ought to have before God…but whose case is now so happily
altered.” Zubly proceeded to call those “who still go on in the folly of their way” to
repentance warning them of the dire consequences. “The wrath of God from Heaven is
revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in

37 Ibid., 4, 8-9.
38 Ibid., 7-8. Biblical quotes are from II Corinthians 5:21 and Romans 10:4.
unrighteousness.” He implored them to use reason to consider their ways as opposed to those of God. “If you have no thoughts about your soul, and its everlasting state, to what purpose are you possessed of the faculty of thinking.” Zubly reminded his listeners “that God will not always plead” with sinners. Eternity was at the doorstep. “Today, if you hear the voice of God, harden not your hearts…turn ye therefore, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?” He closed his message with an invitation. “Are any hearing me who feel their wretchedness and guilt…who tremble at the thought of death…who see the necessity and insufficiency of their endeavors…condemned by your own heart, without merit, without righteousness, without works, or anything that you can plead in the sight of God.” Zubly offered them a solution to their pitiful state. “Look unto Christ and be saved. Betake yourselves to the blood of sprinkling…plead it before God that his son died for man, and that you rely upon him only…labor not…but…fly unto your advocate Jesus Christ the righteous--intreat him to bestow that upon you as his gift which you can never obtain by your own works…lay hold on him by faith, and be well assured that it will be unto you according as you believe.” Zubly hoped that some in his presence would one day look back and say that they were “pricked to the heart in that very sermon” and “effectually turned from sin to righteousness.” Zubly’s message was emphatically evangelical outlining the pitiful state of the sinner, promoting the conversion of the individual through the grace and work of Christ apart from works, and illustrating the joyous change brought about by faith in the lives of believers.

Though evangelical Presbyterians dominated certain areas in South Carolina and Georgia, by the American Revolution, the largest group of evangelical dissenters was the

40 Ibid, 26-0. Biblical quotation concerning wrath of God is found in Romans 1:31.
41 Ibid., 31-4.
Baptists. Baptists arrived in Charleston as early as the 1670s. At least five separate sects of Baptists called these two colonies home. Three of these, the General Baptists, German Tunkers, and Seventh Day Baptists, withered in strength or never constituted a large enough presence to permanently influence the social or political scene in either of the colonies. The two dominant groups were the Regular and the Separate Baptists. From these two, emerged a cadre of preachers who spread the evangelical message throughout South Carolina and into the backcountry of Georgia.

The Charleston Baptist Church split into two groups, Particular and General Baptists, in 1736. Upon the arrival of Separate Baptists in 1759, the Particulars took the moniker Regular Baptists to distinguish themselves from their more enthusiastic brethren. Though the early concentration of Regular Baptists centered near Charleston, other groups began to arrive in the backcountry in the late 1730s. A combination of northern migration and missionary zeal produced a flowering of congregations from the coast to the piedmont. The Regulars were generally subscribers to the rules and ordinances of the Philadelphia Association and received missionary support and enjoyed continuing doctrinal fellowship with this northern group even after they had formed their own

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42 Edgar, 10.
43 Waldo P. Harris III and James D. Mosteller, Georgia’s First Continuing Baptist Church (College Park, GA: N & R Printing Inc., 1997), 26; Morgan Edwards, Materials Towards a History of the Baptists in the Province of South Carolina 1772, SCL; Leah Townshend, South Carolina Baptists, 1670-1805 Reprint. (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), 122. The moniker, General Baptists, designates a group of Baptists who emerged from a split in the Charleston Baptist Church in 1736. They tended to Arminianism. German Tunkers, referred to also as Dunkers and Tumblers, maintained a separate baptism ritual involving “trine immersion with a kneeling posture and forward bending of the body in the rite of baptism.” Seventh Day Baptists held Saturday as the Lord’s Day while other groups held to Sunday observance. German Tunkers and Seventh Day Baptists resided in small settlements in the backcountry of both colonies.
44 Harris, 27; Edwards, 17.
45 Harris, 27, 31; Bob Compton, “The Fairforest Church” in Journal of South Carolina Baptist Historical Society I, (November 1975), 47. Subsequent references to the Journal of South Carolina Baptist Historical Society will be abbreviated to JSCBHS.
46 Weir, Colonial South Carolina, 186. A group of Baptists from Delaware settled on the Pee Dee River in 1737 establishing the Welsh Neck Church.
Particular Baptists were evangelicals. They were among the most ardent supporters of Whitefield during his tours through South Carolina. The most prominent Regular leader during the late colonial and revolutionary period was Oliver Hart, pastor of the Charleston Baptist Church. Born in Bucks County, Pennsylvania in 1723, he came under the influence of many of the leading lights of the Great Awakening including Whitefield. Hart received his license to preach in 1746 from the Baptist church in Southampton, Pennsylvania, and was ordained in October 1749. After ordination, he headed south filling the vacancy at the Charleston Baptist Church on February 16, 1750. Hart’s preaching led to revival in the church, and he remained its pastor for thirty years until driven from Charleston by the British in 1780.

Soon after arriving, Hart set about to organize the Regular Baptist churches in South Carolina into an association modeled after the one in Philadelphia. Accomplished on October 21, 1751, the Charleston Association became the vehicle for disseminating Regular doctrine and encouraging fellowship among Regular Baptists in South Carolina. By 1775, the association had grown from three churches to nine. These churches, concentrated in the Pee Dee, Charleston, and other coastal areas, serviced hundreds of

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47 Townshend, 115-7; Wood Furman, *A History of the Charleston Association of Baptists Churches in the State of South Carolina* (Charleston: J. Hoff, 1811), 14-5. Much of our primary information regarding the Baptists in South Carolina was compiled by Morgan Edwards, a Philadelphia Association messenger. He made a tour of South Carolina in 1772. Another Philadelphia messenger, John Gano, made several trips into South Carolina and Georgia from the 1750s to the 1770s.

48 Townshend, 19.

families and counted 529 members at the outbreak of the war.\textsuperscript{50}

A product of the Great Awakening, Separate Baptists spilled south during the 1740s and 1750s. Originally known as “New Lights,” they came to be called Separates because they separated themselves from churches they viewed as too worldly or too uncommitted to the doctrine of individual spiritual regeneration. Separate beliefs included an insistence on confirmed conversion before baptism by immersion, keeping the Lord’s Supper on a frequent basis, love feasts, laying on of hands, foot washing, anointing of the sick, offering the right hand of fellowship, kiss of charity, and devoting of children. Authority figures within each church included ruling elders, deacons, and deaconesses.\textsuperscript{51}

They also prized autonomy and refused to agree to confessions of faith.\textsuperscript{52}

Through migration and missionary work, Separates exploded throughout the backcountry of all southern colonies. The leader of Separate Baptists in the South was Shubal Stearns.\textsuperscript{53} Stearns came under the influence of Whitefield while in his native Connecticut in 1745. Stearns became an ardent propagator the new birth and began working through the south as a missionary. After moving through Virginia, he established a Separate Baptist church at Sandy Creek, North Carolina. This church exploded in growth and became the sallying point for the Separate mission into South Carolina.\textsuperscript{54}

The two men most responsible for Separate expansion in South Carolina were Philip Mulkey and Daniel Marshall. Mulkey was born in 1732 into an Anglican family in Halifax, North Carolina. He became a Separate on Christmas Day in 1756 and was
baptized by Stearns. Ordained in October 1757, he ministered to a small congregation in Deep River, North Carolina before setting off with his entire congregation to settle on the Broad River in central South Carolina in 1759. The church on Broad River was incorporated in 1760. His work in this area resulted in the eventual establishment of Congaree Church which included five branches serving over 200 families. In 1762, he moved northwest into the Fairforest (near present day Spartanburg) region, taking the original settlers from North Carolina with him, and established Fairforest Church. This church also had five branches. Mulkey possessed an extraordinary preaching ability that elicited praise from his friends but engendered discomfort and ridicule from those opposed to the spread of the Separates.

Daniel Marshall was born in Windsor, Connecticut in 1706. He, with Stearns, heard Whitefield preach in 1745. Heavily influenced by the evangelical message, Marshall left Connecticut to become a missionary to the natives living in western Pennsylvania. He became the brother in law of Stearns after marrying Stearns sister after his first wife died and followed Stearns south. First settling in Virginia, he joined a Regular Baptist church and was licensed to preach. Soon, however, he moved to join Stearns in starting the Separate church at Sandy Creek. Though not as gifted a preacher due to a stammer, he was

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55 Compton, 47; Edwards, 30, 34, 39-0; Floyd Mulkey Papers, “The Strange Career of the Rev. Philip Mulkey,” 1973, SCL. The five branches of the Congaree Church were Congaree, Wateree, Twenty Five Mile Creek, Amelia Township, and Four Holes. The five branches of Fairforest were Fairforest, Lawsons Fork, Catauba, Enoree, and Thickety. A later offshoot was the church at High Hills on the Santee. This church was incorporated in 1772 and became a rendezvous point for dissenters working for disestablishment.  

33
a tireless worker. Marshall followed Mulkey into South Carolina in 1760. Marshall first worked among the initial converts at Congarees. After several years, the church had grown substantially and was constituted as independent Separate church in 1766. Marshall was not alone in his work in this area. Joseph Reese, a native Pennsylvanian who settled in the Congarees area in 1745, converted under the initial ministry of Mulkey in 1760. Ordained in 1768, he became the chief pastor of the Congarees church when Marshall moved south into the Savannah River valley. Reese, like Mulkey, was a dynamic preacher who captivated those who heard him.

Leaving the Congarees area in Reese’s hands, Marshall moved toward the Savannah River establishing or aiding a series of Separate meetings. He first settled on the Bush River. Aided by occasional visits from Mulkey, Marshall gathered Separates into his home before growth allowed them to build a meeting house in 1770. Constituted an independent church in June 1771, Marshall left the work in the hands of Thomas Norris, a native of Bath, North Carolina. Mulkey baptized Norris during his stay in the Congarees, and he, along with Marshall, ordained him to the ministry in 1771.

During the ten year period spent establishing the churches at Congarees and Bush River, Marshall made itinerant missionary trips further into the backcountry. Marshall helped establish Stephens Creek Church (located approximately ten miles north of Augusta, Georgia in South Carolina) in 1766 He aided Mine Creek (near present day

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57 Morgan, 214-6, 223; George Purefoy, History of the Sandy Creek Baptist Association from its Organization in AD 1758, to AD 1858 (New York: Sheldon & Co. Publishers, 1859), 294.
58 Harris, 31.
59 Edwards, 30-2; Hooker, 113. Woodmason thought little of Reese. He intimated that Reese had special power with women. “What Man amongst all the Beaus and fine Gentlemen of the land has such Influence over the women as Joseph Reez? It was but few Sundays past, That to make display of their Veneration for Him, and shew the Power He had over them, that He made them strip in the Public Meeting House, quite to their Shifts, and made them all walk home bare footed and bare legged. And had He only said it, they would have stript off their Smocks, and gone home stark Naked…”
60 Edwards, 42-3.
Saluda) baptizing, with Reese, a number of converts. Augmented by settlers from North Carolina and Virginia, Mine Creek was constituted a church in 1770. On Raburns Creek (present day Craven County), Marshall and Norris worked with a group of Separates who built a meeting house in 1767 and was constituted a church in 1770.61

The growth of the Separates in South Carolina was truly phenomenal. In a span of fifteen years, 1760 to 1775, they formed nineteen churches and constructed thirty two meeting houses. Working tirelessly, sixteen ordained preachers and twenty lay exhorters ministered throughout the backcountry. These churches serviced over 1,400 families. Counted among the 7,000 who attended their services were 1,013 communicants.62

The Baptist presence in Georgia lagged behind that of South Carolina. A small group of Baptists settled at Tuckaseeking, a small community about 40 miles above Savannah. Other individual Baptists were scattered around Bethesda and into the backcountry, but no lasting church was established until Daniel Marshall arrived above Augusta in 1771.63 The two men most responsible for the spread of Baptist churches in Georgia were Marshall and Edmund Botsford, a Regular Baptist sent in 1771 by the Charleston Association to minister to both sides of the Savannah River between Savannah and Augusta.64

Marshall arrived a few months before Botsford. Having spread the Separate

61 Ibid., 34, 44-5. This is not an exhaustive list of all Separate meetings in South Carolina. Those listed are given in an effort to show the growth of the Separates and to highlight the efforts of those Separates who played a role in the Revolution, notably Mulkey, Marshall, and Reese.

62 Morgan, 235.


message throughout South Carolina, he sought a new venue to sow his gospel seed.

Marshall made contact with Georgia settlers during itinerant missions work while working out of the Stephens Creek church in South Carolina. Sufficient opportunities presented themselves among the growing settlements above Augusta, so Marshall and his family removed across the Savannah River in January 1771. Marshall organized Kiokee, the first permanent Baptist church in 1771 or 1772, about twenty miles north of Augusta. Aided by Loveless Savidge, a convert from Anglicanism, a second Separate church was founded at Red Creek in 1774 between Kiokee and Augusta. Marshall gathered about him a cadre of men, including Silas Mercer, Sanders Walker, James Mathews, Sr., and Marshall’s son Abraham, who fanned out into the surrounding areas to spread the Separate message.65

Botsford arrived in Georgia in June 1771.66 Born in 1745 in Great Britain, he served in the British army during the Seven Years War before coming to Charleston at the age of twenty. Oliver Hart took the young man under his wing, and Botsford converted on his twenty first birthday in November 1766. Baptized in March 1767, he joined the Charleston Baptist Church. Hart saw potential in the young man. Hart, along with the Religious Society of Charleston, decided to further Botsford’s education. Botsford studied classics and theology before being licensed to preach in February 1771.67 Four months after receiving his license, Botsford preached his first sermon in Georgia to the Baptist settlers at Tuckaseeking. Agreeing to a one year in the village, Botsford received permission to use the Lutheran church building and served out his term before dedicating himself to missionary efforts along the Savannah River. Itinerating between the Salzburger

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65 History of Baptist Denomination in Georgia, 13-4, 23, 32-3; Harris, 31; Hawes, November 19, 1772, 21. For the debate on the founding date of Kiokee Baptist see Harris. Separate missionary efforts primarily ranged from Augusta into the new settlements in present day Wilkes County. Red Creek Church is now an influential Southern Baptist member known as Abilene Baptist in the metro Augusta area.

66 Mallary, 39.

67 Botsford, 3-11; Broome, 22.
settlement at Ebenezer north to Kiokee, Botsford became a recognizable figure in the backcountry. He preached at courthouse gatherings and in private homes. Recognizing the successes of his Georgia ministry, the Charleston Association ordained Botsford on March 14, 1773. In August 1773, he earned the nickname the “flying preacher” by riding 650 miles on horseback, preaching, 42 sermons, and baptizing 21 converts. Due to his efforts, the first Regular Baptist church in Georgia formed in 1773. First called New Savannah Church, it later took the moniker Botsford’s Old Meeting House. The church building was located 25 miles south of Augusta at the junction of McBean and Brier Creeks. New Savannah petitioned for membership in the Charleston Association in 1774, and Botsford began taking a larger role in the Association.68 Botsford purchased land on Brier Creek and remained at New Savannah for six years before being driven out by the British.69

Much has been made of the derogatory views held toward evangelicals by their contemporaries. During the height of the Awakening revivals in the 1740s, churchmen were concerned. In a letter to Bishop of London, John Fordyce, rector of Prince Frederick’s Parish in northeastern South Carolina, wrote “as for the Anabaptists in this parts, they are so possessed with the Spirit of Enthusiasm that (according to their number) there is almost as many ignorant preachers among them as there was at Oliver’s Camp, that one can scarce beat a bush but out pops a preacher.” He lamented their readiness “to speak evil of Dignities” and pleaded with the bishop to send an Anglican missionary. Fordyce believed that intervention “might in time remove that enthusiastically (sic) spirit of prejudice which

68 Mallary, 40-7; Hart, Diary, 121; Broome, 27-8. On one occasion, Botsford preached at the courthouse in present day Burke County. People listened to him until someone brought out a cask of rum. Botsford was invited home by a drunk older man. While staying in the home, the man’s wife converted. In a short while, fifteen neighbors converted. New Savannah grew to include four branches with over 137 members by 1778. Botsford Baptist Church is still in existence in Burke County, Georgia.
69 Botsford, 12. Before he left, he had baptized 148 converts.
One such Anglican missionary arrived in 1766. Charles Woodmason itinerated through the South Carolina backcountry and was appalled at what he witnessed. Using the pulpit to voice his grievances against Presbyterians and Separate Baptists, he mockingly cataloged a litany of failures on the part of the dissenters to improve the behavior of their converts in a sermon delivered in the Anglican church in Congarees in 1768. Drunkenness, adultery, fornication, gaming, foul speech, and plain rudeness characterized the members of these sects. The following year he delivered another sermon highlighting the “ignorance” of Separates. Woodmason detested their use of the scriptures to validate their different claims to spiritual authenticity. He derided their inability to prove the presence of their names in the Book of life due to their illiteracy, but Woodmason seemed to hate the most the fact that he was not recognized as the religious authority in his dealings with the Separates. Though Woodmason claimed the people were confused, three years later, it was he who stood in bewilderment. In a sermon delivered in the Congarees in 1771, he lamented the success of the Separates. Though he lambasted the sect for instances of “hypocrisy,” he marveled that most of their followers had been “very zealous Members of

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71 “The Baptists and Presbyterians: This is very fine Talking: I could wish that all the Doings too, were equally innocent,” Sermon Book, III in Hooker, 93-108.

72 “The New Light Baptists: Peoples Brains are turn’d and bewildered,” Sermon Book, IV in Hooker, 109-11. Another illustration of Woodmason’s displeasure at the Separates for failing to recognize his authority can be seen in a sermon prepared in 1771 but never delivered. The fact that Separates responded to his criticism of their worship styles and enthusiastic utterance with “It is not I that speak—but the Spirit of God that dwellth in me,” sent Woodmason into a denunciation of their blasphemy and profligate living. “The New Light Baptists: They apply to the Passions, not the Understanding of People,” Sermon Book, III in Hooker, 114-17. For a fuller discussion of Anglican difficulty with the lack of deference shown by Separates see Isaac’s Transformation of Virginia.
our Church.”  

The Anglican outlook in Georgia was much the same. James Seymour, rector of St. Paul’s Parish (area included Augusta), considered the Separates in much the same way. His parish was “overrun with ignorant preachers who call themselves Irregular Baptists.” He despised their itinerant ways and mocked their claims “to miraculous conversion and inspiration.” Like Woodmason, Seymour claimed they were “men of very abandoned characters” who “live in adultery.”

Government officials also worried about the spread of Baptist doctrine. In South Carolina, Lieutenant Governor William Bull sought “to put a stop to the progress of those Baptist vagrants, who continually endeavor to subvert all order, and make the minds of the people giddy, with that which neither they nor their teachers understand.” In Georgia, Daniel Marshall was briefly arrested by the authorities. Botsford, on one occasion, was refused permission to speak in the Kiokee Creek area.

Anglican churchmen and government officials were not the only groups who viewed the Separates with suspicion. During the late colonial period, Regular and Separate Baptists did not agree on several key issues. Regulars viewed the Separates with suspicion due to their refusal to agree to confessions of faith, particularly the Philadelphia Confession, their practice of more exuberant forms of worship, their reliance on

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73 “The New Light Baptists: And yet twelve months past most of these people were very zealous Members of our Church,” Sermon Book, III in Hooker, 112-3. Contrast this with Christine Heyrman’s contention that Separates made few inroads among Anglicans.


75 Townshend, 124. Bull’s plan, outlined on March 6, 1766, was to pay the Anglican minister at Augusta to cross the Savannah River to preach in an effort to stymie Baptist growth.

76 No Author, *The History of Calliham’s Mill-Parksville Baptist Church, 1785-1985* (SCL); Davis, 196. Marshall’s arresting officer, Samuel Catledge, converted and became a prominent Separate and church planter.

77 Mallary, 42. Loveless Savidge prevented Botsford from preaching. Savidge soon converted, however, and aided in the formation of Baptist churches in Georgia.
uneducated ministers, and the Separates modification of Calvinism. Separates thought the Regulars too easy in admittance to fellowship, too worldly in dress and manner, and too reticent to shed unconverted members.\textsuperscript{78} Independent evangelicals and New Light Presbyterians viewed the Separates in much the same way as the Regular Baptists.

In South Carolina, a request was made by Shubal Stearns to have Nicholas Bedgegood, the Regular Baptist preacher at Welsh Neck, ordain a Daniel Marshall. Bedgegood, a friend and co-worker with Whitefield, “sternly refused, declaring that he held no fellowship with Stearns’ party, that he believed them to be a disorderly set, suffering women to pray in public, and permitting every ignorant man to preach that chose, and that they encouraged noise and confusion in their meetings.” Whitefield himself denied that Separates were his spiritual children.\textsuperscript{79} In apparent retaliation for this snub, Stearns silenced John Newton, a Separate minister, ordained by Regulars Oliver Hart and Evan Pugh.\textsuperscript{80} In Georgia, Zubly thought little of Daniel Marshall or his methods. While being entertained with Marshall at Col. Barnard’s house in Augusta, Zubly and Marshall entered into a debate over the Separate practices of foot washing and the holy kiss. Marshall insisted they were necessary practices. Zubly took out his wrath upon Marshall in his diary. Describing him as a “weak man,” Zubly inveighed against Marshall’s “crazy behavior and his intruding himself every where to hold forth.”\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{78} Harris, 27.
\textsuperscript{79} Townshend, 124-5; Morgan, 224, 231-2, 244-5.
\textsuperscript{80} Townsend, fn 66, 144. Pugh was born in Pennsylvania and moved to Virginia as a child. In Virginia, he claimed to have learned surveying from George Washington. He left Virginia for North Carolina’s Yadkin Valley where he was converted by the Baptists. The church leaders sent him to Charleston to study. He then was tutored by Nicholas Bedgegood at Welsh Neck and by Francis Pelot, a prominent Baptist in the Beaufort area. Hart and Pelot ordained Pugh in November 1764. He served Welsh Neck for two years before he was dismissed. He then moved to the pastorate at Cashaway and was involved in church plantings in the Pee Dee area. Evan Pugh, \textit{The Diaries of Evan Pugh}, 1762-1801, transcribed by Horace Fraser Rudisill (Florence, SC: St. David’s Society, 1993), ii-iv. This diary is located at the SCL.
\textsuperscript{81} Hawes, 21. Diary dates these observations on November 19 and 28, 1772. Marshall had taken advantage of the crowd gathering for an election.
Evangelicals, however, were not all enthusiasts or practitioners of the methods of the Separates. William Tennent, Oliver Hart, and John Zubly were respected members of their communities. In fact, they enjoyed fellowship among themselves and with many Anglican clergymen. These men strongly supported education both for themselves and for those who sought to serve God in the ministry. Far from being ostracized, they enjoyed the company of elites and counted many of the leading lights as their parishioners.

Tennent’s congregation included David Ramsay the physician and historian who later became the son in law of South Carolina scion Henry Laurens. On occasion, Hart filled the pulpit of St. Michael’s Anglican during the Revolution. Zubly’s congregation included many of Georgia’s leaders. Jonathan Bryan, member of colonial Georgia’s Upper Council, Edward Telfair, and Archibald Bulloch, a future governor, all attended Savannah’s Independent Church.

Zubly’s diary gives us a telling indication of the fellowship enjoyed among he, Tennent and Hart. It also displays the ecumenical attitude shared by Independents and Anglicans in South Carolina and Georgia. Between 1770 and 1775, he preached in Hart’s church sixteen times. On one occasion, Hart traveled with Zubly discussing politics all the way to Charleston. Zubly made a habit of staying with Regular Baptist leader Francis Pelot on his journeys to and from Charleston. Zubly preached at least ten sermons in

82 Heimert, 191. Tennent could cause Henry Laurens irritation. When he was a member of the Provincial Assembly during the early Revolution, his forceful support of radical measures induced Laurens to call him a man of “ill breeding.” He viewed Tennent, who he called “the Parson” as hot-headed and impetuous. Henry Laurens to John Laurens, September 26, 1775 in A.S. Salley, Jr., The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine, V, No. 1(Charleston: South Carolina Historical Society, January 1904), 78-0. All subsequent references to this journal will use SCHGM.
83 Dalcho, 210.
84 Miller, 8; Strickland, 150-1.
85 Hawes, 4, 7,11-2, 15, 17, 18, 19, 26, 30, 33-4. Diary entries for 1770 are March 11and 15. Entries for 1771 are May 26 and 30, October 6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 27. Diary entry for 1772 is August 2. Entry for 1773 is March 22. Entries for 1774 are March 13 and 16. Entries for 1775 are March 12 and 26.
86 Ibid., 9, 14, 24-5, 30. Diary entry for travel is March 17, 1773. During this stay with Pelot, he, Pelot, and
Tennent’s church and on one occasion stayed in his home. In May 1771, he spent a convivial evening with Anglican missionary Edward Ellington. On August 2, 1772, he shared a meal and the latest gossip with the Hadden Smith, rector of Christ Church in Savannah. In 1774, the two discussed politics over supper. On a visit to Augusta, James Seymour, rector of St. Paul’s, apologized for not announcing Zubly’s presence to his congregation. Seymour later came to hear Zubly preach. Zubly dined twice with John Holmes, future Anglican rector of Georgia’s St. George’s Parish. When Zubly went to Charleston in 1773, he left the care of his church to an Anglican minister, Richard Piercy. On March 26, 1775, Zubly filled the pulpit of St. Philip’s Anglican for Robert Smith. During this period, Zubly was involved in the ordination of Moses Allen who became the pastor of Midway, Georgia’s Congregational church. Zubly also kept up with the latest Presbyterian news, visited Presbyterian pastors, and assisted in the ordination of new ministers.

Hart discussed the preaching style of a newly ordained Baptist minister. Zubly commented to Pelot that the man “when he preacheth in the Back Country always speak as tho his hearers were learned men.” Other times he stayed with or visited Pelot were August 9, 1770, October 2, 1771, and an undated visit in March 1774. Lodging occurred on March 19, 1773. Sermon entries began in 1773. Entry for 1773 is April 11. Entries for 1774 are March 13, 15, 18, and 20. Entries for 1775 are March 12, 14, 21, 23, and 26. Zubly preached to both Hart’s and Tennent’s church in the same day on two occasions.

Ibid., 10. Diary entry is May 23. The discussion ranged from Whitefield’s will to Ellington’s difficulty with certain Baptists over licensing.

Ibid., 19, 31. Diary entry for second meal is March 18, 1774. Haddon Smith can also be found spelled as Hadden Smith. Smith was later dismissed from his post in Savannah for refusing to honor the Provincial Assembly’s decree for a fast day sermon. This incident will be discussed further in chapter 3.

Ibid., 21, 30. Diary entries are from November 19 and 20. Seymour had been unaware that Zubly was coming to Augusta. He came to hear Zubly on August 23, 1773.

Ibid., 12. Diary entries are May 28, 1771 and August 2, 1772.

Ibid., 24. Diary entry is March 16.

Ibid., 34. Robert Smith served St. Philip’s before moving to St. Michael’s. He was an ardent patriot who served as a foot soldier during the 1776 siege of Sullivan’s Island. Frederick Dalco, An Historical Account of the Protestant Episcopal Church in South Carolina. Reprint (New York: Arno Press, 1972), 216.

Ibid., 32-3. Diary entries are for March 6 and 15. Zubly thought Allen still needed seasoning. He agreed to ordain as long as Allen continued his divinity studies and preach under the direction of Tennent. Allen, a 1772 graduate of Princeton, eventually settled in Midway. An ardent patriot, he served as a chaplain and was captured when Savannah fell to the British. He was placed on board a prison ship. He drowned in an attempt to escape. The Georgia Assembly awarded his son 500 acres after the war. Strickland, 150-1; Allen D. Candler, The Revolutionary Records of Georgia, III, Journal of the House of Assembly August 17, 1781, to February 26, 1784 (Atlanta: The Franklin-Turner Company, 1908), 549-51. All subsequent references to any volume of The Revolutionary Records of Georgia will be abbreviated RRG.
Presbyterian ministers.\textsuperscript{95}

Zubly communed with more than just the leading clergymen in South Carolina and Georgia. Zubly conducted business with and enjoyed the hospitality of some of the leading citizens of Georgia and South Carolina. In fact, he was one. He owned hundreds of acres, many slaves, and operated a ferry across the Savannah River.\textsuperscript{96} Besides his business concerns, he was a leading proponent of Whitefield’s orphanage at Bethesda. Zubly used his contacts in the assembly to procure aid and redress for the orphanage and himself. He counted Christopher Gadsden, Henry Laurens, and Governor James Wright as personal friends.\textsuperscript{97} He and Alexander Garden, a noted physician and naturalist, were friends, and Garden, on at least one occasion, aided Zubly through an illness. Zubly met with and discussed religion with Isaac Da Costa, a leading Jewish merchant in Charleston.\textsuperscript{98}

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\item \textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 5, 10, 14, 32, 35. Diary mentions possible machinations of James Caldwell to procure Charleston’s Independent pulpit on March 10-11, 1771. Upon hearing of the death of William Richardson, pastor of Waxhaw Presbyterian, Zubly laments, in an entry from October 3, 1771, the loss of “that useful Man.” Zubly “visited Revd Mr. [James] Gourlay who had a Letter of Recommendation from Dr. Witherspoon and I invited him to be present at Mr. [Moses] Allen’s ordination but it did not suit him.” This visit occurred on March 8, 1775. Gourlay worked with two Presbyterian congregations in the lowcountry, Walterboro and Stony Creek. Zubly also visited Archibald Simpson in Stoney Creek (between Charleston and Savannah) on May 23, 1771. Simpson’s kept a diary that George Howe used extensively in his work on South Carolina Presbyterians. Zubly and Tennent ordained Oliver Reese sometime between March 26 and August 17, 1775. Reese, a 1772 graduate of Princeton, served the Willtown Presbyterian meeting in Colleton County in the low country. Ordination involved the laying on of hands and extending the right hand of fellowship. These Christian practices connote conference of authority and communion with the mission. Separates also practiced these rituals.
\item \textsuperscript{96} Miller, 8.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Hawes, 3-7, 11. Diary entries for Bethesda and business concerns are March 10, 11, and 12, 1770. Zubly dined with Laurens on March 16, 1770. Gadsden invited Zubly to stay with him during his spring visit in 1771, but Zubly was also staying in the home of Daniel Legare, a leading Charleston planter. Diary entry is May 24, 1771.
\item \textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 5-6, 12-3, 16, 18 28-9. Diary entries for Garden relationship are March 12, 1770 and October 15, 1772. Diary entries for Da Costa are May 31 and October 9, 1771 and sometime in late March 1773. In the first two meetings, Zubly and Da Costa discussed the Trinity and the meaning of Isaiah 7:14. Da Costa remained unconvinced regarding the Trinity. Zubly argued the verse prophesied the coming of Jesus, while Da Costa stressed it was a present sign not a future prophecy. The second centered on the Jewish Passover. Zubly argued that the “Jewish system” was built on the need of a Sacrifice, namely Jesus. This “seemed to affect him” Zubly had a particular desire to see Jews come to evangelical faith. In his Whitefield funeral sermon, he stated that Romans 11:27 pointed to the “future conversion of the Jews…God will certainly remember the posterity of Abraham his friend, and has not preserved the Jews as a distinct people, but for some very great purpose; now, those whom God shall make use of at the time to make them wise, to take the
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dined with the Perroneau, Bee, and Legare families, all prominent members of Charleston society. In Georgia, Zubly enjoyed the hospitality and religious conversation offered by Col. Barnard, one of Augusta’s leading citizens. While staying in Augusta, Zubly preached at the home of George Galphin, a wealthy trader and huge landowner.

These examples give evidence that the leading proponents of evangelical Christianity in the low country enjoyed a respectable standing in society. A more subtle shift in evangelical relations was occurring in the backcountry. The historical narrative has focused on the antagonisms Separate Baptists engendered among social elites and other evangelical groups. However, rapprochement began between the Regulars and Separates in the 1760s and picked up momentum as the colonies approached war with Britain. Though the two groups did not unify until after the American Revolution, they began to cooperate much more closely.

The first major instance of cooperation came in the late 1750s or early 1760s. John Gano, a Regular Baptist messenger to the south from the Philadelphia Association, attended the second Sandy Creek Association meeting. Though held in North Carolina, both Mulkey and Marshall, the men most responsible for Separate growth in South Carolina and Georgia, emanated from this group. Gano was greeted cordially by Shubal Stearns and spoke each day of the conference. Mulkey returned the favor and visited the

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99 Ibid., 7, 16, 23. Legare entry is March 15, 1771. Bee entry is October 9, 1771. Perroneau entry is March 23, 1773.
100 Ibid., 20, 21, 30. Diary entries for Barnard visits are November 19-20, 1772 and August 22-23, 1773. Barnard had thoughts of becoming ordained by the Presbyterians. Barnard was no fan of Separate Baptists. He issued the arrest warrant for Daniel Marshall discussed earlier in the chapter. He and Marshall later became friends. For a fuller treatment, see Harris’ Georgia’s First Continuing Baptist Church. Diary entry for preaching at Galphin’s is November 18, 1772.
101 Morgan, 233. There is some disagreement as to the establishment date of the Sandy Creek. Edwards dates it at 1758. Morgan puts its formation in 1760.
Charleston Association general meeting in 1762.\textsuperscript{102} Difficulties still existed between Regulars and Separates during the 1760s, as evidenced by the refusal of Bedeggoed to ordain Marshall and Stearns’ silencing of Separates ordained by Regulars, but fellowship grew during the late 1760s.

In December 1771, the Separate churches of South Carolina broke away from the Sandy Creek Association and formed their own known as the Congaree Association. Morgan Edwards, the Philadelphia Association messenger and historian, contacted the Separates on his tour through South Carolina in 1772 and correspondence between the Separates and Philadelphia began. In 1773, Daniel Marshall, Joseph Reese, and Samuel Newman were sent by the Congaree Association to broach the possibility of union with the Charleston Association. Doctrinal differences kept the two from cementing the partnership, but this did not stop another attempt in 1775. Mulkey visited the Charleston annual meeting to again offer union. Either due to continued doctrinal differences or the turbulence brought on by the advent of the Revolution, this attempt failed to procure the union of the two largest Baptist sects in the state.\textsuperscript{103}

Though formal union failed, meetings such as these came about because the Separates and Regulars were making more contact and working more closely together. A perfect example of this is the Congaree Church. Mulkey and Marshall left the five branches of this church in the hands of Joseph Reese. Reese, converted under the ministry and baptized by Mulkey, received his ordination at the hands of Regulars Oliver Hart and Evan Pugh in 1768. The church itself began to list toward Regular practices. It did not have ruling elders and instituted a quarterly observance of the Lord’s Supper. In spite of these

\textsuperscript{102} Mulkey Papers, 29, SCL. Mulkey also attended the 1775 Charleston Association meeting.
\textsuperscript{103} Townshend, 174-5.
tendencies, Reese refused to join the Charleston Association, preferring autonomy.\footnote{Townshend, 144. It is possible that Reese may have been angered by Stearns’ silencing of Newton, one of Reese’s assistants at Congaree. We do not have the exact date of Reese’s ordination so this is only conjecture. For biographical details of Reese and Newton see Townshend’s Endnote Biographical Sketches.}

In South Carolina, we find other examples in which, by 1775, Separates and Regulars joined together to ordain ministers or baptize converts. The most notable example of combined ordination occurred in May 1774. Richard Furman, a young man from the High Hills region, came under the influence of Joseph Reese when Reese visited the area to conduct meetings. After a two year period in which he felt increased conviction under the sound of Reese’s preaching, Furman converted at age sixteen. He was soon ordained by Reese and Evan Pugh, Regular pastor of the Cashaway congregation. Furman then entered into a friendship with Oliver Hart and accompanied Hart and John Gano on a preaching tour of Georgia. There he was introduced to Edmund Botsford, with whom he enjoyed a lifelong friendship.\footnote{Wood Furman, \textit{A Biography of Richard Furman}, ed. Harvey T. Cook (Greenville, SC: Baptist Courier Job Rooms, 1913), 5-10; Joseph B. Cook, “The Good and Faithful Servant Approved and Honoured by his Divine Master: A Funeral Sermon, Occasioned by the much Lamented Death of the Rev. Richard Furman D.D. (Charleston: W. Riley, 1826), 26-7. Furman may also have met the Marshall’s during his trip to Georgia. Furman took over the Charleston Baptist Church in the 1780s and presided until his death in 1826. Some looked askance at his move to Charleston believing him to be seduced by the big city. Weir Papers, SCL.} Furman became the leading Baptist in the state following Hart’s removal to New Jersey during the Revolution. In the fall of 1774, Mulkey baptized four converts at Welsh Neck, a Regular meeting.\footnote{Minutes of Welsh Neck Baptist Church, 1737-1935, Fall 1774, 17. SCL. Subsequent references to the Minutes of Welsh Neck Baptist Church will be abbreviated to Welsh Neck Minutes.}

In Georgia, a working relationship between the Separates and Regulars began almost immediately after the arrival of Marshall and Botsford in 1771. Marshall and Botsford were introduced by Col. Barnard, Zubly’s friend. Marshall thought highly of the young Regular’s preaching and invited him to preach to the new Separate church at Kiokee during Botsford’s visits to the region. On one of these visits, Loveless Savidge, not yet
converted from Anglican to Baptist ideas, restrained him from preaching. Botsford
challenged him to consider his eternal state, and soon thereafter, Savidge converted and
became one of Marshall’s top aides. Marshall helped Botsford as well. Botsford was only a
licentiate when he arrived in Georgia. Therefore, he was not authorized to baptize any who
converted under his ministry. Marshall and Francis Pelot, a Regular leader from South
Carolina, shared the baptismal duty until Botsford received his ordination in 1773.107

It is true that certain segments of society looked down upon the spread of
enthusiastic evangelicalism in South Carolina and Georgia. However, focusing on these
blatant examples of distrust and ridicule has caused historians to miss two vital points.
First, the history of evangelicals has become that of the Separates writ large. This mistake
has caused historians to broadly mislabel evangelicals as outcasts in southern society. It
has also blinded us to the contributions evangelicals made in the debate between Great
Britain and the colonies leading up to the American Revolution. Second, in the years
immediately preceding the American Revolution, the Separates and Regulars were moving
together and functioning in a much more ecumenical way. This cooperation resulted in a
closer working union and a softening of the doctrinal edges that kept the two groups apart
during the colonial era. This confluence of Regular practice and Separate zeal, more than
any desire to please a gentry elite, catalyzed the Baptists into a position of religious
supremacy in the post-war south.

107 Morgan, 239-0; Mallary, 41-2; Broome, 24-5. Barnard may have introduced the two, but he was not a fan
of Baptists during their early work in the state. Marshall thought Botsford was good but not near as good as
Reese or Mulkey. Morgan believes, erroneously, that cooperation between Separates and Regulars only
occurred in Georgia.

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Chapter 3

Evangelical Political Activity in South Carolina and Georgia during the Imperial Crisis

Evangelicals played a larger role in the coming of the Revolution in the Deep South than has been acknowledged. Masked partially by a paucity of research, evangelicals have also been shortchanged by a penchant of historians to focus on more radical practitioners of evangelical Christianity. It is not that Zubly and Tennent are unknown, but they are not recognized as the staunch evangelicals they, in fact, were. Before the first spilling of blood at Lexington and Concord, these two men led, or were prominently engaged in, a southern assault against the perceived infringement of the British crown upon the rights of the colonists. Zubly, through his numerous pamphlets, made the larger contribution of the two to the constitutional debate, but Tennent also published works aimed at stirring the colonists to a defense of their rights in the years leading to the break with Great Britain. Neither enjoyed the fruit their labor produced. Zubly died a broken man bemoaning the rebellion his pen helped unleash. A fever struck down Tennent in 1777. Though marginalized or gone by the end of the struggle, both these men lent strong evangelical voices to the colonial cause in its incipient stage.

The colonists, particularly those of British descent, prized liberty above all other political considerations. Proud of their heritage, many erupted in a chorus of discontent when, during the 1760s, Parliament began policy changes which would strengthen the power of the ministry while undercutting the power of the colonial legislatures. Steeped in the political philosophies of the British commonwealth men, also known as “country ideology,” colonial leaders looked with growing distrust at what they perceived to be
usurpations of power at the hands of a corrupted cabal of ministers intent on depriving the colonists of their liberty. Commonwealth ideology stressed the danger of accrued power in the hands of a few. Once garnered, this power, with the aid of fallen human nature, would result in the enslavement of the people and a deprivation of the rights and privileges guaranteed by the British constitution. To combat this inevitability, government must be held in the hands of men who were “able, independent, courageous, virtuous, and public-spirited.” Colonial leaders, including many in South Carolina and Georgia, believed government to be a necessity for the protection of property, freedom, and life, but they supported a limited government responsive to their demands and subject to local redress via representatives of their own choosing when governmental measures appeared to undermine their prized liberty. By the 1760s, most colonists in the thirteen colonies viewed their colonial legislatures as the seats of power and equated any challenge to this authority as a challenge to their constitutional prerogatives.¹

The British ministry, however, saw political reality quite differently than the colonists. Believing ultimate authority for the governance of the empire to be in the hands of Parliament, British authorities began, after the culmination of the French and Indian War in 1763, to strengthen their hold on colonial affairs, particularly in the area of taxation. These measures, beginning with the Stamp Act in 1765 and continuing through the early 1770s, touched off a firestorm of dissent within the colonies, including South Carolina and Georgia. At the heart of the matter lay a constitutional argument over power and representation. British authorities believed the colonists to be a part of the empire and thus

subject to the virtual representation given to the empire by the elected members of Parliament. Colonial authorities argued that they were not actually represented in Parliament and to have measures dictated to them without such representation was tantamount to declaring the colonists slaves, a position contrary to their birthright as British subjects who enjoyed full constitutional privilege. It is in the context of this debate that Zubly and Tennent entered the fray on the side of the colonists.2

The Stamp Act set in motion a decade of constitutional argument which culminated in the American Revolution. Parliament, seeking to raise funds to maintain an army in the colonies, instituted a direct tax on the colonists in the form of a government stamp affixed to nearly all printed documents. Howls of protest echoed throughout the colonies. Stamp collectors and governors were burned in effigy. London heard the protests and abandoned the tax. With the repeal of the Stamp Act, Zubly made his first published foray into the rising debate between the colonies and the home government. In 1766, he preached a sermon, later published, which outlined his basic political views. First, liberty was precious but should not be confused with licentiousness. Second, tyranny may rise to such an extent that even loyal subjects may choose to rebel. Third, sin was the cause of a nation’s calamity and may prove the destruction of that nation if behavior was not rectified.3

Zubly admired greatly the British constitution and the liberties of British citizens. His sermon highlighted this zeal on several occasions. The repeal of the Stamp Act gave the colonists a “pleasing opportunity to offer public thanks unto Britain’s God.” No event before in colonial history, according to Zubly, had given the colonists such occasion to

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2 “Actual representation” is representation in which a body of electors chooses who will represent them in a legislative body. “Virtual representation” connotes a view of representation in which an elected body makes laws for the whole body of people, whether or not those people have a hand in electing the representatives.

3 John J. Zubly, “The Stamp-Act Repealed: A Sermon Preached in the Meeting at Savannah in Georgia, June 25th, 1766.” (Georgia, printed; South-Carolina, Reprinted by Peter Timothy, 1766), 3.
praise God. God had “inclined the British parliament to hear the cries of the innocent.” The Act, though an “ill-concerted measure,” had been repealed by actions Zubly termed as “just, noble, and generous.” This fortuitous turn of events had been orchestrated by God, and Zubly urged his congregants to “offer thanks unto the Most High, because he has been favorable unto our land.” Because God had ordained reconciliation, he urged his listeners to “make a proper return to our most gracious king, and the British legislature” because the impending doom of slavery had been lifted. Zubly called George III “our great and good King, the friend of mankind, and the father of his people.” He reminded both his listeners and the king that the ascension of George III had been greeted with universal approval by the American colonists.4

Though Zubly denounced the Stamp Act, he feared that others may make wrong conclusions regarding the colonists’ refusal to obey the act. In a foreshadowing of his later inability to join the movement for independence, Zubly used scripture to highlight the need for quick rapprochement between the colonies and Great Britain. Pointing his listeners to the Old Testament, he reminded them their actions could be misconstrued by London as an act of “independency.”5 Defense of liberty was a noble calling, but, if it degenerated into permanent division, horrible consequences would result. Economically, the colonists would face a trade embargo, agricultural stagnation, and a general decay which would hit farmers the hardest. Worse than any economic calamity, war might result. “War in its best light is a destruction of the human species, but war among brethren, intestine feuds and

4 Ibid., 5-6, 18.
5 Ibid., 4. The story, found in Joshua 22:10-34, is that of the Israelite tribes of Reuben, Gad, and a portion of Manasseh. Both had fulfilled their obligations to the nation and returned to their inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan River. They erected an altar as a monument to the covenant they shared with the rest of the tribes of Israel. However, the other tribes, not knowing the altar’s true significance, thought that they were preparing a rival site of worship in rebellion against God’s dictates. They gathered to destroy the two tribes. War was averted when the true meaning of the altar was relayed to Phinehas, the high priest.
civil wars as they are called, of the worst evil are the worst species.” Zubly pleaded with British authorities, as well, to minimize the prospect of such evil through the benevolent treatment of its subjects. The policy of a wise king seeks to win “the affection of loyal subjects.” In doing so, he gains “greater security to his reign and kingdom than any submission he would force them unto by any act of mere power.” Zubly stipulated that union between the colonies and Great Britain was the only sure path to permanent success. They “must sink or swim together.”

The second plank of Zubly’s sermon highlighted the danger of tyrannical government. “When tyranny and oppression once arrive at a certain height, they become intolerable even to loyalty, and must recoil upon their authors.” Rulers who implemented policies to see how much their subjects could withstand swam in dangerous waters. Oppressive measures made “even a wise man mad” and led to confusion. When power, instead of “the good of the community,” became the operating principle of rulers “a nation not only ceases to be formidable to its neighbors and enemies, but it also [is] in very great danger of falling” into a state of violence and disturbed peace. According to Zubly, tyranny rose “when jarring interests and different factions divide the state and impose upon the sovereign.”

Zubly’s final argument focused on the role of sin in the difficulties of a nation. “Sometimes the sins of the subject are punished by arbitrary sovereigns, and oppression and arbitrary power are sometimes visited…by the violence of unruly subjects.” Illustrating his point with another Old Testament example, Zubly recounted the division of the nation of Israel because of Rehoboam’s failure to listen to wise counsel. While sin

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6 Ibid., 8-10.
7 Ibid., 10-1, 17.
8 Ibid., 11.
reigned, God could not bless. “Oppression and rebellion are both wicked, and may become by a righteous judgment of God a scourge to one another.” God might allow the “peace and tranquility” of a nation to be “interrupted or taken away, by suffering the rulers to be too intoxicated with too high notions of power, or by suffering the subjects to go beyond the just bounds, in asserting and maintaining their just rights.” The repeal of the Stamp Act and the ensuing peace were signal proofs that God “was again returned unto them in mercy.” God’s blessing resulted from righteous actions. “National sins bring on national calamities, and national reformation a national blessing.”

Zubly was convinced that national sin could easily have been punished by God. Indeed, the tempest over the Stamp Act was a preliminary act portending the awful wrath that may await both Great Britain and her colonies. Therefore, he implored his listeners to be grateful to God for averting his judgment. “We are met today to offer our thanks unto the great ruler of all things, that he hath averted from us a very great evil.” Escape from judgment, however, was not the only thing for which the colonists should be grateful. He listed several important blessings granted in the peaceful resolution of the crisis. He thanked God “that our invaluable privileges are preserved, that our land is not become a land of slaves, nor our fields a scene of blood.” God’s blessing removed the gloom surrounding the difficulties and allowed parliament to see “the justice of our complaints” and with “justice and moderation.” Other blessings, according to Zubly, included restored “affection and confidence…between us and our mother country,” the continuance of trade, and political safety. The colonists should be thankful to God in the same measure that he

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9 Ibid., 12-4. Rehoboam was the son of Solomon. He listened to the counsel of his young friends and promised to increase the taxation of the Israelites. The ten northern tribes rebelled and formed a new nation under the leadership of Jereboam. This story is recounted in I Kings 12.
blessed them. God allowed a great escape from “this unhappy act.”

Zubly returned to reiterate his central themes. He prayed the blessing of God upon the king and hoped for continued attachment to the mother country. The colonists were “hewn” from Britain. Great Britain should “act the part of the tender parent,” and the colonists must always play the role of “truly dutiful children.” God hated division and discord, therefore, “let us abhor them who would do any thing that might tend towards a separation of interests or an alienation of affections. Let Britain and British America ever be like one heart and one soul; he that would divide, anathema fit, let him be held accursed by both.” Though Zubly heartily confirmed the union of Great Britain and the colonies, he reminded his listeners that their efforts against the Stamp Act saved the liberties of the colonists. Posterity must know that if their efforts had failed, “the year 1765 must have been the fatal year from which the loss of American liberty must have been dated.” Zubly reminded them that they owed the king reverence and honor, but they must always “stand fast” in protection of their liberty. Those who led the fight should receive honor because they had “at all times signally distinguished themselves in the cause of liberty, and deserved greatly of the British nation.” However, Zubly warned against the appearance of disloyalty, the creation of factions, or the equation of liberty with licentiousness among those involved in the fight to preserve these liberties.

Though the sermon dealt mostly in political themes, Zubly did not forget his primary calling. He called upon his listeners to act the part of Christians submitting themselves to the ordinances of men and “good members of the community.” He reminded rulers that they should “rule in the fear of God, and to look upon their subjects as their

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10 Ibid., 16-7.
11 Ibid., 18-21.
fellow creatures and brethren, whose happiness to promote is the very design of their office.” If tyrannical government rose, Christians should still obey because “our sins must be the cause of it.” Zubly closed his sermon with an evangelical appeal. True freedom came in service to God. “How insignificant will our struggle for liberty appear, while we deliberately give up ourselves to be slaves unto lust.” Zubly approved of the “universal satisfaction” that met the repeal of the Stamp Act, but he lamented “the woeful coldness and indifference…toward the best news that was ever sent from upon earth…the glad tidings of great joy, that unto us is a savior born, Jesus Christ.” Zubly implored his listeners to “come…let us embrace this opportunity and become his real subjects.”

Unfortunately, the joyful celebration in the colonies at the demise of the Stamp Act did not last long. Parliament, in 1767, slid through the Declaratory Act in which it claimed for itself the sole power to make any laws necessary for the governance of the empire. This assertion brought to a head the debates over the locus of power in the British system and virtual versus actual representation in the law-making process.

Zubly responded to the Declaratory Act with a pamphlet, “A Humble Enquiry into the Nature of the Dependency of the American Colonies,” published in 1769. Hoping to justify the rationality of the colonial position on taxation and representation, Zubly argued that the fundamental “principle of the British constitution [is] that no Englishman ought to be taxed but by his own consent, given either by himself or his representatives.” Zubly forged a two- pronged argument against the parliamentary position. First, virtual representation was actually no representation at all and endangered the liberties of all British subjects. Second, the British constitution acknowledged the right of the people to

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12 Ibid., 20-3.
consent to the laws that governed them and superseded any parliamentary claims that contradicted this fundamental constitutional right.

Zubly attacked virtual representation zealously. “If the assent of those that are to be governed by the law is not necessary or essential to the making of it, then representation is a mere superfluous thing, no better than an excrescence of legislative power.” The constitution guaranteed that no man could be taxed without personally acquiescing to the tax via his own consent or that of his representative. Zubly considered parliamentary claims to virtual representation to be inimical to the constitution. Actual representation was necessary for taxation because only the people have the right to determine what they will give to the support of the government. The power of taxation lay in the hands of those men specifically elected to carry out the business of the electors. Zubly argued that no member of Parliament held any legislative power by right of birth, nor could any man legislate while unselected to Parliament. Writs of election specified particular districts to be represented by the elected members of Parliament. Therefore, electors could not grant to their elected members of Parliament the power to tax any other part of the empire. The thirteen colonies, according to Zubly, elected no members to the British Parliament. “The electors cannot dispose of the property of America…In England, there can be no taxation without representation, and no representation without election…it is undeniable that the representatives of Great-Britain are not elected by nor for the Americans, and therefore cannot represent them.” Zubly contended that electors in Great Britain violated the constitution by taxing the Americans without representation.

Zubly next turned his attention to claims regarding the supremacy of Parliament in

14 Ibid., 2.
15 Ibid., 17, 22.
16 Ibid., 22.
making laws for the colonies. Zubly argued that Parliament was subservient to the constitution. Though Parliament was the supreme legislature for Great Britain, its power came from the constitution, thus that body was constrained by the limits placed on it by the constitution. The constitutional rights of Britons superseded the powers of Parliament because they were protected by the permanence of the constitution. The constitution “which prevails over the whole empire” guaranteed “all Englishmen, or all that make up the British empire…certain privileges indefeasible, unalienable, and of which they can never be deprived, but by the taking away of that constitution which gives them these privileges.” Zubly claimed that “Americans pretend to no share in the legislature of Great-Britain at all, but they hope they have never forfeited their share in the constitution.” Parliamentary measures seemed aimed at depriving the Americans of their “liberty and property.” These, Zubly argued, were a violation of the constitution and, therefore, could not be constitutional.17

Zubly combined these two themes in his attack on the Declaratory Act. While maintaining that the colonial assemblies were “Houses of Representatives,” the Act failed to acknowledge their legislative power. “If it is allowed that they are represented in America, unless they are represented doubly, they cannot be represented any where else; this strikes at the root of virtual representation.” Zubly then continued his argument regarding taxation. “If representation is the basis of taxation, they cannot be taxed but where they are represented, unless they are doubly taxed.” The Declaratory Act also endangered the constitutional liberties of the colonists. The sweep of the Act, “in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER,” would over time result in the enslavement of the colonies. This clause, coupled by their lack of representation, seemed to Americans an attempt to

17 Ibid., 4-5, 15.
“deprive them of their rights as Englishmen” and in time would “deprive them of liberty and property altogether.” Zubly recognized that the power inherent within the Declaratory Act caused apprehension among the colonists and a general fear that eventually Parliament meant to place them “upon a level with the meanest slaves.”

As with his earlier pamphlet on the repeal of the Stamp Act, Zubly clearly stated that he, as well as the other defenders of colonial rights, did not seek independence. Those who broached the topic of independence were not in touch with the real views of the colonists but were seeking to stir up controversy and misreading genuine attempts to defend British liberty. “It is said, if America cannot be taxed by the British Parliament, then it would be independent of Great-Britain…This is not, will not, cannot be the case…nobody in Britain or America ever dreamed that America was independent.” Cries of “treason and rebellion” reflected “greater disgrace on those who unjustly make it, than on those on whom it is unjustly made.” Americans, Zubly contended, were uneasy about the measures passed by Parliament. They feared the eventual loss of their constitutional rights and property. In fact, their discomfit was such that “two millions of people are so thoroughly prepossessed with them, that even their children unborn may feel the parents’ impressions.”

Concluding his argument, Zubly returned again to the theme that animated the colonists, liberty. “This is not a dark abstruse point, but seems plain and essential to the very being of liberty.” Where there was no representation, there could be no taxation. “Can you be tired of being represented, O Britons! Is it consistent with the constitution you so justly boast of to be thus taxed? Then representation is not essential to your constitution,

\[18\] Ibid., 10-1, 20.
\[19\] Ibid., 24-5.
and sooner or later you will either give it up or be deprived of it.” Zubly, though worried about the possibility that Britain would send “fire and sword into her own bowels,” closed with pleas for civility, vigilance for common constitutional liberty, and a continued “happy union.”

In 1772, Governor James Wright disallowed the election of Noble Wymberly Jones as speaker of the Georgia Commons House of Assembly. Jones belonged to a group of Georgians engaged with the royal governor in the debate over the prerogatives of the crown in the colonies. Zubly responded to the governor’s negation of the people’s choice with another pamphlet. Writing under the pseudonym “Freeman,” Zubly argued, in his “Calm and Respectful Thoughts on the Negative of the Crown on a Speaker Chosen and Presented by the Representatives of the People,” that Wright’s actions were unconstitutional. Zubly continued the themes present in his earlier political writings. Parliamentary claims to unbounded authority over the colonial legislatures were not supported by history or legal precedent. For Zubly, colonial legislatures were equal to Parliament as representative bodies.

Beginning his Calm and Respectful Thoughts in the same tone as he concluded his Humble Enquiry pamphlet, Zubly defended the right of the colonists to question, within bounds of propriety and decorum, the constitutionality of certain measures taken to strengthen Britain’s control of the colonies. Zubly feared that certain elements in Britain and in Georgia were twisting the actions of the colonists “to set this province in the worst light at home, and to render the late Representatives as odious as possible within this province.” To combat this perception, Zubly outlined his understanding of the role of

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20 Ibid., 25-6.
21 Strickland, 143.
22 Miller, 17.
elected representative bodies within the British system. In Britain, the House of Commons was the voice of the people and “as necessary and essential to our Constitution as the existence of a King and House of Lords.” The chief tasks of the Commons were “to be a check on the Prerogative, and to watch over the rights of the people.” To do so, the Commons held the power of impeachment for the purpose of “punishing the conduct of the King’s evil counselors.” Attempts to interfere with these privileges by government ministers or kings were tantamount to a destruction of the representative assembly and thus the constitution itself.23

Moving from this general outline of British government, Zubly attacked the decision of governor to replace the duly elected speaker of the Georgia House of Assembly. The choice of the speaker, according to Zubly, was that of the representatives of the people. The speaker “sits in the House…not to do any business for the King, but their business, to be their mouth, regulate their debates, and execute their orders.” If the speaker must have the favor of the king or whose choosing was at his behest, the role of the representative body was compromised. Zubly wondered how the assembly could exercise its constitutional duty as a check upon the designs of the executive if it could not exercise free choice within its own body. “It is difficult to conceive how the House may preserve freedom in debate if they are not at liberty to choose the person by whom the debates are to be directed.” The views and popularity of the speaker chosen should have no bearing on the independence of the assembly to make its own choice. If the king had the power to reject a man based on his popularity within the assembly or because he held contrary views

23 John J. Zubly, “Calm and Respectful Thoughts on the Negative of the Crown on a Speaker chosen and presented by the Representatives of the People: Occasioned by some Publications in the Georgia Gazette, of Many and June 1772, wherein the late Assembly of the Province in charged with encroaching on the Rights of the Crown. By a Freeman.” (Savannah: Unknown, 1772), 1-3.
regarding the power of the executive, calamitous results awaited the rights of the people. In the hands of a “bad ruler” or “pernicious and evil Counselors,” the power of rejection of the people’s choice led to the possibility of arbitrary government. Zubly contended that if a ruler “should have a right to reject the only man that is fittest to oppose him and serve the nation, I think a very dangerous part of the Prerogative, and I am at a perfect loss how to reconcile such a power with the spirit and design of the Constitution of a free people.”

Zubly realized that his arguments charted a course differently than the one accepted by the British ministry. According to the noted legal commentator Coke, the assembly had the right to choose a speaker, but the crown had an equal right to refuse the choice. Zubly attacked this assessment on historical grounds. This interpretation held sway because Coke was the oldest extant commentator on the constitution not because the constitution actually granted the king the power of refusal. Coke argued the interpretation of the constitution under the rule of the Stuart kings. Zubly acerbically noted “that the only instance where a Speaker appears rejected by the Crown was in the reign of a Stuart, when there was a settled design against the religion and liberties of the nation.” Zubly hoped that “it was no treason” to highlight that Britain’s laws had changed since the days of Coke.

Zubly maintained that exercising the right to speak out against perceived constitutional aberrations did not insinuate disloyalty. Those hostile to these complaints branded the protesters “fiery Republicans” and “as bad...as the Long Parliament.” Brooking no charge of republicanism, Zubly adamantly refused to cede the constitutional ground to those who favored the governor’s move. He returned again to highlight the

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24 Ibid., 3, 7-11.
25 Ibid., 13-4, 21. By the 1760s, the colonial understanding of the separation of power within the British system and that held by the ministry widely diverged. Colonists, armed mainly with ideas of corruption and placemen derived from the tracts of commonwealth opposition, battled a ministry which had, during the course of the 18th century, moved more towards a king-in-Parliament conception of government framework.
independence of the speaker and the necessity of the assembly’s check on the executive.

“The Speaker is not the King’s Representative.” If the king demanded a compliant speaker, the king interjected himself into the legislative body as unconstitutionally as if he attempted to gain sway through “bribery and corruption.” The king’s job was simply to echo the voice of the people in approving their choice. To interfere through refusal, Zubly stated, was a “breach of the original contract between him and his people.” The rights of the British people “everywhere in the British dominions” were “natural” and anteceded any colonial charters or royal instructions. “Whatever is not law cannot be binding upon a British subject, and I suppose no man will say that because the king has an undoubted right to instruct his servants, that therefore he has also a right to give instruction contrary to the constitution.”

26 Zubly maintained that unchecked power was a major threat to the liberties of the people. The assembly checked the power of the executive. If the executive could simply disallow the choice of the people’s representatives, this removed the most obvious check on arbitrary power.

Zubly battled the tyrannical exercise of power in all his published writings on politics. Sometimes, however, Zubly saw the ugly head of tyranny raised in the matter of religion. Two key religious issues that animated portions of the political discussion leading to the American Revolution were the possibility of the appointment of a bishop for the American colonies and the passage of the Quebec Act in 1774. The “Episcopate Question” simmered in the hearts of colonial dissenters and was used to heighten dissenter vigilance regarding the aims of the ministry regarding religious liberty. The Quebec Act implanted, in the minds of both dissenters and members of the Establishment, the specter of an encroaching tyranny unleashed upon the colonies by the Catholic Church. Both of these

26 Ibid., 22-4.
issues appeared in South Carolina and Georgia. Zubly used both these issues to call attention to growing evidence of tyrannical government.

During the constitutional crisis that engulfed the colonies during the 1760s and 1770s, support for an American bishop was inimical to the defense of American religious liberty and made proponents of the idea an easy mark for criticism. In South Carolina, the presence of a bishop was no more welcome than that of a stamp collector.27 No dissenter and few Anglicans in the Deep South thought much of the proposal. On one occasion Zubly used rumored support for the measure to castigate one of the few Anglicans with whom he had difficulty. Zubly enjoyed the company and support of almost all low country Anglican rectors. Despite this fact, Zubly’s relationship with Samuel Frink, the rector of Christ Church in Savannah, can only be described as chilly. Frink appears to have been jealous of establishment privilege and a general thorn in Zubly’s side. From Zubly’s correspondence with Frink, it seems that Frink, though he had at one time been a dissenter himself, considered it “an equal crime to transgress the laws of the Church or the laws of the Land.” Zubly accused Frink of displaying a lack of moderation toward his dissenting brethren and insinuated that Frink was behind a rumored petition sent from Georgia to Britain asking for an American bishop.28 Zubly had no doubt that any appointment of a bishop “would make more dissenters in America in one year than many of us would make in an age.” Though little progress was actually made toward the appointment of a bishop, it

27 Arthur L. Cross, The Anglican Episcopate and the American Colonies (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902), fn 3, 256. Cross quotes from a letter describing conditions in South Carolina sent to the Bishop of London, October 20, 1765: “If I may form a Judgment from that present prevailing turbulent Spirit which like an epidemick disorder seems everywhere to diffuse itself through this and the other Colonies, I can venture to affirm that it would be as unsafe for an American Bishop (if such should be appointed) to come hither, as it is at present for a Distributor of the Stamps.”

28 John J. Zubly, “A Letter to the Reverend Samuel Frink,” (Savannah?: unknown, 1770?), 3-4. There is the possibility that an angry Zubly placed the blame for the petition on Frink because Frink had declined to bury one of Zubly’s children. Miller, 12.
remained an issue that reminded dissenters in the colonies, including South Carolina and Georgia, to be vigilant for any perceived threats to their treasured religious freedom. Little was more dangerous to these liberties than the arbitrary installment of a unified Anglican establishment by a parliament beyond their control.29

Far more disconcerting for Zubly than the possibility of an American episcopate was the passage of the Quebec Act in 1774. For colonial clergymen friendly to the cause of the colonists, both Anglican and dissenter, this act portended disaster for colonial Protestants. When the British government recognized the Catholic establishment in the former territories of French Canada, many believed the ministry “to be laying the groundwork for the ultimate destruction of American Protestantism.”30 Protestant clergymen were not alone in their fear of the Catholic Church. South Carolinians viewed with Catholicism with suspicion. The passage of the Quebec Act “sunk deep into the minds of the people; as they saw the Crown now made despotic, and the Romish Church established in a part of America.” George III broke his oath and the original contract of governance by allowing the act because he violated the dictates of “the Revolution of 1688” which specifically sought to rescue “the English dominions from the errors, and tyranny, of the Romish Church.”31 Zubly wholeheartedly supported toleration for dissenting Protestant sects, but he drew the line at Catholicism. Referring to Catholics as “papists,” he held little regard for the Roman church and looked askance at any

29 Davis, 110. Davis quotes John Adams while stating the importance of the episcopacy debate in the minds of the colonists. “John Adams would later claim that ‘apprehension of Episcopacy’ contributed as much as any other cause in the American Revolution, capturing the attention ‘not only of the inquiring mind, but of the common people...The objection was not merely to the office of a bishop, though even that was dreaded, but to the authority of parliament, on which it was founded.”
30 Ibid., 43.
participation of Catholics in the government of Great Britain. He considered Catholicism to be “a religion which is equally injurious to the rights of sovereign and of mankind.”

Zubly, writing under the pseudonyms of “Freeholder” and “Freeman,” joined in the chorus of discontent over the act. Submitting two articles to the Georgia Gazette, he attacked the legislation. In the September 28, 1774 edition, he claimed that the Quebec Act established “popery.” Three months later, he wondered if “an unlawful combination” had conspired in the measure to enslave “two thirds of the empire” by introducing “Popish principles and French law.” For Zubly, the establishment of Catholicism, along with the “taking away [of] trial in the vicinage, and taxation only by Representative,” appeared to be a “vile” conspiracy aimed at destroying the liberty of the colonists.

Zubly was not a lone evangelical voice in the Deep South against the usurpations of the ministry. After spending ten years as a Presbyterian minister in New York and Connecticut, William Tennent III arrived in Charleston in 1771 to become pastor of the Independent Church. Caught up in the political maelstrom that swept the colonies, Tennent became a loud proponent for American liberties. He soon began associating with South Carolina’s most radical political leaders. This group of radicals eventually included Christopher Gadsden, William Henry Drayton, Edward Rutledge, Peter Timothy, Rawlins Lowndes, Thomas Ferguson, and Colonel Charles Pinckney.

Tennent took a decided stand against British attempts at coercion. Writing as “A Carolinian,” he acerbically attacked the policies of General Gage in Boston. In a letter to

33 Strickland, 140-1. Quote is from Zubly’s “Petition to the King” adopted by Georgia’s Provincial Congress in July 1775.
34 Ibid., 140-1.
35 Weir Papers, SCL, 1.
36 Brinsfield, 176, 183-4; Christopher Gadsden, The Writings of Christopher Gadsden, 1746-1805, ed. Richard Walsh (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 1966), 109. A partial list of radical South Carolinians is found in Gadsden’s letter to Admiral Iseck Hopkins, January 10, 1776.
the Charleston media entitled “Some of the Blessings of Military Law, or the Insolence of Governor Gage,” Tennent echoed “country” objections to a standing army. For Tennent, “a standing Army is the most dangerous Enemy to the Liberties of a nation that can be thought of.” Tennent thought it better to rely on “a well regulated militia” and “run the risk of a foreign invasion” than to accept the “risk of slavery” associated with a standing army. The “crime” of Massachusetts had been in implementing a non-importation treaty “with those people who are trying to enslave them.” Though this agreement, according to Tennent, was “a peaceable, a constitutional, as well as effectual Measure,” Gage chose to characterize those involved as an “unlawful, hostile, treasonable” combination and threaten “almost half a million free born subjects with the pains due to treason and Rebellion.” Tennent likened Gage to “a Turkish despot” appointed for his “high opinion of the sword” and warned that the British ministry meant to extend this “precedent for all America.”

Tennent unleashed a broadside aimed at New England Anglicans whom he believed to be working to establish an American episcopate. In his undated “Letter to the Press,” Tennent acknowledged that southern Anglicans “may have as high a sense of the Rights of Mankind as any in the World,” but he claimed their northern brethren and those in charge of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sought “to Episcopise rather than Gospelize America.” Tennent believed their aim to be instituting a bishop who enjoyed religious and civil powers. Tennent attempted to support this claim by highlighting the petitions sent by episcopate supporters to the king and Parliament. To this perceived conspiracy, Tennent responded that dissenters “defended themselves” and hoped “to enjoy

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37 William Tennent Papers, “A Carolinian,” “Some of the Blessings of Military Law, or The Insolence of Governor Gage,” SCL.
entire Liberty of Conscience.” Tennent coupled his fear of an episcopate with a
denunciation of British political machinations. He “denied the power of Parliament to
establish religion in America, or to tax us in spirituals more than in temporals.” Supporters
of an episcopate knew “that the millions of free born Americans would never submit to the
clandestine overthrow of all their Constitution,” yet they pressed for the installation of a
bishop and the establishment of “Spiritual Courts” more arbitrary than the Courts of
Admiralty. This measure would necessitate further taxation to support the religious
hierarchy. Tennent applauded the failure of the effort to gain an American bishop but
warned that this remained the object of northern Anglicans.38

After the passage of the Intolerable Acts in 1774, Tennent responded with an article
aimed at the ladies of Charleston.39 Echoing an earlier pamphlet from Christopher
Gadsden, Tennent called on low country ladies to give up the use of tea as a means of
preserving the precious liberties and lives of the colonists. “I cannot think you so divested
of all love to your Country as to be willing to partake of any trivial pleasure at the Expense
of the liberties if not the blood of your husbands and children.” The tax on tea was being
used to “enslave” the colonies. He begged the ladies to give up this “political plague” in
order to demonstrate to the British ministry that they would not be party to the
“enslavement” of America. Tennent outlined seven reasons the ladies should join him in
abstaining from tea. First, unified action would “disarm [the] Tea Revenue Act.” Second,
their actions would show that colonial patriotism “extends even to the Fair sex” and
discourage future attempts by the ministry to “enslave” the colonists. Third, the ladies
would punish the East India Company for “leaguing” with the ministry. Tennent estimated

38 Tennent Papers, “Letter to the Press,” SCL.
39 Brinsfield, 175.
that non-consumption might cost the company 500,000 pounds sterling annually. Fourth, the threat of profit loss by non-importation would change company policy. Fifth, non-importation would diminish smuggling and city riots which cost lives. Sixth, the ladies’ decision to stop drinking tea might remove the “pretence” used by the ministry to maintain a standing army in the colonies. In a bit of hyperbolic enthusiasm, Tennent claimed the ladies’ actions might “save the lives of half the men of America and preserve you from seeing your streets run with blood.” Tennent’s final reason aimed at the pocketbook. Non-consumption would save the ladies money.40

In 1774, he published, as a political pamphlet, a sermon he delivered to his Charleston congregation. Though publicly stating that politics was not the proper subject for the pulpit, Tennent could not help himself. The “Duty of every minister of the Gospel” necessitated commentary on right action in the midst of troublesome times. With that disclaimer, Tennent launched into his political sermon outlining, as he saw them, the aims of the British ministry and the root causes of the trouble with Britain. British aims were to enslave America, and the judgment of God rested upon Britain and her colonies for the manifold sins exhibited in the lifestyles of both. Tennent’s vision for the future was apocalyptic if changes did not occur in the policies of Britain and in the behavior of the colonists.41

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40 Tennent Papers, “To the Ladies of South Carolina.” SCL. Christopher Gadsden used a similar line of argumentation in his June 22, 1769 publication entitled “To the Planters, Mechanics, and Freeholders of the Province of South Carolina, No Ways Concerned in the Importation of British Manufactures.” Gadsden included an appeal to women trying to convince them that non-importation was the only thing that could save them and their children from “distresses, slavery, and disgrace.” Gadsden, 83.

41 William Tennent III, “An Address Occasioned by the Late Invasion of the Liberties of the American Colonies by the British Parliament, delivered in Charleston, South Carolina,” (Philadelphia: Printed and sold by William and Thomas Bradford, at the London Coffee-House, 1774), 6; Ruth H. Bloch, Visionary Republic: Millenial Themes in American Thought, 1756-1800 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 66. Preaching politics from the pulpit in Charleston could lead to loss of one’s position. John Bullman, assistant Anglican rector at St. Michael’s, was called down by the vestry because he “had given great Offence and exasperated many of the Inhabitants of the Parish who threatened a Desertion of, and Indignities.
Tennent minced few words in describing British actions toward the colonists. “We are threatened with Slavery.” No judgment of God was like that of slavery. “War, pestilence, and Earthquakes, those ordinary Ministers of GOD’S Vengeance, are transient, partial or local Evils.” Slavery, however, was ubiquitous. It discriminated not between old and young, male nor female, rich nor poor. “It reaches to every corner of a Land. It includes the present and all future Generations…In a Word, it is the prime Minister of GOD’S Vengeance.” Tennent likened the British to oppressors. Though the oppressed may “sink under the Load of their Oppressions,” Tennent calmed his audience reminding them of God’s eventual judgment. God promised in the scriptures that he will vindicate “the Poor, and break in Pieces the Oppressor. This is the portion of the wicked Man with God, and the Heritage of Oppressors.” Stirring his audience to action, Tennent called for defense of colonial rights. No action taken in the battle against political enslavement, unless it was “inconsistent with necessary Principles of human Nature, or contrary to the Word of God,” was sin.  

Sin, however, lay at the root of the troubles roiling the empire. Using the Old Testament illustration of Jeremiah, Tennent painted a picture of Jeremiah as the “holy Patriot” whose “patriotic Soul glowed with an enthusiastic Love for his Country.” Because
of this love, Jeremiah warned his people to turn from their sin to avert the judgment of God. In this tradition, Tennent warned his listeners that they must not forget, in their rush to judge the evil actions of the mother country, the ways they too had violated the laws of God. “Nations, like Individuals, have their Vices, which call for Punishment.” No more sure sign pointed to impending judgment than “universal Corruption.”

For Tennent, the evidences of corruption were obvious. “If we examine the religious and moral Character of the Inhabitants of the British Empire, we have the utmost Reason to conclude to conclude that a Time of general Correction is not far from us.” Tennent believed that “universal moral Depravity in a People” anticipated “their Destruction.” Tennent placed examples of national corruption into two categories. First, he highlighted the religious corruption that infected the empire. Infidelity raged rampant in the philosophy of the age. Men treated “the Christian Revelation with Ridicule.” Christian ministers were no longer marked by conversion but were motivated by “a Title to an Estate, or as legal Qualifications for holding civil Offices.” Families no longer took the time to educate their children in Christian worship or doctrine. The colonists zealously taught their children their constitutional liberties while neglecting their spiritual instruction. The conduct of Christians was characterized by “lukewarmness.” This coldness toward God alone exhibited by his people gave Tennent “Reason to forbode the most dreadful Calamities.”

Tennent’s second category of corruption contemplated the moral transgressions that afflicted the empire. Vice was now so prominently spread throughout British society that all classes of people were infected by its contagion. People no longer considered it

43 Ibid., 8-10.
44 Ibid., 10-3.
necessary to keep the Sabbath. “This is a true Mark of national Impiety.” Merchants balanced their books, individuals took “Jaunts of Pleasure,” and church members gathered at the churches for convivial fellowship instead of the worship of God. The language of the people had descended into profanity and cursing. Formerly the vice of the “low life only,” foul language and blasphemy now infected all ranks of society including outbursts by “our Ladies…shocking to Religion and Delicacy.” Perjury pervaded the customs houses and courts. Drunkenness and intemperance, particularly in the colonies, alone might call down the wrath of God. To these, Tennent, using the illustration of Sodom and Gomorrah, added the “Secret Vices of Nation and Country” seen only by the “Eye of God” done under the “Curtain of Night” The British people, both home and colonial, might brag of their “charities,” but no amount of charity would “atone for the general Want of Piety, Sobriety, Justice, and Chastity which characterize us.”

God showed his mercy to the colonists in a variety of ways. They enjoyed general prosperity, agricultural bounty, commercial success, political freedom, and the “gospel of Jesus Christ.” For these “Treasures of Heaven,” the people responded with “unparalleled Ingratitude.” Due only to God’s compassion had he delayed the “Blow…aimed at our Liberties.” “Why is the Sword of civil War still at rest in its Scabbard?…Why is not the Yoke of Bondage riveted on our Necks?” Returning again to the theme of the “Christian Patriot,” Tennent argued that the measure of the “Danger and Safety of his Country” could be computed “by its Numbers of sinful or praying People, and its Degrees of Holiness and Vice.” For Tennent, the colonists had more to “dread from our Iniquities than our Enemies.”

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46 Ibid., 17-8.
The only remedy for this doleful condition was a return to God. “Confession, Prayer, and Reformation are Duties to which every Individual is called, as well for the Welfare of his Country, as for the Sake of his own Salvation.” Confession was the key to personal and political safety. “A sense of our Crimes is a hopeful Dawn of Deliverance.” Quoting an older minister, Tennent illustrated again the folly of complaining against the British ministry without remediying the cause of the troubles. “If…could hear our People exclaim against their Sins as warmly as against Lord North, I should have Hopes of Deliverance. Alas, they hug their crimes while they decry the Executioner! Were we as harmonious in our Remonstrances against ourselves, as we are against the late oppressive Acts, our case would not be so doubtful.” Humility before God would eliminate the necessity to humble themselves before the “Feet of a boasting Minister of State.” Tennent urged his audience to pray “to him who holds the Hearts of Kings in His Hands.” The “Christian Patriot” must remember “that in an Age and Country when Petitions and Remonstrances to earthly Rulers have lost their Efficacy, Prayer to GOD still possesses…Almighty Efficacy.” God might yet preserve the nation if even “one Christian Society” supplicated their cause to his throne. Tennent closed his message with an evangelical appeal. Reformation was necessary to save the country, but true reformation came in taking “GOD…for your GOD.” He urged his listeners to “become the Disciples of Jesus Christ, and be assured of Safety here and Crowns of immortal Glory hereafter.”

Both Zubly and Tennent were active in promoting the rights of the colonists. This activity extended beyond their southern audiences. Both corresponded with northern preachers keeping abreast of the political situation in New England. Zubly’s pamphlets

47 Ibid., 18-20.
48 Miller, 9; Brinsfield, 165.
reached a wide audience. Ezra Stiles, a leading Congregationalist figure at Yale, commented that his *Stamp Act Repealed* received “great Applause, with the best Judges of Composition in New England.” His publications connected the colonists of Georgia with the current of constitutional thought coursing through the rest of the colonies. Zubly sought to reprint John Dickinson’s *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer* in Georgia. He wanted his neighbors to “catch a spark” of Dickinson’s constitutional thought by bringing “Some of that fire” to Georgia. Tennent’s pamphlet *An Address, Occasioned by the Late Invasion of Our Liberties* was published and read in Philadelphia.

Far from being outside the mainstream of low country political thought and society, both held views consistent with many of their Anglican brethren. Nearly all Charleston’s clergy, establishment or dissenter, looked askance at the various edicts on revenue and colonial governance emanating from Parliament. Leading men in the struggle counted both Zubly and Tennent as their pastors. From Zubly’s Savannah congregation, Jonathan Bryan served on the Upper Council but was removed from the position when he served as chairman of a meeting called to resist the Townshend Acts in 1769. His stance on non-importation led to his being designated a friend of American liberties, and he was celebrated by newspapers and toasts in both Georgia and South Carolina. Bryan went on to serve the American cause throughout the Revolution. David Ramsay, a member of Tennent’s congregation, served in the Provincial Assembly and was elected to the Privy Council. He was imprisoned by the British when they took Charleston in 1780. Though at times critical of Tennent, he included his preacher as one of the most influential proponents

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49 Miller, 10-1. Original letter is dated April 25, 1767 in the Stiles Collection.
50 Ibid., 6-7.
51 Brinsfield, 175.
of American constitutional liberties.\textsuperscript{53} As a measure of their popularity, both were elected to their respective provincial congresses in 1775.\textsuperscript{54}

Politically, both stood squarely in the stream of commonwealth opposition thought. Both saw the British measures as a plot to deprive the colonists of their liberties. Both saw parliamentary action as an aggrandizement of power aimed at stifling the constitutional privileges that they as British subjects felt was a birthright. Common “country” themes flowed from the pens of these two evangelicals. Zubly and Tennent highlighted the inviolable rights of representation and the necessary independence of these representative bodies to check the power of the executive. Both argued for the supremacy of constitutional principles over dubious government proclamation. Both exhorted their audiences to defend their rights vigorously. The two preachers concurred with the common message of colonial dissenters regarding the presence of God’s judgment on a sinful nation and implored the colonists to repent and turn to Christ as a remedy for the calamities facing the empire and both opposed the prospect of an American episcopate with an eye to protecting dissenter rights. Despite the presence of common ground, key differences can be detected between the political thought of these two evangelicals. Differences, that in the end, proved fatal to Zubly’s support for the American cause.

In general terms, Zubly must be viewed as the more conservative of the two.

\textsuperscript{53} Howe, 374; David Ramsay, \textit{The History of the American Revolution in Two Volumes}, I ed. Lester H. Cohen (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1990), xxv-vii; David Ramsay, \textit{The History of the American Revolution in Two Volumes}, II ed. Lester H. Cohen (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1990), 634. Ramsay was a Presbyterian educated at Princeton. After graduating in 1765, he moved to Philadelphia to study medicine. He graduated from the College of Philadelphia Medical School in 1773. He arrived in Charleston in 1774 and promptly married into a prominent merchant family. His first marriage to Sabina Ellis lasted little more than a year before she died in 1776. He married Frances Witherspoon, the daughter of Princeton president John Witherspoon in 1783. She died in childbirth the following year. In 1787, he married Martha Laurens, the daughter of Henry Laurens. This marriage lasted twenty five years. Ramsay, I, fn 25, xxvi. Ramsay included Tennent with such American luminaries as John and Samuel Adams, John Dickinson, William Henry Drayton, Benjamin Franklin, and James Otis.

\textsuperscript{54} Brinsfield, 185; Coleman, 57-9. Their respective roles in the provincial government will be examined in chapter four.
Though he argued forcefully for the constitutional rights of the colonists, he repeatedly couched his language referring to the mother country in terms of deep respect. The American colonists were Britons and should never forget the well-spring from which their political blessings flowed. From his earliest writings, he defended the rights of the colonists to call attention to the usurpations of Parliament, but he refused to countenance independence. For Zubly, a “good Christian must be a good subject.” Tennent, on the other hand, used much more strident language in his attacks on the ministry. Loaded political phrases marked the more radical nature of his protest. Repeatedly, he referred to the “tyranny,” “oppression,” and “corruption” of the ministry. Though Zubly mentioned the prospect of “enslavement,” Tennent saw this as the aim of the mother country and used the words “enlave,” “enslavement,” and “slavery” much more frequently in his writings. Zubly worried about an “arbitrary Sovereign” or “a bad ruler,” but Tennent compared British leaders to “Turkish despots” intent on the subjugation of the colonies. Zubly contemplated the possibility of a “mother’s sword thrust into her own bowels,” but Tennent viewed the ability to wield the sword as a prerequisite for colonial appointment and attacked forcefully the presence of a standing British army in the colonies.

It is interesting to observe that these evangelicals viewed political enslavement as the worst of evils while making little comment regarding the presence of chattel slavery in their midst. Indeed, Zubly was a prominent slaveholder. Many evangelicals in the Deep South owned slaves, but they do not appear to have been overcome with any sense of the hypocrisy of yelping for liberty while holding others in bondage. This is in decided contrast with the rising sense of discomfort that was beginning to shake the consciences of other colonists from the Chesapeake to New England. As to why this was the case among
evangelicals in the Deep South, the record remains mostly silent. It is clear, however, that these evangelical leaders delineated between what they believed to be the political subjugation of constitutional rights by an arbitrary government and the culturally accepted enslavement of non-citizens as property.\(^{55}\)

Though much of his political ideology sprang from opposition thought, Zubly refused to be described as a “republican.” He believed “a Republican Government…little better than a Government of Devils.”\(^{56}\) This opinion was not shared by Tennent or the vast majority of evangelicals in the Deep South. When the constitutional crises came to a head in 1775 and 1776, Zubly’s opposition to Great Britain melted in the face of the growing heat of the conflict. The vast majority of evangelicals in South Carolina and Georgia, including Tennent, joined the patriot side. Supplying arms, supplies, and ideas, evangelicals warmed to the Revolution and relished the political and religious possibilities successful prosecution of the war lay before them.

\(^{55}\) Samuel Johnson, *Political Writings*, ed. Donald J. Greene (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 454; Bailyn, 232-45; John Phillip Reid, *The Concept of Liberty in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 47-54, 91-7. The one notable exception to this silence on the evil of slavery among evangelicals in South Carolina was Elhanan Winchester who pastored the Welsh Neck Baptist Church from 1774 to 1779. He thought slavery wrong and actively ministered to black slaves. This resulted in the conversion of many and the establishment of a large black church. He moved back north in 1779 and became a Universalist.

\(^{56}\) Miller, 15.
Chapter 4

“Piety and Political Safety:” Evangelical Effort in the Establishment of Provincial Government

The simmering constitutional feud between Great Britain and her American colonies erupted in open warfare in April 1775. Colonists were faced with several choices. They could acquiesce to the demands of the British ministry, continue to seek compromise and reconciliation, or remain firm in their demands for recognition by the ministry of their constitutional demands regardless of the cost for doing so. In South Carolina and Georgia, colonial leaders not appointed by the Crown refused to give up the fight for their liberties. However, a split arose between moderate and radical proponents of colonial rights. Moderate voices continued the fight for constitutional liberties but urged continued attempts at reconciliation. More radical colonial leaders, though not yet advocates of independence, began the process of consolidating colonial resistance to the British government spurred by the bloodletting at Lexington and Concord. Formal battle lines had not yet been drawn, but these leaders wanted to produce a unified front if, indeed, the British ministry decided that war was the only means to retain the wayward colonies.

Unifying the divergent groups that called South Carolina and Georgia home did not promise to be an easy task. In fact, complete unity was never accomplished throughout the Revolution. Key religious groups, principally Quakers and German Lutherans, sought to maintain neutrality during the ordeal and resisted attempts by more radical leaders to bring them into the fold. However, evangelical settlers, the largest group in the backcountry of both colonies, almost universally rallied to the patriot cause. The provincial government of
South Carolina, aided by key evangelical voices, took special pains to win over these settlers in the early stages of the conflict. These efforts were handsomely rewarded when these evangelicals became the bulwark of patriot resistance in the latter stages of the Revolution. In Georgia, evangelicals hesitated only slightly before offering their aid to the patriot cause. Once offered, they, with the notable exception of Zubly, served the revolutionary forces until most were driven out by the British.

It is impossible to understand the importance of religion and religious ideology in galvanizing support for the patriot cause if viewed only through eyes steeped in a modern understanding of the separation of church and state and a modern culture which compartmentalizes public ideology and private religious belief. Provincial leaders did not operate with these conceptions in mind. Religion was an integral part of colonial life, and leaders of the revolutionary movement sought to use religion to garner as much support as possible for their cause. They steeped public addresses with religious language, eagerly called for days of public fasting and thanksgiving, mixed republican and religious injunctions against vice and corruption, and actively sought to equate the cause of the colonists with the cause of God.

It must be stressed that not all religious groups or ministers in South Carolina or Georgia rallied to the patriot cause. It is equally true that not all evangelicals decided that rebellion was the cause of God. However, the story of evangelicals in the two southernmost colonies reveals the efforts of patriot leaders to procure their aid and the almost universal support of evangelicals to the cause. Evangelicals were prominent players in the political society of the revolutionary Deep South. Evangelicals served as elected members in both provincial governments. Evangelical leaders throughout the backcountry urged support for
the establishment and proceedings of these provincial governments. Revolutionary leadership recognized the necessity of this vital contingent of the population, and evangelicals realized that their dreams regarding full religious liberty and the disestablishment of the Anglican Church found their brightest hopes of realization in the success of the provincial governments.

The use of religion by political leaders to procure support for the revolutionary cause followed three main courses of action. First, leaders, including moderate figures, highlighted the danger to religious liberty inherent in the passage of the Quebec Act. Catholicism was seen as a religion of tyranny, and Britain meant to extend its tyranny toward the colonies by the establishment of that religion on colonial borders. Second, political leaders stressed the involvement of God in the affairs of man. To that end, they declared public days of fasting, thanksgiving, and prayer. Failure to meet these demands was met with government censure and, in one case, the removal of an offending preacher. They implored the colonists to avoid vices and sins that might call down God’s righteous judgment. Revolutionary political leaders publicly pronounced that God was on the side of the colonists. Third, the provincial government in South Carolina specifically targeted evangelicals in an effort to win their support. Using evangelical leadership, provincial leaders authorized a paid junket into the backcountry to cement ties between dissenting settlers, most of whom were evangelical, and the new government.

Political reaction to the Quebec Act mirrored that of Tennent and Zubly. In South Carolina, William Henry Drayton believed that America would be consumed by “the flames which are lighted, blown up, and fed with Blood by the Roman Catholic doctrines;…doctrines which tend to establish a most cruel tyranny in Church and State.”
The bill threatened “the free Protestant English settlements.” The South Carolina assembly attacked George III for failing to protect the Protestant religion. Cartoons appeared showing the pope sitting between the king’s ministers, Lord North and Lord Grenville.¹ One elaborate display included a set of effigies in the likenesses of the king’s ministers, the pope, and the devil being pulled on a cart. The pope was sitting in “the chair of state” between the ministers with the devil standing behind the pope. When any Carolinian believed to support the British ministry passed, the cart would be wheeled in a manner that would produce a bow to that person by the pope with the devil leaning forward to strike the pope in the back of the head with a dart.² “A Protestant“ writing in the South Carolina and American General Gazette stated that “England is trying to raise an army of French and Irish Catholics to be used against America.” The writer pointed to the establishment of Catholicism in Grenada and Canada as means by which the ministry was trying to “establish popery and arbitrary power” through “raising Roman Catholic armies to butcher Protestants into subjection.”³

These views were in line with general colonial sentiment. The Second Continental Congress issued a series of grievances against the ministry which included a stinging attack against the Quebec Act. Warning against the subversion of religious liberty that the establishment of Catholicism in Quebec entailed, American leaders railed against the act as a British measure which “abolished [the] equitable system of English laws” and would lead to “tyranny” by establishing an alien religion on the borders of the Protestant colonies. South Carolinians reviewed this congressional proclamation in their provincial assembly

¹ Brinsfield, 180-2.
² Drayton, 226-7.
³ Brinsfield, 180-2.
during the week of January 11, 1775 and assented with its anti-Catholic stance.⁴ Those few Catholics who made South Carolina home were viewed with deepening suspicion. Catholics, it was decided, should not be allowed to bear arms lest they turn against the “Protestant interest.” At least two men, Lauglin Martin and James Dealey, were sentenced to be tarred, feathered, and banished from the colony by the provincial Congress in part for their adamant refusal to give up bearing arms as Catholics.⁵ Most early revolutionists viewed Catholicism as inimical to republican government due to its centralized and hierarchical structure and saw no difficulty in proclaiming support for Protestant religious liberty while proscribing it for Catholics.⁶

The provincial governments of South Carolina and Georgia also tried to cement patriotic sentiment by publicly proclaiming days of fasting and prayer. On January 17, 1775, the South Carolina provincial congress appointed February 17, 1775 as a day to be set aside for “fasting, humiliation, and prayer, before Almighty God.” The provincial congress proposed that all ministers throughout the colony “be requested to prepare and deliver suitable discourses upon this solemn occasion.” The legislators asked that God be petitioned “to inspire the King with true wisdom, to defend the people of North America in their just title to freedom, and to avert from them the calamities of civil war.” They also resolved that “every member of the present Congress, who may be in the town [Charleston]” should meet together at the assembly house and proceed to St. Philip’s Church to hear a sermon, requested by the congress, by Robert Smith, an Anglican

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⁴ William Edwin Hemphill and Wylma Anne Wates, *Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses of South Carolina, 1775-1776* (Columbia: South Carolina Archives Department, 1960), 11-8.
⁵ “Petition of Michael Hubart” in Drayton, 300-2.
⁶ For a concise discussion of colonial inability to reconcile Catholicism with republicanism see Colin Kidd, “Civil Theology and Church Establishments in Revolutionary America,” *The Historical Journal*, 42, No. 4 (December, 1999), 1016.
minister. Smith’s sermon pointed to the vanity of relying on human wisdom and actions. The legislature must not “become forgetful of him from whom our strength and wisdom are derived; and are then betrayed into that fatal security which ends in shame, in misery and ruin.” He sanctioned the work of the assembly for their “defense of [the colonist’s] undoubted rights.” The assembly later praised Smith for his “benevolent heart, and a real love of mankind; the good and welfare of whom, is the ultimate end of all institutions, religious as well as civil.”

Heightening tensions led to the call for more public observances of humiliation before God. On June 17, 1775, the congress set aside July 27, 1775 as another day of fasting and prayer. Again, ministers throughout South Carolina were ordered to preach “suitable sermons” and use “suitable prayers” for the occasion. Suitable prayers entailed a plea for God’s “favor to this oppressed Country, and success upon all endeavors for the security of the liberties of the American Colonies.” Parishioners who attended these services in St. Philip’s and St. Michael’s parishes in Charleston were to come armed.

On April 10, 1776, the South Carolina assembly appointed a committee to request from the president of the colony, John Rutledge, another “Day of Solemn Fasting, Prayer, and Humiliation.” Colonel Charles Pinckney and Tennent prepared the request. This request recognized the government’s “Dependence upon the Supreme Ruler of all Events” and the need for gratitude “for the many signal Interpositions of Heaven in favor of American Liberty in general and of this colony in particular.” This proclamation echoed the earlier calls for suitable prayers and sermons, for thanksgiving for God’s goodness, and

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7 Hemphill and Wates, 29-30. Robert Smith had been elected to represent the parish of St. Thomas and St. Denis, but he declined to serve initially. Ibid., 73, 81.
8 Willbanks, 20-1.
9 Hemphill and Wates, 52, 58.
for supplication for God’s aid in protecting liberty. However, it, perhaps due to Tennent’s influence, called specifically for every person of every denomination to “confess and deplore the Sins against Almighty God” and to ask “that he would Aid and bless the present Constitutional Authority of this Colony.” Rutledge issued this proclamation, and several more days were observed during the course of the Revolution.\textsuperscript{10}

These religious observations did not pass unnoticed by South Carolina’s royal authorities. Noting the general attitude of the colonists to be “adverse” to England, Lieutenant Governor William Bull wrote the Earl of Dartmouth describing the fervor with which the colonists observed one of these occasions. The fast day of February 17, 1775 “being the day appointed by the [Continental] Congress for a general fast,…had been observed with great strictness throughout the Provinces, several of the clergy had shown a most rigid compliance to the order and suited their pulpit declamations to the temper of the times.”\textsuperscript{11}

South Carolina’s provincial congress did not limit itself to religious observations on fast days only. Between June 4, 1775 and March 10, 1776, Paul Turquand, the rector of St. Matthew’s Parish and an elected member of the congress, preached seven sermons to the congressmen gathered for Sunday legislative business. The provincial records reveal that Turquand was requested to perform “divine service in [the] provincial Congress” and that official congressional gratitude was extended to him and other ministers who performed the services. Tennent also led congress in worship on February 11, 1776 despite

\textsuperscript{10} A.S. Salley, \textit{Journal of General Assembly of South Carolina, March 26, 1776-April 11, 1776} (Columbia: The Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1906), 61-3. The particular reason given for God’s help in South Carolina was “the late happy Establishment of a Constitution of Government.” The Constitution of 1776 had been passed on March 26, 1776.

his non-establishment credentials.\(^{12}\)

Government directives and the speeches of leading South Carolinians show an attempt to link the cause of the colonies with that of righteousness. “A Circular Letter to the Committees of the Several Districts and Parishes of South Carolina” issued from Charleston on June 30, 1775, placed most of the blame for the current political situation on the British. “The measure of their iniquity appears now full. They seem fixed in the pursuit of their plan to enslave America…But, Divine Providence has inspired the Americans with such virtue, courage, and conduct, as has already attracted the attention of the universe.” It reminded the people to observe the coming fast day in order to “obtain pardon for our past offences, and to procure the favor of Heaven.” As to whom God supported, the authors had little doubt. “On one side stand our unfortunate and deceived Sovereign-his ministers of State-the profligate part of the nobility-and the corrupt majority of the House of Commons…On our side, the favor of the Almighty stands confessed.”\(^{13}\) John Rutledge, president of South Carolina in 1776, reiterated these sentiments in a speech given before both house of the legislature on April 11, 1776. He promised to uphold “our laws and religion and the liberties of America…to the utmost of my power.” British measures, which he termed as “impious,” meant to cut off Americans from “the bounty of the Creator and to “compel [the colonists]…by famine, to surrender their rights, will seem to call for Divine vengeance.” God might allow devastation into South Carolina, but Rutledge was convinced that men “will do their duty” in the defense of their natural rights “submitting them with humble confidence to the omniscient and omnipotent Arbiter and Director of the

\(^{12}\) Hemphill and Wates, xxiv, 21, 36-7, 46, 118, 137, 184, 195, 210, 228.

fate of Empires, and trusting that his Almighty arm, which has been so signally stretched out for our defense, will deliver them in a righteous cause.”

William Henry Drayton, attorney general for the province, encompassed many of the religious themes animating South Carolina’s provincial government in a speech delivered to the grand jury meeting in Charleston. On April 23, 1776, he reminded the jurors that British measures, by breaking the original contract of government by removal of protection, had forced Carolinians to resume the protective powers of government once delegated to the Crown. Thanks should be given to the “Divine Ruler of human events” for such a “wise” and “virtuous” constitution, but it was their duty to enforce its wisdom. “We cannot but declare we think every opposition to its operations…the foulest criminality a mortal can be guilty of, highly offensive in the eyes of God…We think it a sacred duty incumbent upon every citizen to maintain and defend with his life and fortune, what is give and entrusted to him by the hand of Providence.” Drayton proceeded to unleash a furious assault on the king and call the colonists to independence. The king and his ministry had deprived “whole colonies of the bounty of Providence…in order to coerce them by famine.” He had established “in Quebec, the Roman Catholic Religion, and an arbitrary government; instead of the Protestant Religion and a free government.” After illustrating British evil, Drayton repeated that God had demonstrated his favor toward the colonists through “miraculous success in the present war” God, “the Almighty Constructor of the Universe“ was using the “tyranny of the British rulers“ to bring all the bounty of America

14 “The President’s Speech to Both Houses, April 11, 1776” in Ibid., 273-5. The oath of the President of South Carolina included the following phrase: “and to the utmost of my Power maintain and defend the Laws of God, the Protestant Religion, and the Liberties of America, SO HELP ME GOD,” in “An Ordinance for Establishing and Oath of Office, to be taken in manner therein mentioned. Passed the 6th Day of April 1776” South Carolina, Laws, Statutes, etc., (Charleston: 1776) 4. Rutledge was no firebrand. He belonged to the more moderate faction of South Carolina’s revolutionary politicians that included Colonel Charles Pinckney, Henry Laurens, Arthur Middleton, and Rawlins Lowndes. Eventually, all moved to support American independence in Brinsfield, 183-4.
together to form the world’s “pre-eminent“ nation. All this demonstrated “that the Lord of Hosts is on our side!” Drayton unabashedly declared that “the Almighty created America, to be independent of Britain. Let us beware, of being backward to act as instruments in the Almighty hand, now extended to accomplish his purpose.” God’s hand and American “virtue” would seal God’s plan. “In a word, our piety and political safety are so blended, that to refuse our labors in this divine work, is to refuse to be a great, a free, a pious and a happy people.” Drayton presented the jury two alternatives, “political happiness or wretchedness under God.” “I pray the supreme Arbiter of the affairs of men, so to direct your judgment, as that you may act agreeable to what seems to be his will, revealed in his miraculous works in behalf of America, bleeding at the altar of liberty.”

15 “Drayton’s Speech to the Grand Jury,” in Ibid., 277-89; Drayton, 259-74. Particular quotes are from 262, 264, and 274. Drayton’s speech highlights the views of the more radical faction in South Carolina’s early revolutionary politics. Drayton was an Anglican, but he was a friend and ally of Tennent.

16 “Letter from Henry Laurens to John Laurens,” September 26, 1775, in Salley, 78; “Letter from Peter Timothy to Mr. Drayton,” August 22, 1775, in Gibbes, 155-6. Timothy’s letter stated that “Pinckney does not retreat, he comes forward bravely—wish you and Mr. Tennent were along side him at the table.”


Tennent, who had been elected to the Second Provincial Congress, was one of a group of more radical representatives who pressed for action in the conflict with Britain. Though dominated by low country subscribers to the Church of England, the provincial congress recognized that the South Carolina backcountry, peopled mostly by dissenters, was of key significance to a unified stand against the policies of Great Britain. To encourage unity, a committee of intelligence was formed to “correspond with, and communicate to the Inhabitants of the Interior and back Parts of this Colony, every kind pf necessary Information.” Tennent was a member of this committee. Later, the provincial Council of Safety ordered that an expedition, headed by William Henry Drayton and Tennent be sent into the backcountry to “explain to the people the causes of the present
dispute between Great Britain and the American colonies.” Tennent seemed a proper choice because of his occupation as a dissenting minister. The goals of the expedition, scheduled for August 1775, were “to settle all political disputes between the people to quiet their minds and to enforce the necessity of a general union in order to preserve themselves and their children from slavery.” Drayton and Tennent were to gain the signatures of backcountry settlers to the Continental Congress’s Association proclamation. The Association was an attempt by Congress to force Great Britain to repeal the Coercive Acts by unified colonial non-importation. To aid in the recruitment of backcountry Baptists, the Council of Safety ordered Oliver Hart, known in Charleston for his ardent patriotism, to join the mission. The Council believed that Hart’s presence “in the western and northern frontiers of this colony may be of great service by explaining to the inhabitants, in a proper and true light, the nature of the present dispute unhappily subsisting between Great Britain and the American colonies.” Hart’s acquiescence to this request would “be esteemed by the Council of Safety as an instance of your zeal in the public service, when the aid of every freeman and lover of constitutional liberty is loudly called for.” Two German speaking emissaries were also included to help with translation during meetings with German settlers. Drayton, Tennent, and Hart met for planning near the Congarees before splitting up to cover more ground. They decided to meet at certain stages during the mission.

Church meetinghouses served as a primary target for the endeavor. Tennent and Hart crisscrossed northwestern and central South Carolina, delivering addresses to settlers

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18 Ibid., 105-7.
20 Weir, Colonial South Carolina, 323-4.
gathered at Presbyterian meeting houses at Jackson Creek, Union, Rocky Creek, Beersheba, Thicketty, Ninety Six, Little River, Long Cane Creek, Bull Town, and Duncan’s Creek. Six Baptist churches were visited at Rock Creek, Congaree, Fairforest, Lawson's Fork, Raeburn’s Creek, and Enoree.¹² Both the diaries of Tennent and Hart reveal they combined preaching and political discourse in their stops in the backcountry.

Tennent preached to both church groups and local militia companies. On August 11, Tennent delivered a one hour sermon at Jackson’s Creek before launching into his political mission. Initially the majority resisted the provincial request, but most signed the Association. Tennent found the meetings at Rocky Creek, Beersheba, and Thicketty receptive to his message and most signed. On August 25, he preached to “a large and concerned audience.” After a brief intermission, he delivered a long harangue on the political reasons for his mission to the “attentive” crowd. Two days later, Tennent preached in the meeting house at Ninety Six. The audience then enjoyed political addresses by both Drayton and Tennent. On August 29, he returned to Little River to hear Hart deliver a “good” sermon which “concluded with a touch of the times.” Tennent believed his return to Little River was “providential,” because opponents of the provincial congress had gathered to “browbeat” Hart. Tennent claimed he “took the storm upon myself and did some good.” Tennent moved, August 31, from Little River to Boonesborough, in the Long Cane district and delivered a sermon and political speech. Tennent was bolstered in this meeting by the arrival of Hart, John Harris, another Presbyterian minister and member of the provincial congress, and Francis Salvador, a Jew who represented the Ninety Six district in the provincial congress. On September 2, he preached to a group of mostly made up of

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“Opposers.” After his sermon, the crowd, the largest he had seen on the mission, listened as he “gave them a Discourse upon the American Dispute of nearly three hours.” He then debated a loyalist leader, and many who had signed a loyalist association now came to sign the Association.\footnote{“William Tennent Diary of Backcountry Mission” in William Tennent Papers, SCL.}

Tennent did not restrict his activity to preaching. While he rode between meetings, Tennent surveyed the countryside looking for areas that would be suitable for further settlement and manufacturing. Tennent served on several committees in the provincial congress relating to manufacturing including those charged with the procurement of gunpowder, salt petre, paper, and file production.\footnote{“A Fragment of the Journal…William Tennent” in Gibbes, 233; Hemphill and Wates, 150, 186, 222, 244.} Tennent was also involved in preparing patriot forces for possible attacks by loyalists. On hearing of a plot against Ft. Charlotte (about 40 miles northwest of Augusta on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River), he inspected the fort, on September 3, surveying its “fortifications, magazine, stores, ordinances, and barracks.” He ordered necessary repairs, the mounting of artillery, and the removal of the horses from the fort. Tennent also encouraged its defenders and prayed with them before heading to Augusta. In Georgia, he met with George Walton, a member of Georgia’s Council of Safety. After spending several days in the Augusta area and meeting with Drayton to discuss the possibility of impending conflict with loyalist forces in the South Carolina backcountry, he headed for Charleston to give the Council of Safety the results of the mission and inform them of the approaching conflict.\footnote{“William Tennent Diary” in SCL.}

Oliver Hart left Charleston on July 31, 1775 on his mission “to reconcile a number of the Inhabitants who are disaffected to Government.”\footnote{Oliver Hart Papers, 132, in SCL.} Hart conducted services at both
Baptist and Presbyterian meeting houses. On August 6, he spoke at Congaree Baptist Church, a group started by Separates, “to a good congregation” and “took the Liberty to apply ye Subject [of the] times.” Hart convinced Joseph Reese, the pastor of Congarees Baptist, to accompany him on the mission. On the August 9, he spoke to a group of Baptists gathered in a home at the fork of the Broad and Saluda Rivers. “I took Occasion to speak on the State of nation[al] affairs; they heard with Attention, and I was told one opposer was convinced and sharply reproved one who quarreled with the Sermon.” Hart and Reese moved northwest into the Fairforest region and met with Philip Mulkey, the founder of the Separates in South Carolina. They stayed over a week meeting with various groups trying to convince them of the justice of the American cause.27

Mulkey was a man of loyalist leanings. His property adjoined that of loyalist militia leader Thomas Fletchall, a man who gave Tennent and Drayton much grief on their mission.28 Upon arriving at Mulkey’s on August 10, Hart “found that He [Mulkey] rather sides with ministerial Measures, and is against those adopted by the country, Although He professes Himself difficulted about these Things.” Most in the region sided with the king’s measures, according to Hart. Neighbors of Mulkey came to hear Hart, but when he attempted to engage them in debate “no argument on the contrary side [that of the provincial congress] seemed to have any Weight with them.” After Hart preached a sermon on August 11, “Mr. Rees[e] conversed with several about ye State of our national Concerns, who seemed to be extremely obstinate, on the Ministers side.” One even expressed his personal wish that the British might kill 1,000 citizens of Boston in battle.

27 “Diary- 31 July 6 September 1775-Backcountry Mission,” in Oliver Hart Papers, SCL.
28 Owens, Back-Country Commission, 9-13. Fletchall declared that he would never take up arms against the king. Nevertheless, he scheduled his militia regiment to hear Drayton and Tennent.
“On the whole, they appear to be obstinate and irritated to an Extreme.”

The next day, Reese preached a sermon before he and Hart engaged Fletchall in discussion over political matters. A crowd gathered and supported Fletchall. Hart voiced his concern in his diary. “Upon the Whole there appears but little Reason, as yet, to hope that these People will be brought to have a suitable Regard to ye interests of America. I wish their Eyes may be opened before it is too late.” On August 13, both Hart and Reese preached to Mulkey’s congregation. They were joined that day by John Newton, another Baptist whom Hart had invited to join the mission. Newton brought disturbing news that civil war amongst backcountry settlers appeared to be a real possibility.

Hart and Reese attended a meeting of Fairforest inhabitants the next day. Rumors of a British invasion of Charleston flew, and most in the audience displayed little inclination to aid the low country. Hart worried about his city and his family. He returned to Mulkey’s where he allowed, perhaps out of Christian charity or with an eye to win over Mulkey, the Separate minister to wash his feet, a practice that Hart and Regulars did not follow. On August 15, Hart met with Drayton and Tennent. The next day he left Mulkey’s to lodge with Nehemiah Howard, another Baptist. Howard seemed “to be more considerate about national affairs than anyone…in these parts; He seems sensible of our oppressions and of the necessity of resisting ministerial measures.” Hart wished “all the Inhabitants were like-minded.”

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29 Oliver Hart, “Oliver Hart’s Diary of the Journey to the Back-Country,” eds. J. Glennwood Clayton and Loulie Latimer Owens, JSCBHS I, (November 1975), 20-1. Though Mulkey and many in his congregation exhibited strong loyalty to the king, at least two of his assistants, Thacker Vivian and William Wood, eventually served the patriot cause in Compton, 50. Tennent also ran into some difficulty with a few Baptists near King’s Mountain. He mentioned two “gainsaying Baptists” who persuaded a large contingent of backcountry settlers not to sign the Association in “Fragment of Journal” in Gibbes, 229. It is possible that one of these men might have been Mulkey.


31 Ibid., 21-2.
On August 17, Hart joined Drayton and Tennent for a meeting with loyalists Fletchall, Thomas Brown, and Patrick Cunningham. The next day, he left Howard’s and breakfasted with Mulkey before heading northwest to Lawson’s Fork. Here he found a more receptive audience. On Sunday, August 20, he preached to a small Baptist gathering and baptized a new convert. The next day, the congressional delegation hosted a barbecue at Captain Benjamin Wofford’s house. Reese opened the festivities with singing and a prayer before Drayton spoke to the militia men about “the state of affairs in the nation.” Close to seventy men signed the Association.\textsuperscript{32}

Drayton, Tennent, and Hart next met with Fletchall’s militia company. Few showed up, but tensions between the loyalists and Drayton almost erupted in bloodshed. Drayton and Tennent only gained 60 signatures from Fletchall’s regiment. Hart and Reese left the gathering and headed southeast to stay with a Baptist family on Duncan’s Creek. There they met Thomas Norris, a Separate minister ordained by Mulkey and Marshall. Both men preached to Norris’ congregation, but Norris forbade Hart from saying “anything about national affairs.” Hart spent August 24 attempting to convince Norris “of the utility of standing up for liberty.” Norris agreed to introduce Reese to other Baptist settlers in the vicinity. Reese took the opportunity “to converse with people about ye main concern” of the mission. Norris, however, seems to have maintained his stance of conscientious objection.\textsuperscript{33}

The next Sunday, August 27, Hart and Reese traveled to the Presbyterian meeting house on Duncan’s Creek. Though Hart and Reese were Baptists, the church elders agreed to allow them both to speak. Hart’s text was Mark 1:15, “Repent ye and believe the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 23-4.
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Gospel.” After preaching, Reese left Hart to head back to Congarees. Hart spoke next at the Presbyterian meeting house on Little River pastored by James Creswell, an ardent patriot. Tennent arrived to hear his sermon. At the close of his sermon, he “spoke a little to the public concerns of the times.” Tennent then answered “many objections,” and Hart left hoping that “some good was done.” Hart moved on to Toms Creek where he caught up with Reese. Here he delivered his final recorded sermon on the backcountry mission.  

Hart, Reese, and Newton were not the only Baptists engaged in the effort to swing South Carolina’s backcountry over to the patriot cause. Richard Furman “took an early and decided stand in favor of liberty and the measures of Congress.” Furman was not part of the official mission into the backcountry, but he spoke with Hart on one occasion to a group of militia. Though initially minded to hand the two over to authorities, the loyalist leader of the group, with his company, decided to join the patriot cause. Furman also visited the settlements around his church at the High Hills of Santee trying to promote the measures of Congress. Furman made his greatest contribution to the backcountry mission in the form of address he prepared to be read by Colonel Richard Richardson, leader of the militia group accompanying the mission and which scattered loyalist troops at the confrontation at Ninety-Six, to settlers between the Broad and Saluda Rivers. In his address, Furman aimed a blow at the Declaratory Act. Colonists did not object to the “rightful power of the King, not the lawful power of any of his officer.” They did, however, oppose the “right to bind Americans in all cases whatsoever.” Furman continued by stating that “submitting” to the taxes handed down by the British ministry would be acquiescence in the enslavement of the colonists. Furman railed against the Quebec Act. He believed that an “Arbitrary and

34 Ibid., 24-7.
Tyrannick government” passed the act to create a Canadian force “always ready to bring
down on the back of the other colonies should they oppose the designs of Parliament to
subdue them.” He urged his fellow South Carolinians to “join in with the great body of
America: and as a friend with friend, endeavor to promote the good of the Whole.” Furman
stated that God might use those who did not join to punish the “sins” of the colonists, but
“divine vengeance” might be returned upon those who did not make common cause with
their neighbors. Furman, like most South Carolinians, was not yet ready for independence.
The colonists “opposed the things that are wrong, which his Majesty has consented to, yet
as they believe him blinded by his Minister, they do not eject him as their King, but desire
that he should reign over them.36 Furman later preached a sermon against loyalists for
refusing to come to the aid of their fellow citizens in the face of the mighty British army.37

The ultimate success of the mission is difficult to ascertain. Drayton, Tennent, and
Hart all believed that some good had come of the mission. Royal authorities, however,
thought it an utter failure. Governor William Campbell, in a letter to Lord Dartmouth,
wrote that two “of the principal incendiaries, William Henry Drayton, and one Tennent, a
clergyman, were sent sometime ago to poison the minds of the poor ignorant People in the
back part of the Province, but succeeded so badly” that they had to resort to “force what
they could not accomplish by threats, bribes or persuasion.”38 A tentative treaty between
Drayton and Fletchall had been signed on September 16, 1775 in the presence of Philip

36 “Furman’s Address to the Inhabitants of South Carolina, who resided between Broad & Saludy Rivers, at
the time they were embodying in the year 1775 in opposition to the American Congress,” in William E.
Pauley, “Religion and The American Revolution in the South: 1750-1781” (Dissertation: Emory
University, 1974), 87, 90-1, 93, 96, 99-100.
37 Brinsfield, 220. The sermon was taken from Judges 5:23. “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord,
curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord
against the mighty.” Furman used this quote from the song of Deborah after the defeat of Sisera.
38 “Letter from Governor William Campbell to the Earl of Dartmouth,” August 31, 1775 in Brinsfield, 214.
Mulkey. The provincial government did eventually back its commitment to holding the backcountry by sending a militia force, led by Colonel Richardson, to disarm the loyalist threat, and the backcountry maintained a fragile peace until the British invasion in 1780. It is very possible that the work of the backcountry mission convinced enough people to muster against the loyalists to prevent the loss of the backcountry. Evangelicals played a pivotal role in that work. Both Tennent and Hart received official thanks for their “important services…rendered to this colony” from the provincial congress for their work in the backcountry.”

This mission intertwined evangelicals and the politics of revolutionary South Carolina in an unprecedented way. The provincial government sought to utilize evangelicals to foster evangelical support for its stance against Great Britain. It is true that this was self-serving to the interests of the provincial government, but this cooperation highlights the fact that evangelicals were not outcasts in South Carolina society. It is also true that some Separates, most notably Philip Mulkey, did not join the patriot cause, but members of his congregation did. Mulkey’s presence with Fletchall’s company at the negotiations between the provincial delegation and backcountry loyalist leaders does illustrate again that Separates in South Carolina were not above involvement in the political questions of the day. The expedition illustrates vividly that many Separate and Regular Baptists enjoyed close communion. Many leading South Carolina Separates, including Joseph Reese and Richard Furman, decided not to eschew politics and joined with their Regular brethren to espouse the American cause.

In Georgia, the role religion played in the early stages of the conflict mirrored that

39 Drayton, Memoirs, 399-403.
40 Hemphill and Wates, 167.
of South Carolina. The Quebec Act engendered some uproar. The provincial government attempted to persuade Georgians that God was on their side against the sinful measures of the British ministry and sought unified resistance. Fast day sermons and public proclamations interjected the role of God on numerous occasions. Georgia differed slightly in that Zubly staunchly maintained his unwillingness to separate from Britain. Zubly played a large role in preparing proclamations and preached the opening sermon of the July 1775 session to the legislators. Though evidence of his strong attachment to colonial constitutional rights remained, signs of his future inability to break with Britain are clearly visible.

As the colonies careened toward open warfare with Great Britain, various groups of Georgia citizens issued proclamations defending the rights of the colonists. A gathering at Tondee’s Tavern in Savannah on August 10, 1774 drafted a petition sent throughout the colony declaring they would “by every lawful means in our power maintain” the blessings “for which we are indebted to God and the Constitution of our country.” In Darien, a committee of colonists, on January 23, 1775, drew up a list of grievances against the British ministry. Describing Britain as a “merciless oppressor,” this group described the American colonies as “a new world” opened to them by “a kind Providence.” They railed against the placemen in Parliament, slavery, and luxury. In the provincial congress in January 1775, a resolution was passed attacking the presence of a British standing army and the Quebec Act for “establishing the Roman Catholic Religion in the Province of Quebec,…, and erecting a tyranny there, to the great danger from so total a dissimilarity of religion, law and government to the neighboring British Colonies, by the assistance of
whose blood and treasure the said country was conquered from France.”

Georgia’s provincial government also utilized religion in the forms of congressional sermons, fast day observances, and governmental proclamations. On July 5, 1775, the provincial congress motioned for and approved an appeal to Governor James Wright “requesting him to appoint a day of Fasting and Prayer throughout this province, on account of the disputes subsisting between America and the parent state.” A message, composed by a committee which included Zubly, was sent to the governor requesting the fast day in hopes “for a happy reconciliation…under the auspicious reign of his Majesty, and his descendants” that would allow the empire to “remain united, free, virtuous, and happy, till time shall be no more.” Governor Wright responded that he thought the call for a day of prayer “unconstitutional,” but he would appoint a day of fasting because the appeal was written in “loyal and dutiful terms, and the end proposed being such as every good man must ardently wish.” The provincial congress thanked Wright for appointing the “Day of Humiliation.”

The events surrounding the observance of this fast day show the heightened politicization of religion in Georgia during this time. The provincial congress asked that Wright declare Wednesday, July 19 as the recognized day of fasting. After he concurred, information from the Continental Congress arrived in Georgia stating that the proper fast day was actually to be observed the day after the one set by the governor. Haddon Smith, the rector of Christ Church since 1774, was a staunch royalist who had written, under the pseudonym Mercurious, several articles in the Georgia Gazette defending the Intolerable

42 Ibid., 147-8, 240-1, 258. Wright considered the request unconstitutional because it emanated from the extralegal provincial government.
43 “Address of the Committee Appointed by the Provincial Congress, Savannah, July 25, 1775,” in Ibid., 260-2.
Acts, criticizing colonial destruction of property, and highlighting the unconstitutionality of colonial non-importation agreements.\textsuperscript{44} When the congressional representative, Steven Biddulph, approached him asking that he preach a second sermon on the day appointed by the Continental Congress, he refused. He stated that “nothing hurts me more than being under the disagreeable Necessity of refusing any Thing that is politely requested of me; but, as a Clergyman of the Church of England, I think myself bound in Conscience not to do anything of a public nature without the express Authority of my lawful Superior.” Biddulph pressed the matter, but Smith refused to acquiesce. Biddulph informed Smith “that we think it neither will be decent or safe for you to stand in opposition to the People of this Country and the united Voice of America.” Smith responded that he was sorry his reasons were not accepted by the provincial congress, but he would not preach because those reasons were “his real sentiments.”\textsuperscript{45} In the face of his refusal, the provincial congress censured Smith on July 17, three days before the sermon was scheduled to be preached.\textsuperscript{46}

Smith’s refusal cost him his post as rector of Christ Church. On July 22, members of the Council of Safety met Smith at Christ Church. Reading from a prepared document, they told Smith that his “late Conduct in Disobeying the Orders of the Congress” made him “an Enemy to America; and by order of the Committee we are to inform you, that you are to be suffered no longer to officiate in the Town.” The sexton of the church was informed not to deliver the key to the front door to Smith, and a carpenter was dispatched to change the lock on the back door, effectively blocking Smith from carrying out his duties as

\textsuperscript{44} Strickland, 146.
\textsuperscript{45} Henry T. Malone, The Episcopal Church in Georgia, 1733-1957 (Atlanta: The Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Atlanta, 1960), 40-1.
\textsuperscript{46} Candler, I, 258.
Smith feared further recriminations for his stance against the provincial congress. A young sailor by the name of John Hopkins had an unfortunate meeting with a patriot mob which resulted in his being tarred and feathered. Under deposition, Hopkins stated that members of the crowd declared “if they could lay hold of the Parson [Smith], they would put him along side of this Deponent in the Cart,” and “Mr. Smith should be next; and they intended to continue on until they had tarred and feathered all the Tories.” Smith promptly departed Savannah.48

Despite Smith’s refusal, the provincial congress was pleased with the overall observance of the fast days. A committee, including Zubly and a young radical by the name of George Walton, prepared an address to the “Inhabitants of the Province of Georgia” stating that “both days have been observed with a becoming solemnity, and we humbly hope many earnest prayers have been presented to the Father of Mercies…and that He has heard the cries of destitute, and will not despise their prayers.” The committee continued on to urge caution, “to promote frugality, peace and order, and in the practice of every social and religious duty, patiently to wait the return of that happy day” when peace and prosperity returned to the land.49

Georgia’s revolutionary government also sought to curb behaviors they thought were inimical to republican virtue and might lead to the judgment of God. On July 6, 1775, they passed, in a series of other resolutions, a measure aimed at promoting republican behavior while curbing displays of vice and luxury. Proper republicans needed to be frugal

48 Ibid; 42.
and industrious. The list of extravagant “dissipation[s]” included horse-racing, gaming, cock-fighting, plays, and the giving of scarves at funerals. Soon after receiving word of the Continental Congress’ Declaration of Independence, Georgia’s revolutionary government issued a proclamation urging citizens to mind their behavior during “the present awful Situation in the United States of America.” At this critical time, the president, with the advice of his council, called on “all good men to humble themselves before Almighty God, and to use their utmost endeavors so to conduct their lives and conversations, as to conciliate the divine favor and Protection.” The proclamation declared the practice of allowing slaves to buy and sell goods on Sunday “disregarded and profaned” the “Lord’s day.” Everywhere could be heard the sound of “profane swearing and blaspheming,” even on Sunday, “to the great Offense of Almighty God.” In light of the prevalence of these “heinous Offenses,” the president, Archibald Bulloch, “strictly” required all “civil Officers to do their utmost to preserve the Public Peace” and to provide “exemplary” punishment for those who broke these laws.50

Zubly played a conspicuous role in Georgia’s revolutionary movement during 1775. Before the provincial government met in July, Zubly met with other leaders who resolved to send through the provincial congress “a humble, dutiful and decent petition…to his Majesty.” When the provincial congress convened on July 4, 1775, they adjourned to Zubly’s meeting house to hear him preach a sermon “on the alarming state of American affairs.” On returning to the assembly, “a motion was made and seconded, that the thanks of this Congress be given to the Rev. Dr. Zubly, for the excellent sermon he preached this day to the members, which being unanimously agreed to it was ordered.”51 While serving

50 “A Proclamation, August 8, 1776” in Ibid., 298.
51 Candler, I, 229-32. The contents of his sermon will be discussed later in this chapter. Zubly was not the
in the provincial assembly, he was a member of four committees.\textsuperscript{52} He formulated plans for stimulating unity throughout Georgia against British measures. Zubly also bandied about different ideas about rights of suffrage.\textsuperscript{53} Most of his activities revolved around correspondence between the provincial congress and other government institutions. He kept the Continental Congress informed regarding the affairs of Georgia was on the committee charged with informing Georgians about the “nature of the dispute and proceedings of Parliament.” He evidently wrote the fast day address to Governor Wright. The provincial government agreed to send a petition to the king and ordered him to prepare the petition, a request to which he readily agreed. His petition was approved and passed on to the president for his signature.\textsuperscript{54}

Zubly’s petition attempted to remind the king of his position before God and his role as “father” to the American colonies. “We still hope that He by whom kings rule, and to whom monarchs are accountable, will incline you to pay some regard to our most humble and faithful representation.” “The blessings of Providence” and the “goodness of God” had granted to the king the vast territory of the American colonies. Despite these blessings, the king had allowed, through “the iniquitous designs of your ministers,” the establishment of “popery” in an attempt to “overawe your Majesty’s Ancient Protestant and loyal subjects.” The king’s army shed colonial blood “with pleasure rather than with pity” for the simple sin of “an irregular zeal for constitutional liberty.” The king’s ministers

\textsuperscript{52} Strickland, 143.
\textsuperscript{53} Zubly Letters in the Georgia Historical Society collection. Letter to Dr. Noble Wimberley Jones dated July 1775. Zubly called for an address to the people and contemplated South Carolina’s decision to allow all who paid a tax to vote for delegates. All subsequent reference to Georgia Historical Society collections will be abbreviated to GHS.
\textsuperscript{54} Candler, I, 241-3, 256-7.
had introduced “the demon of discord into your empire,” and Zubly hoped that the “goodness” of George III’s heart would “interpose between weak or wicked ministers” and restore to the colonists “the known principles our excellent Constitution.” If the king did so, he would find the colonists willing to sacrifice “the last shilling of our property, and the last drop of our blood in your service.” Zubly was unsure how the king might receive the petition, but he knew that the colonists could “unrestrained, apply to the great and merciful Sovereign of the whole earth, who will not despise the prayer of the oppressed.” To this end, he, along with the provincial congress, would “most ardently pray that, the wicked being removed from before the king, the king’s throne may be established in righteousness.” Archibald Bulloch, president of Georgia’s congress, affixed his signature to the petition on July 14, 1775.

The members of Georgia’s provincial congress recognized the efforts of Zubly by electing him to serve as one of Georgia’s delegates to the Continental Congress. Zubly “expressed his surprise at being chosen and said that he thought himself, for many reasons, a very improper person.” Nonetheless, his peers refused to renounce their choice of him. Zubly stated his willingness to go as long as his congregation gave him leave. Two members, John Houstoun and Noble Wimberley Jones, were sent to petition the members of Independent Church for the release of Zubly, so that he could represent Georgia. The church members “voted that they were willing to spare their minister for a time, for the good of the common cause.” Once released, Zubly agreed to the mission and “thanked the Congress for so signal a mark of honor and confidence.”

Zubly arrived in Philadelphia on August 12, 1775. He preached to a variety of church groups and met with many of the leading dissenting ministers, including William

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Ibid., 240-1, 248-9.
Tennent (the father of his friend in South Carolina) and John Witherspoon of Princeton.\textsuperscript{56} Everywhere around him, Zubly heard the voices of colonial discontent. “Everything I hear makes me wish and pray for a Speedy Reconciliation.” Zubly fulminated on a recent British bombardment and wondered if “this over needless Act of Severity” would “provoke the people to do something rash.” The people’s “zeal” was “honest,” but he feared it “may become very dangerous.” He commented on “the noble Spirit of the people” but hoped that spirit might be contained to “proper bounds.” Zubly breakfasted with Philip Livingston of New York who urged Zubly to “be attentive to the religious liberty of America and thought it probable that this was the design of Providence in my being sent to Congress.” Zubly met with John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress, who expressed his happiness that Georgia had joined the Congress. Zubly then took his place in Congress.\textsuperscript{57}

Zubly soon found himself battling the tide of independency that seemed to spring up in every conversation. “I made a point of it to…contradict and oppose every hint of a desire of Independency or of breaking our connection with Great Britain.” He poured out his fears in his diary. “A Separation from the Parent State I would dread as one of the greatest evils and should it ever be proposed will pray and fight against it.” Perhaps some “good men” might hold these views, but Zubly convinced himself that “good men do not always know what they are about.” He boasted to himself of his acquaintance with “republican Government,” but he believed republics to be “inherently evil,” and hoped he would never see the day independence “should be agitated.” It was this talk of independency which helped those in Great Britain, whom he derisively nicknamed “our friends,” give evil reports of the colonists. Hints of independence were “pernicious in the

\textsuperscript{56} Hawes, 35-7. Diary entries are August 12 and 17.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 37-40. Diary entries are August 17, 24, 25.
highest degree.” He feared for the colonies. “We are too haughty to look unto God,” and he worried that the delegates were underestimating the “great disadvantages” America faced in fighting Britain, “one of the greatest forces of the universe.” However, the talk of independence grew stronger in the Congress.58

For Zubly, the issue reached a boiling point in early November. “More talk of independence,” he scribbled in his diary. On November 3, writing in the third person, he described his actions in Congress. He “warmly opposed [independence]” and “said that if [a] Breach of [pe]ace and Separation was the Sense of [Congre]ss, it was time for himself to take himself home.” Christopher Gadsden, his erstwhile friend who had aided Zubly in the South Carolina assembly, rose to cry “agreed, agreed.” Zubly defended his right to speak, but, sensing little could be done, he left Philadelphia for Georgia a week later.59

It is in the context of this growing chorus for independence that we must examine Zubly’s published version of his Law of Liberty sermon. Published while in Philadelphia, Zubly made certain additions that reveal his struggle with the direction American resistance was taking.60 He evidently delivered the sermon more than once, for Zubly published the appendix, regarding the struggles of the Swiss to earn their liberties, of his sermon earlier in the year in Charleston. The appendix was so popular that it had sold out three editions.61 In the Philadelphia edition, Zubly added a special introduction to the Earl of Dartmouth hoping to appeal to the earl’s Christianity and stir him to aid the colonists. God heard the cries of the “oppressed.” In his address to the earl, Zubly maintained that the colonists rightly contended for their constitutional privileges and that the Declaratory Act

58 Ibid., 40, 42-3; Coleman, 92. Diary entries are September 16 and October 24.
59 Ibid., 44-5; “Zubly to the Honorable John Houstoun, November 1775” in Letters in GHS.
60 This is the sermon he preached before the opening of the provincial congress in Georgia in Candler, I, 229-32.
61 Hawes, 33. Peter Timothy, a member of Charleston’s radical clique, was the publisher. Diary entry is March 21, 1775.
reminded the Americans of “despotism.” According to the colonial view, Britain meant to “establish a [religious] hierarchy over them similar to that of the church of Rome in Canada” and to “stir up popish Canadians” against them. He continued to claim that the Americans wanted no part of independency but who, in their fight for liberty, were “not afraid to look regulars in the face.” The poor measures of the British ministry and the “cruelty and violence of administration” had augmented a force of colonists well-acquainted with the British constitution and willing to fight for the rights guaranteed by it. In their struggle against the “slavery” perceived from British actions, “DEATH OR FREEDOM” had become the “general motto” of the colonists. God may use the ministry to deprive Britain of her most valuable colonies, but he hoped the earl would allow himself to “be a happy instrument” in the hand of Providence to end “the present unnatural contest.” Though Zubly’s rhetoric had risen to the level of the more radical Tennent, he still hoped “GOD would blast every counsel and measure that may have a contrary tendency—that would separate Britain and America, whom God has joined together—that would abridge the rights, liberties and happiness of the nation, our rightful Sovereign (whom GOD ever preserve), or any of his subjects.”

The sermon itself rehashed most of Zubly’s earlier constitutional arguments. Though it is unnecessary now to repeat his arguments, Zubly made several statements to the assembly that reveal his inner conflict and demonstrated that his days as a spokesman for colonial rights were shortly to end. He was overjoyed that the assembly had taken the time to seek the mind of God by opening their session with a reflection upon scripture. Zubly exhorted the assembly to be “thoroughly convinced” that eternal judgment would come and reminded them to watch their deeds. He extolled the Christian religion and

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clearly stated that it “commands due respect and obedience to superiors, [but] no where requires a blind and unlimited obedience on the part of the subjects; nor does it vest any absolute and arbitrary power in the rulers.” Zubly contradicted any “that would support arbitrary power, and require an unlimited obedience.” Those who believed this would find no such “precepts…in the gospels.” In spite of these assurances, Zubly’s message soon revealed his own confusion.

Sometimes also our relative duties may seem to come in competition with one another, and we may hesitate in our own minds which for the present has the strongest call. We would fain obey our superiors, and yet we cannot think of giving up our natural, or civil and religious rights, nor acquiesce in or contribute to render our fellow-creatures or fellow-citizens slaves… We would willingly follow peace with all men, and yet would be very unwilling that others should take the advantage of a pacific disposition, to injure us in hopes of impunity. We would express duty, respect and obedience to the king, as supreme, and yet we would not wish to strengthen the hands of tyranny, nor call oppression lawful: In such a delicate situation it is a golden rule, “So to speak, and so to do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.

Zubly’s sermon then meandered to the necessity of relying upon God during times of trouble and called for a repentance of sins before returning to the source of his own confusion. The king was “supreme,” and “by our law the king can do no wrong.” While others were beginning to place as much blame on the king as upon the ministry, Zubly could not escape the hope “that when the truth of things, the tears of his suffering subjects, the distresses caused by Acts extremely ill advised, once reach his notice, a generous pity will force his heart, and that pity, when he feels it, will command redress.” Zubly urged his listeners to “never loose out of their sight that our interest lies in a perpetual connection with our mother country…let every step we take afford proof how greatly we esteem our mother country and that, to the wish of perpetual connection, we prefer this only consideration, that we may be virtuous and free.” Zubly stressed moderation and the folly of hasty measures before closing his sermon with an evangelical appeal. “Consider the
extreme absurdity of struggling for civil liberty, and to continue slaves to sin and lust.”

Zubly, possibility moved by the rising discussions of independence, included a brief synopsis of another sermon and his appendix on the Swiss at the end of the published Law of Liberty sermon. He urged those who believed that “every government has no further right than according to the laws and constitution of its respective country” to be “very careful nevertheless to obey, but for conscience sake, and under whatever grievances they may labor never to make use of any methods of redress unjust in themselves, nor of any remedies that may be worse than the disease.” Those of Zubly’s contemporaries who actually read the complete manuscript must have been puzzled by statements Zubly made in his Short and Concise Account of Switzerland and Liberty. He extolled the Swiss defense of their liberty against the arbitrary rule of the Hapsburgs. Zubly stated “it is more honorable to be defeated in the cause of virtue and justice, than to erect trophies to injustice and oppression.” The Swiss had been right in defending themselves and in doing so had won their liberty. “When attacked, they defended themselves with incredible bravery, and under every possible disadvantage resisted every attack and, at last, obliged their enemies not only to desist, but to declare them a free state.” For reasons only Zubly seemed to comprehend, the Swiss were justified in their martial defense of their liberties while he seemed to believe that Americans should give up their strivings before more blood was shed.

Passing through South Carolina on his way back home, Zubly heard of the battles already fought between patriots and loyalists around Ninety-Six. He lamented in his diary that only God’s mercy could avert “the evils that are come and coming.” By the time he

63 Ibid., 3, 13, 16-7, 19-20, 22, 24-5, 27.
64 “Partial Sermon added to Printing,” in Ibid., 32.
65 “Short and Concise Account (Swisserland and liberty)” in Ibid., 33, 41.
reached Georgia on December 14, 1775, Zubly had fallen under the suspicious eyes of those less reticent to meet the blows of Great Britain with reciprocal force. He had left Philadelphia under a cloud of suspicion regarding his correspondence with Governor Wright, a charge he denied until presented with damning evidence produced by radical leaders in Congress. It was rumored that the Continental Congress even sent someone to shadow him because they feared he meant to do the proceedings harm. His service to the American cause had come to an end.

Other evangelicals in Georgia, most notably the Separate and Regular Baptists, however, hesitated little before casting their lot with the patriot cause. Little is known about political activity by the Baptists during the years leading to the Revolution. However, at least two Separate Baptists joined the political debate in Georgia in 1774. Daniel Marshall and Saunders Walker signed a petition from “the inhabitants of Kiokee and Broad River” in St. Paul’s Parish dissenting to the Tondee Tavern proclamation. By 1775, many in the Kiokee region had switched their allegiance and endorsed both the provincial assembly and the Continental Congress. Baptists, who made up a sizeable portion of the population in this region, were “fairly unanimous in their support of the revolutionary movement.” Evidence of this switch, among the Separate Baptists, can be found in the ardent support Separate preachers supplied to the patriot cause. Of the eleven chaplains that served patriot forces in Georgia, five were Separates. These were Daniel Marshall, Abraham Marshall, Saunders Walker, Silas Mercer, and Alexander Scott. A

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66 Hawes, 49-50, 61. Diary entries are December 1 and 15.
67 Miller, 21; Ibid., xiv.
68 Candler, I, 22-4. The Tondee resolves, mentioned earlier in the chapter, stated that Georgia concurred with “every constitutional measure to obtain redress of American grievances.” The inhabitants of the backcountry, faced with the ever present threat of Indian trouble, did not wish to face this threat without British protection. They also objected to the fact that no backcountry representation was present during the drafting of the Tondee resolves.
69 Strickland, 152-4.
sixth Baptist, the Regular preacher Edmund Botsford, also served as a chaplain.\textsuperscript{70} A contemporary sketch of his life stated that Botsford “was firmly attached to the American cause, in the struggle for liberty which issued in the independence of these United States.”\textsuperscript{71} His ties with Oliver Hart probably indicate that he supported the American cause from its inception. Though their contributions will be addressed in a subsequent chapter, this evidence clearly shows that evangelical sentiment in the backcountry of Georgia turned early in the favor of the revolutionary cause.

Zubly’s political service to the American cause crashed upon the rock of independency. His decade-long defense of constitutional liberty served to educate and animate Georgians to a resistance to tyranny, but he could not break his allegiance from the “rock from which he was hewn.” However, almost every other evangelical leader in Georgia did decide that independence was the proper course of action for the colonies and illustrated their resolve by providing spiritual aid and leadership to patriot military forces.

Evangelicals of different stripes played key roles in the tumultuous days leading to the separation of the colonies from Britain. Several served in the provincial governments of South Carolina and Georgia. Others obeyed the call of these governments when asked to supply vital assistance to the revolutionary movement. Presbyterians worked with Baptists, and Separate Baptists worked with Regulars. For this service, evangelicals expected a return. That return would come in the new constitutions adopted in South Carolina and Georgia. The Anglican establishment fell, and evangelicals enjoyed the broadened religious liberty they had earned.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} Botsford, 12. The biographical sketch was an introduction to Botsford’s work by Richard Furman.

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Chapter 5

“Sowed in Blood:” Evangelicals Reap the Rewards of Revolutionary Service

The advent of the Revolution presented a powerful opportunity for evangelicals and other dissenters throughout the colonies to gain the prize for which long they had sought, complete religious liberty. During the revolutionary era, church groups were the largest social institutions in America.¹ In South Carolina, evangelical Baptists and Presbyterians were the largest of these organizations. Revolutionary leaders in South Carolina sought to win their support. The establishment of the Church of England served as a thorn to southern evangelicals, and the sweeping changes brought about by revolution and the need by the revolutionary governments to solidify support against Great Britain, opened the door for attacks against the establishment. Evangelicals began to demand equal liberty in religious matters, and revolutionary leaders, who needed their aid, moved to meet these demands.²

In South Carolina, the issue of religious liberty dominated the political hopes of Regular Baptists. Connected by doctrine and shared political inferiority, the members of the Charleston Association initiated relief efforts in 1775 for their Baptist brethren in New England struggling under the yoke of Congregational dominance. At their annual meeting, South Carolina’s Regular Baptist leaders issued a call for monetary contributions for Isaac Backus and the Baptists of Massachusetts to relieve their “suffering from restrictions on their religious liberties.” Baptists in South Carolina were upset by the situation faced by their brethren in Massachusetts. Hart considered their predicament “doubly gauling at such

² Isaac, 279, 292.
a Period as this when they are equally engaged with their fellow citizens, in procuring and
defending the civil rights of America.” The desire for religious liberty led many Baptists
throughout America to join the revolutionary cause. Baptists used many of the same
ideological arguments for religious liberty that Whig politicians used to justify their
rebellion against Great Britain. In South Carolina and Georgia, Baptist leaders, such as
Hart, Reese, Botsford, and Furman, hoped that God might bring to them, through an
American victory over Britain, “the privilege of being let alone.” Their hope centered in
the possibility of new laws, instituted by the new American governments, which would
allow to them “the free and uninterrupted enjoyment of …religious rights” instead of the
old laws “of conscience, oppressing…pious taxes, writs, and scourging.” Many of these
men showed early their willingness to support the revolutionary government most notably
in their efforts to support the government’s backcountry mission.

Many citizens in South Carolina and Georgia, however, were still hopeful that
reconciliation might still occur between the American colonies and Great Britain, but by
1776, the need for, at least, a temporary constitution for provincial governance took center
stage in South Carolina. Though the Constitution of 1776 did nothing to alter the religious
establishment in South Carolina, it did include religious themes. The Quebec Act was
attacked again, and the document proscribed against church goers saying “any Thing, in

3 Brinsfield, 269; W. Furman, 15.
hopes of obtaining “liberty of conscience.” In New England, Baptists did not attain religious liberty as quickly as in South Carolina. In 1780, the Baptist church in Woodstock, Connecticut issued a statement
saying they had “little heart to hold the sword against a British invader while our countrymen are endeavoring
to deprive us of our liberty,” in Ibid., 24. By 1780, Regular Baptists in South Carolina were almost
unanimous in support of the revolutionary government which guaranteed their equality with all other sects.
5 Mallary, 52-3.
their religious Assembly, irreverently, or seditious, of the Government of this state.”

Baptists reacted positively to the news of the constitution. Hart exploded with joy in his diary and reveled in the fact that South Carolina had broken “off the British yoke and established a new form of government upon a free and generous Plan.” He was happy that representation and rule belonged to the people of South Carolina and closed his entry jubilantly, hoping that they might “never again be enslaved.” In a letter to Henry Laurens, the vice president of South Carolina, Hart and Elhanan Winchester, Baptist minister of Welsh Neck Baptist Church, offered Baptist support to the government. Hoping to see “hunted Liberty sit regent on the Throne,” they congratulated Laurens and blessed God for beginning their “deliverance.” The letter was reprinted in the May 1, 1776 issue of the
South Carolina General Gazette and signed by a delegation of Baptists. Laurens responded with a letter of his own stating that he was happy “Baptist congregations accepted [the] constitution.” He promised that religious liberty would be established, and he encouraged the ministers that “it is especially the Duty of those who bear Rule to promote and encourage Piety and Virtue and to discountenance every degree of vice and immorality.” His letter was also printed in the same issue of the Gazette.

In spite of the relative joy expressed by evangelicals for the growing independence of the colony, many hoped for a greater degree of religious liberty than that granted by the Constitution of 1776. The Baptists of Charleston sent an appeal, read before the provincial

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7 Hart Diary, March 26, 1776, SCL.
9 Letter from Henry Laurens to Oliver Hart and Elhanan Winchester, March 30, 1776 in Ibid., 200.
congress on February 8, 1776, for greater religious liberty. Baptist leaders agreed to a proposition by Elhanan Winchester to gather together at Richard Furman’s church at the High Hills of Santee in April 1776 “in order to choose delegates to attend the Continental Association.” Recognizing the necessity of making their voices heard, these Baptists wanted to make every effort to “obtain our liberties, and freedom from religious tyranny or ecclesiastical oppressions.”

This meeting, convened on April 24, was not limited to the Baptists. Tennent, along with certain members of the established church who favored greater religious freedom, joined the meeting. These men composed a petition to the congress asking for greater religious liberty. William Tennent is given most of the credit for authoring the petition, but he likely received help from Baptist supporters, including Furman and Hart. Christopher Gadsden, a member of the Church of England and a radical friend of liberty, also aided with the petition. William Henry Drayton, also a churchman, paid for the printing of the petition. A separate meeting by Baptist ministers at the conclave voiced hope “for the prospect of obtaining universal Religious Liberty in the State” and chose delegates to attack the establishment before the “Continental Association.”

The question of greater religious liberty animated the thoughts of many backcountry South Carolinians. Colonel William Hill, an ardent patriot and Presbyterian, took the petition into the backcountry to garner signatures showing the support of the

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10 Hemphill and Wates, 181. Evidently, the “Continental Association” referred to the provincial government. Unfortunately, the record does not reveal what was in the petition, and I have not managed to find an extant copy.
11 Brinsfield, 234; Welsh Neck Minutes, 21.
13 Brinsfield, 244.
people for religious liberty. He described the mood of the backcountry as “much agitated upon the grand question, whether there was to be any Religious establishment of one denomination of Christians over the other.” Due to their experience under the Church of England, most inhabitants did not wish to see the establishment of any single church. Hill related his own fear “that if any denomination had any preference over the other, it would, in a great measure, prevent that Harmony amongst the Citizens which was necessary to oppose the measures of the British government.” Evidently, the petition drawn up at High Hills recognized this difficulty stating that it would be “bad policy either in a Religious or political point of view” to establish “any one religious denomination over another.” Hill garnered as many signatures as possible, including those of backcountry women. In all, thousands signed the petition before it was delivered to Charleston.15

Others also aided in the circulation of the petition, including Baptist leaders Furman, Pugh, and Edmund Botsford. Patrick Calhoun, a Presbyterian and an influential justice of the peace in the Ninety Six district, published Drayton’s Charge to the Grand Jury for the people of his district. In the publication, he included a paragraph promoting Tennent’s petition. He recognized the need for uniting the people of his district in support of the revolutionary cause and urged the legislature to recognize religious liberty for all Protestants as a means of accomplishing that union. “We are equally entitled to religious as well as civil Freedom and Liberties.” Any preference to one denomination or the garnering of taxes for the support of a single denomination would be unfair to those “equally arduous for the Protection and Welfare of their Country, now sharing in the common dangers and

15 William Hill, Col. William Hill’s Memoirs of the Revolution A.S. Salley, Jr. ed. (Columbia: The Historical Commission of South Carolina, 1921), 30; Edward McGrady, The History of South Carolina in The Revolution, 1775-1780 (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1902), 207. Hill had women sign the petition because he wanted to get as many signatures as possible and did not believe “in the doctrine of the Turks that women have no souls.”
As calls for greater religious liberty grew in intensity outside the provincial congress, Tennent, Drayton, and Gadsden worked within the government to effect revision of the 1776 constitution. Tennent had tirelessly supported the patriot cause and encouraged many to follow his lead. Though his religious beliefs differed from those of Drayton and Gadsden, for they were members of the establishment, the three shared a burning desire for the independence of America. These two, along with other establishment men, believed that the cause of religious liberty might serve as a potent issue that might cement backcountry support for independence or, at least, support for the provincial government. Others, however, were satisfied with the establishment and did not wish to see radical changes in the relationship between the church and state.  

The summer of 1776 brought momentous change to South Carolina. The Americans foiled an attack by the British on Sullivan’s Island in Charleston harbor in June. In July, the Continental Congress declared the colonies independent of Britain. The first seemed to Hart and many others a sign of God’s protection and blessing on the American cause. In his diary, Hart noted that “God appeared for us and defeated our Enemies.” The second signaled a profound shift in the political landscape of South Carolina. Tennent greeted the reading of the Declaration of Independence in Charleston with deep pride. “No event has seemed to diffuse more general Satisfaction among the People. This seems to be

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16 Brinsfield, 258-9. Pugh presented “a petition” to individuals and his congregation after at least one sermon in the summer and fall of 1776 in Pugh, Diaries, 159, 161. The diary dates are August 10 and November 10, 1776. It is likely this petition was that which was drawn up at High Hills. Calhoun’s injunction was later printed in the December 5, 1776 edition of the South Carolina and American General Gazette.

17 Godbold and Woody, 152-3, 168.

18 “Diary,” Hart Papers, 134, SCL. In August 1776, Hart’s son, John, entered, as a 2nd Lieutenant, the 2nd Regiment, South Carolina, of the Continental Army.
designed as a most important Epocha in the History of South Carolina, and from this Day it is no longer to be considered as a Colony but as a State.”

Other evangelicals greeted the news enthusiastically. Richard Furman swore allegiance to the new United States of America and marched off to join his brother in defense of Charleston. He was sent back to Santee by John Rutledge, president of South Carolina, to foster loyalty to the new government. He evidently took every opportunity presented to him to espouse the cause.

Anecdotal evidence states that “young Furman was not only an enthusiastic Baptist preacher, but an ardent advocate of rebellion, and everywhere, on stumps, in barns, as well as the pulpit, prayed and preached resistance to Britain and alarm to the Tories.”

The relationship with Great Britain now changed from that of an overbearing parent to that of enemy. Due to South Carolina’s newly declared independence, the President and Council declared “that all prayers in the Liturgy for the king of Great Britain and his Royal Family be omitted, and that no Clergyman do offer up Public prayers for him or them.” The break with Great Britain severed the legal ties between the government of South Carolina and the Church of England. Evangelicals pressed to break the hold of the Anglican church on the hearts and minds of the state legislators.

The battle for disestablishment hit the floor of the assembly on January 11, 1777. Introduced by Gadsden, Tennent presented the signed petition, the one produced in April 1776, calling for religious liberty and the disestablishment of the Church of England. The petition outlined seven major complaints against the establishment. First, it complained that most of the state’s population, being composed mostly of those who adhered to

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21 Tennent Papers, “Interesting Events as they took place in the State of South Carolina, 1776,” SCL.
22 Duncan, 279.
dissenting church groups, was being discriminated against by the continued preference shown to the minority population of Anglicans. Second, it blasted the legal “privileges and immunities” given to the established church. Third, the petition argued that continued “partiality” would be the cause of future “public unhappiness” and “discord.” The petition then outlined the superiority of religious freedom to all other civil liberties. An abridgement of this precious freedom was labeled “injurious to the common rights of mankind” and would serve as a foundation for public acrimony. If the state continued to maintain an established church, the petition assured the legislature that the future “growth, opulence, and power” of the state would be checked. This danger, it warned, lurked especially during the early years of any state’s existence when new settlers were necessary.

The fifth charge against the establishment leveled a blistering criticism of the financial support given to the Church of England. The dissenters blasted the “establishment of any one denomination by way of distinction from and preeminence to others.” The petition then called for the legislature to procure “equal justice” for “every part of the state” in a new constitution which they hoped the legislature would produce. The final request of the petitioners appealed for religious liberty to be rooted in the fundamental law of the state’s constitution. The petitioners requested:

“This that there never shall be any establishment of any one religious denomination or sect of Protestant Christians in this state by way of preference to another; that no Protestant inhabitant of this state shall by law be denied the enjoyment of any civil right merely on account of his religious principles, but that all Protestants demeaning themselves peaceably under the government established by the constitution shall enjoy free and equal civil and religious privileges.”

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The petition reveals several key lines of thought which animated the revolutionary ideology of the evangelicals who crafted the petition. First, it attacked the aristocratic privilege enjoyed by the established church. Second, it highlighted evangelical discontent of continued maintenance of the establishment and illustrated their belief that societal peace was most easily maintained when the majority of citizens were deemed equal before the law. Third, it showed clearly the central place religious liberty inhabited in the minds of eighteenth century evangelicals. Evangelicals in South Carolina, however, did not want religious liberty extended to those outside Protestant Christianity. Disestablishment did not mean complete separation. By disestablishment, evangelicals meant simply that they did not want government to give legal or monetary preference to one denomination of Protestant Christians over others residing in the state. Finally, the petition showed the confluence of evangelical thought with that of other revolutionary Americans in their growing preference for a fundamental written law embodied in the state constitutions.

Tennent followed up the presentation of the petition with a long speech attacking the establishment and calling for complete Protestant liberty. His speech was an attempt to clarify for the largely Anglican legislature the desires of the dissenters. False reports were evidently circulating claiming the dissenters wanted to abolish the Anglican establishment in order to establish one or more of the dissenting churches. Tennent made it clear that the dissenters he spoke for only attacked the establishment, not the Church of England itself. The petition had arisen “from an inextinguishable love to the free and equal rights of mankind, and not from a dislike to one denomination of Christians.” He appealed to the assemblymen for understanding. “How can you find in your heart to blame those who risk their all, and stand with you in the foremost rank of zeal and danger, if they should only
desire to secure to themselves and children, the same privileges that you enjoy.” It was only fair that those who shed blood in the cause of liberty be rewarded for their sacrifice.  

Tennent’s speech can be broken into four major lines of thought. First, he launched an attack against the “infringement of religious liberty” that an establishment entailed. He contended that the legislature had no right to take the “consciences of men into their own hands” or to tax a person’s conscience. The state did have the power to “countenance” religion by “defending and protecting all denominations of Christians who are inoffensive and useful.” The state may also “enact good laws for the punishment of vice and the encouragement of virtue.” The state could “do anything for the support of religion, without partiality to particular societies or imposition upon the rights of private judgment.” However, Tennent proclaimed it “manifest injustice” when “the legislative authority of the state sets itself up as a judge in church controversies” and determined which Christian sect is right or wrong. Tennent argued that it was beyond his power “to communicate to any man on earth a right to dispose of my conscience.” Neither did any man have the right to legislate what an individual believed regarding religious matters. The legislature had no power to violate the inalienable right of conscience. If it did so, it would be establishing “religious tyranny.” “The rights of conscience are unalienable, and therefore, all laws to bind it are, ipso facto, null and void. Every attempt of this kind is tyranny…Of all tyranny, religious tyranny is the worst.” Tennent warned that citizens would then “scorn civil, where they cannot enjoy religious, liberty.”

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25 Ibid., 6; Jones, 196-8.
Tennent then shifted gears to attack the discriminatory nature of the South Carolina establishment. The legislature, “in this reputedly free government,” legally distinguished between “people of different denominations equally inoffensive” to the stability of the state. He blasted the unfair taxation which gave emolument and financial support to one denomination out of the pockets of people of dissenting faith. Tennent next attacked the legal privileges awarded to the established church but denied to dissenters. The state recognized the clergy of the establishment but refused to allow dissenting clergy to even marry their own congregants. The established church also had legal claim to lands and church buildings while the dissenting sects had no legal right to incorporate. Dissenting churches, Tennent asserted, were forced to put money into trusteeships. Many of these churches suffered great financial loss due to mismanagement by fraudulent trustees.26 Tennent continued his attack by complaining that the management of elections continued to reside in the “hands of church officers exclusively” and called for an end to this “Machiavelian policy of the British government.” He complained that the vestries held an “enormous power” because they still had the power to tax for poor relief. In closing his second line of argumentation, Tennent returned to the issue of state taxation for the support of the established church. He singled out this taxation as a prime example of “the injustice and oppression of the present establishment.” Though support for the church came out of the public treasury, thereby eliminating the sting of direct taxation, the money was still “equal property of all denominations in the state.”27 Between 1765 and 1775, Tennent claimed that government financial support of the establishment had drained over 164,000 pounds from the treasury. The value of publicly procured church lands was estimated at

26 Ibid., 198-99.
330,000 pounds. This policy continued though the state’s population consisted of mostly dissenters. Tennent claimed dissenting churches outnumbered Anglican churches by a wide majority. Tennent dismissed pro-establishment arguments that the public was free to enjoy the established church buildings. Even if a dissenter sacrificed “his own private judgment and conscience” by availing himself of the use of these churches, each established church group charged ridiculously high pew rents on attendants.

In the third portion of his speech, Tennent returned to the inalienable nature of religious liberty. He contended that dissenters held this right dearer than money. “They value much more their religious, their unalienable rights, than the expense…You very well know, that it was not the Three Pence on the Pound of Tea, that roused all the virtue of America.” Religious freedom, not simply toleration, was the prized “birthright.” The “full and undiminished freedom in the exercise of our own judgment, in all religious matters, that we value and esteem.” They did not wish to see any establishment continued, even one which removed the burden of financial support, because establishment necessitated continued legal inferiority for those outside the established church. Unity within the state was necessary for the success of their experiment in political liberty. If dissenters continued to struggle under the legal inferiority conferred upon them by the establishment, Tennent warned that unity would be impossible due to the “endless contentions” between dissenters and the established church.

28 Wallace, 279.
29 Jones, 201; Tennent, “Speech,” 11-3. Tennent estimated there were at least 79 dissenting congregations. If one counted “Quakers and sundry others,” Tennent counted 90 churches. Tennent claimed there were but 20 Anglican churches in the state.
Tennent’s fourth argument attacked a proposition, evidently being considered, that would allow for the establishment of multiple denominations and would include equal monetary support for each. He called it a “scheme of division” which was “absurd and impossible.” It would lead, he contended, to the same kind of strife as the present establishment. Recognized churches would fight with unrecognized churches. “In short, every plan of establishment must operate as a plan of injustice and oppression, and, therefore… I am utterly against all establishment in this state.” Tennent later modified his stance against any establishment of religion. He approved of a plan, eventually adopted by South Carolina’s Constitution of 1778, which allowed for incorporation of all churches, eliminated state funding for any denominations, and established Protestant Christianity as the official religion of the state.31

Tennent closed his speech by affirming that dissenters looked forward confidently to receiving the equal rights which they had paid for through sacrifice to the cause. “While you who are contending for the rights of mankind with one of the greatest powers upon earth, will you leave your own Constitution marked with injustice and oppression, and that in the most important of all respects that ever mortals contended for?” None of the other liberties for which the Americans had gone to war could compare with religious liberty. “Can you imagine, that the numerous Dissenters who venture their all in support of American Freedom, would be fond of shedding their blood in this cause if they did not with confidence expect, that they should have justice done them.” Failure to include religious liberty in the constitution might result in the dampening or withdrawal of support by dissenters for the American cause. “They must pay an equal share of that tax which independency will cost you--they must spill a greater share of blood, and therefore…they

31 Ibid., 203.
cannot consent to the smallest inferiority in privileges either civil or religious.”

Tennent highlighted practical benefits, such as increased immigration and the removal of contention between competing sects, which disestablishment would bring. The people of South Carolina waited to see what the assembly would do. Tennent argued that the majority of the state wanted disestablishment. To neglect such a task would neglect the constituents of the assembly and leave future generations without their precious religious freedom. With the struggle against “arbitrary power” fresh on their minds, now was the “natural time, and this is the only time” to implement these sweeping protections. He disavowed any desire by the dissenters to establish their own sects above that of the Church of England and assured delegates that the dissenters wanted no monetary restitution for their previous contributions to the Anglican Church. Tennent reminded the delegates that many Anglicans had signed the petition and other states, including Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware, had already moved for disestablishment. Finally, he addressed criticisms attacking the timing of the petition. He argued that to “postpone the rights of justice is to betray” them. English Dissenters had missed their opportunity for full liberty during the Glorious Revolution. Tennent declared South Carolinian dissenters would not make that same mistake. “We mean to act a rational and constitutional part.” Because the delegates were in the process of preparing a new constitution for the state, it was the “natural time” to cement, for their constituents and posterity, these inalienable rights in the fundamental written law of the state. “Let it be a foundational article in the Constitution, ‘That there shall be no establishment of one religious denomination of Christians in preference to another.’” Tennent urged his listeners to “yield to the mighty current of

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American freedom and glory.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 21-7; Jones, 203-8.
When Tennent finished speaking, debate erupted in the House. Tennent’s proposals were seconded by Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. Two delegates, however, rose in defense of the establishment. Rawlins Lowndes and Charles Pinckney, C. C. Pinckney’s cousin, advocated striking out the clause “that there never shall be an establishment of any one Denomination or sect of Protestants, by way of preference to another in this State.”

They attempted to retain the preferential position of the Church of England without government financial support. Lowndes and Charles Pinckney based their proposal on the need by the government to continue the church’s role in the “provision of the poor” and the “management of elections.” Their motion was defeated by a seventy to sixty count. The House kept the clause as written but decided to postpone the bill and the crafting of a new constitution to the next session. At least one dissenter believed that supporters of the establishment had effected the postponement to prepare an attack on the clause at the next session. Religious debate had seeped, unhappily for some, into the South Carolina revolutionary legislature.

The Charleston Association met on February 3, 1777. These Baptist leaders decried the “the present melancholy Situation of the American States” due to the “Ravages and Devastations of War, with a cruel, unnatural, and unprovoked Enemy” and the prevailing “vice…immorality…and the Declension of and Disregard shown to Religion.” As an order

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35 “Letter from Richard Hutson to Isaac Hayne,” January 18, 1777, in McGrady, 212. Hutson was the son of a former pastor of Charleston’s Independent Church. Hayne, a member of Bethel Presbyterian in Colleton County, was Hutson’s brother-in-law and went on to become a celebrated martyr in the American cause in Howe, 475-9.


37 “Letter from Richard Hutson” in McGrady, 212.

of business, the Association decided to institute four fast days to seek to “deprecate [God’s] 
Judgments, and implore his Favor, on Behalf of ourselves, the Christian Church, and our 
bleeding Country.” Three of these days were in addition to March 6, 1777, the day 
appointed by the government for fasting and prayer. The Association commented that her 
members should “ever pay a suitable Deference” to the government of South Carolina 
while terming Great Britain “the Enemy.” Though the members faced difficult times due to 
war and perceived irreligion, there was genuine hope that a new day of religious liberty 
might be dawning. The drafting of a circular letter to its member churches regarding the 
pleasant prospect of religious liberty outlined in a draft of a new South Carolina 
constitution was ordered. Evan Pugh composed the letter which highlighted the “most 
excellent civil government established in this State.” The constitution was termed 
“excellent,” and Baptist leaders recommended that “all…endeavor to support it to the 
utmost of your power.” The Association leaders were unanimous in their support of “the 
measures taken by America in general and in this State in particular, to secure our 
liberties.” The “prospect of obtaining universal religious liberty in this State” and the 
promise of enjoying “liberty, and property without molestation or interruption” should be 
counted signal blessings. The Association stated that the terms of incorporation were 
“reasonable and easy, and we recommend to you to conform thereto, as it will be of a 
singular advantage in many instances.” Hart added his signature to the letter.39

Baptist leaders looked with hope to the possibility of a new constitution. By 
February 1777, a draft of the new document had been perused by Hart. In a letter to 
Furman, he noted that Baptists could look forward to the “bright prospect that we shall 
obtain religious liberty in its full extent.” Hart urged vigilance and continued pressure. “It

39 “Minutes of the Charlestown Association…February 3, 1777,” (Charleston: ?, 1777), no page numbers.
cannot fail if we dissenters will be careful to attend the next session of the Assembly.” Dissenters would not receive everything they asked for in their petition, but the plan of incorporation being considered would allow them to enjoy “all the immunities and privileges of the State.” Hart urged Furman, still a Separate, to try to bring his church and that of Joseph Reese at the Congarees into the Charleston Association. Union with the Separates on the frontier had failed to this point. He noted, perhaps due to his visit to the Fairforest region during the backcountry mission, that “some of the Baptists on the Frontiers will be deemed unfriendly to government.” If Furman and Reese joined, it would strengthen the Baptist voice in the new state and be of great “Advantage of the Baptist Interest.” All Baptists “who are willing to stand up in support of our happy Constitution [should] unite together in one band.” This would make Baptists more “respectable in the eyes of the Government.” Hart knew he might receive criticism for this stance, but he argued that “while in the world, we must be concerned with it, and I am sure the Religion of Jesus forbids not our making ourselves as comfortable in it as possible.”

Though Hart encouraged Baptist vigilance and unity after Tennent’s work in the assembly, it was not the first time that he had sought to further Baptist interests through legislative activity. In 1776, his Charleston congregation had appealed to the provincial legislature to appoint trustees to manage the funds of the church. This request was eventually fulfilled a month after Tennent’s speech. Baptists continued to keep their interests before the government in the years following the adoption of the constitution. In 1779, the Charleston Association appointed a standing committee which was to conduct the business of the association in case emergencies developed and “particularly to treat

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40 Cook, Richard Furman, 56-7.
41 Townshend, 26.
with government on behalf of the Churches.” Hart, Botsford, Furman, and Pugh served on this committee.⁴²

Tennent did not live to see the completion of his grand work. His father died in New Jersey, so he travelled north to bring his mother to Charleston. Before he could reach home, he was struck down by a fever at the High Hills of Santee.⁴³ The notice of his death, published in the August 14, 1777 edition of the South Carolina and American Gazette, described him as a “Gentleman of Letters, who distinguished himself as a zealous advocate in Behalf of his Country from the Commencement of the present Contest.”⁴⁴ Evangelicals realized they had lost a champion and bemoaned his death. Hart, in a funeral sermon dedicated to Tennent, believed that his death was a judgment of God for the sins of the people. God was “contending with us for our Iniquities,” and the “death of so valuable a man [was] a heavy stroke” that portended future “greater evils” unless repentance came quickly. Hart outlined the prerequisites for measuring the greatness of a man. To be truly great, a man must have a “benevolent heart,” be “a true patriot, a lover of his country,” and “moral virtue.” Virtue, however, could not be attained “without true piety, or a love of God.” For Hart, a great man served as a “prop and support [of] both church and state.” Great men were also the “salt of the earth” and served to “preserve the principles and practices of many, both in church and state, from corruption.” Tennent’s demise was “an unspeakable loss” for the state of South Carolina during this “day of trial” because,

⁴² W. Furman, 16.
⁴³ Oliver Hart, “The character of a truly great man delineated, and his death deplored as a public loss. A funeral sermon, occasioned by the death of the Rev. William Tennent, A.M. who departed this life, Aug. 11, 1777, aet. 37. Preached in the Baptist Church, Charleston, S. Carolina, on the following Sabbath. Published at the request and expense of the church of which Mr. Tennent was Pastor.” (Charlestown: David Bruce, 1777), 5. Hart’s sermon text was II Samuel 3:38, “Know ye not that there is a great man fallen this Day in Israel.” This had been King David’s lament at the murder of Abner, chief of King Saul’s and King Ishboseth’s armies.
according to Hart, he was a great man.45

Tennent was “a true patriot, his country’s faithful friend.” Hart pointed out that
“some have deridingly called him the fiery patriot” because he had “exerted himself, to the
utmost of his power” to promote the welfare of America. Though others may have attacked
Tennent’s zeal, Hart proclaimed that those who did so owed their liberty to men like
Tennent. Hart praised Tennent’s commitment to religious liberty, his ecumenical spirit, his
willingness to allow different “modes of worship,” and his ability to value “good men of
every denomination.” One of these men, Richard Furman, had been with Tennent at his
death.46

Hart closed his oration by lamenting again the “great loss” to the country that was
the passing of Tennent. “A more hearty friend to the American states…doth not exist.”
Hart’s personal feelings toward the American cause and hints to his political desires
highlighted the end of the sermon. He viewed the measures taken by the United States as
“just and necessary,” and described the American cause as “glorious.” He called loyalists
“inimical to the state.” “Tories” might “rejoice at his [Tennent’s] death,” but “those who
wish well to the cause of liberty, civil and religious, will bewail it, as a great and public
loss.” Hart used the occasion to press for the fulfillment of Tennent’s wish that complete
religious liberty become ensconced within the constitution of the state. “I am clear in my
opinion, that the peace, welfare and happiness of this state, depends much upon our having
our religious, as well as civil liberty constitutionally fixed.” Religious liberty was the
“unalienable property” of mankind and to stop short of procuring it would make its
proponents “guilty of great injustice to ourselves, and impiety to God.” Hart took the time

46 Ibid., 25-7.
to remind his listeners that those supporting the government expected this liberty. Hart’s views on representational government can easily be deduced in his hope that “our representatives will do justice to their constituents, by fixing religious liberty on the broadest bottom, and the most permanent foundation.”

A second funeral sermon for Tennent, by his fellow evangelical Presbyterian Hugh Allison, highlighted the recurring theme of Tennent’s “flaming zeal” for America. Tennent had understood the “vast importance of the American cause” and had entered the fray with “ardor and resolution.” Allison stated that Tennent’s actions had earned him censure “even by his friends.” Whatever censure they may have given him, Allison, in a nod to the republican ideology that swept America during the revolutionary era, deemed his conduct that “which would have done honor to an old Roman.”

Though South Carolina evangelicals lost their most ardent spokesman for religious liberty, their hopes were realized in the spring of 1778. It took over a year to produce a new constitution, but the House passed the Constitution of 1778 on March 5, 1778. It was signed into law two weeks later. Religious qualifications pervaded the document. To be eligible for office holding, candidates had to be “of the Protestant religion.” To vote, electors must acknowledge “the being of God.” The constitution also restricted clergymen from the executive and legislative offices of the state. The constitution stated that the restriction was added because “ministers of the gospel are by their profession dedicated to the service of God and…ought not to be diverted from the great duties of their function.”

Perhaps the restrictions against the clergy were inserted to accomplish the lofty goals stated

48 Howe, 372-3.
50 Ibid., 196-7.
in the constitution, but practical politics may be closer to the actual reason. A committee formed, in September 1776, to recommend constitutional changes had suggested that “no ministers of the Gospel or Priest of any religious Persuasion be permitted or allowed to be a member of either House” in order “to avoid as much as possible unhappy Differences and Jealousies amongst the Inhabitants of the State with regard to religious Principals.” This clause had originally been voted down by a large majority.\(^{51}\) Perhaps, in the light of Tennent’s prominent role in interjecting the issue of religion into the state legislature, the writers of the new constitution decided to heed the recommendations of the committee.\(^{52}\)

South Carolinians replaced a single, government funded established church with a system which loosely established Protestant Christianity as the official religion of the state.\(^{53}\) Only Protestants could serve in the government, and all Protestant denominations could apply for incorporation from the government. Any Protestant individual or “religious society” who acknowledged the existence of God, “a future state of rewards and punishments,” and the necessity of public worship enjoyed governmental toleration. Protestant dissenters received key concessions. As long as they demeaned “themselves peaceably and faithfully,” they would enjoy “equal religious and civil privileges.” Protection was guaranteed for their forms of worship. The hated fiscal support of the

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\(^{51}\) Salley, *Journal of the General Assembly, September 17, 1776-October 1776*, 119; Tennent Papers, “Interesting Events,” SCL.

\(^{52}\) At least four clergymen had been elected or served in the provincial congress. William Tennent, John Harris, Paul Turquand, and Robert Smith had served in Ibid., 155, 159-60. Smith declined his seat in the first provincial congress but joined later. South Carolina was not alone in proscribing clergymen from elected office. Other states, between 1776 and 1796, ruled clergymen ineligible for state offices. These states were Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, New York, North Carolina, and Tennessee in Kidd, 1019. The passage of clause excluding clergy was not universally applauded. David Ramsay, in a letter to Benjamin Rush on July 5, 1777, stated “Mr. Tennent who has doubtless called on you before this day has brought you the State reasons for excluding the Clergy in Carolina. I wish to see them excluded by the peoples not voting for them; but we were told that Government is a Check on the natural rights of individuals which interfere with public good. The people here are far from being Priestridden. A clergyman as such has but little influence in this government.” In Brinsfield, 273.

\(^{53}\) Curry, 191. South Carolina was the only state to “officially” proclaim an establishment during the revolutionary era.
Church of England was removed, but the church retained its property. The relief of the poor and election procedures continued in “the accustomed manner” until legal arrangements could be made to transfer these responsibilities “in the most equitable way.”

In Georgia, a new constitution emerged in 1777. There appears to be no concerted efforts, like those of South Carolina, by evangelicals to influence the crafting of the document. The constitution, completed in February 1777, contained similar religious provisions to the one eventually adopted by South Carolina. Representatives in the assembly had to belong to the “protestant religion.” Free exercise of religion to “all persons” was guaranteed as long as those practices were “not repugnant to the peace and safety of the state.” No citizen of the state had to “support any teacher, or teachers, except those of their own profession,” and any support given was to be voluntary. Anticipating South Carolina by a year, Georgia barred any clergyman “of any denomination” a seat in the assembly.

The struggle for disestablishment in South Carolina illustrates the ideological conundrum facing revolutionary governments as they sought to open the door to religious liberty while maintaining historic ties to established modes of Christian worship. The religious stipulations in the new constitutions of South Carolina and Georgia highlight the unwillingness of revolutionary Americans to rid religion from government. Though each constitution disestablished a government-sponsored denomination, each maintained ties with protestant Christianity. These states were well within the mainstream of revolutionary thought regarding the place of religion within government. This fact is illustrated by the

54 Johnson and Sloan, 198-99; “Letter from John Rutledge to Henry Laurens,” March 8, 1778, in Chestnutt and Taylor 12, 529.
continued call of the Continental Congress for the citizens of the United States to thank God for his benefits to the American people and to implore his continued support. In late 1777, the Congress issued a proclamation for another national day of thanksgiving to be observed on December 18, 1777. This proclamation was re-issued in Georgia and shows persuasively that the revolutionary government of Georgia did not jettison Christianity when it abandoned its connections with the Church of England. The Continental proclamation claimed “it is the indispensible duty of all Men to adore the superintending providence of Almighty God.” To that end, Americans were to be grateful to God for his past blessings and ask for continued divine support for American military measures, the individual state governments, and the production of agricultural and manufactured necessities. In a tone reminiscent of evangelical jeremiads, Congress stated that the day of thanksgiving was to include a time of confession for the “manifold Sins” of the nation so that God “through the merits of Jesus Christ” might “mercifully…forgive and blot them [their sins] out of remembrance.” The Congress also asked that prayer be made for schools, the “necessary” implements for inculcating “true liberty, virtue and piety.” Congress also wanted the people to pray that God would “prosper the means of religion for the promotion and enlargement of that Kingdom, which consisteth in righteousness, Peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Ministers were encouraged to “prepare discourses, suitable to the Occasion.” Revolutionary Americans, including those in South Carolina and Georgia, did not erect a wall of separation between government and state.

No conclusive evidence provides a single reason why evangelicals were less active in the crafting of the constitution in Georgia. The presence of high profile elite evangelicals in the legislature, such as Jonathan Bryan, may have mitigated evangelical fears. The fact

57 Candler, I, 320-22.
that Georgia waited until after independence to compose their initial constitution may have allowed the legislature to incorporate lessons from South Carolina learned during the interim between her 1776 and 1778 constitutions. Separate Baptists left no record of their governmental activities, if any existed, during this period. The Regular Baptist leader, Botsford, did play a role in South Carolina’s struggle, perhaps due to the membership of his church in the Charleston Association, by disseminating the dissenter petition, but no evidence remains regarding his political activity in Georgia. Finally, John Zubly, the pre-eminent evangelical in Georgia before the war, faced growing isolation and suspicion due to his stance against the growing tide of independence. He who had been ardent in his defense of constitutional freedom now found himself listed as one “dangerous to American liberties.” Zubly was ordered arrested by the governor because his “going at large will…endanger the public safety.” Though released, he refused to swear allegiance to the new United States, though he was willing to take an oath of allegiance and neutrality to Georgia, in 1777. Due to his refusal, he was banished to South Carolina later that year losing his congregation in Savannah. In 1778, Georgia confiscated his property. Zubly’s refusal to join in the patriot cause obviously cost him the influence in government that he had enjoyed in the years leading up to the Revolution and cut off any possibility of him contributing to the new state’s constitution.

Zubly considered his banishment unjust. He appealed to be returned to his congregation, but the Georgia government did not act upon his request. Zubly continued to preach to small congregations of whites and blacks while in South Carolina. While banished, Zubly received a visit from either Daniel or Abraham Marshall. Though he had

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58 Ibid., 147-8.
59 Strickland, 145; Hawes, 67-8. Zubly’s family lost considerable property. His diary listed over 5,000 acres, 18 slaves, several lots, and a brick house in Savannah that had been turned into a hospital.
earlier castigated Marshall and the Separates, he listened to a sermon and allowed Marshall to pray with him. Marshall’s prayer that “God would prosper us in what was right and cross…us in what was contrary to his will” hints at the political divide separating the patriot Marshall and loyalist Zubly.\(^{60}\)

Disestablishment presented new opportunities for evangelicals while causing new headaches for the Anglican church. Baptist and Presbyterian churches in South Carolina took advantage of the incorporation provision in their new constitution.\(^{61}\) Anglican churches, having lost government funding, began the process of procuring voluntary subscriptions to pay for the upkeep of their ministers and buildings.\(^{62}\)

During 1777 and 1778, evangelicals were active in more than political pursuits. Evan Pugh and Elhanan Winchester, both Baptist pastors, were founding members of the St. David’s Society, a group of leading citizens in the Pee Dee area dedicated to broadening educational opportunities. Several other Baptists joined in this venture including Colonels George Hicks, Abel Kolb, and Thomas Lide. Hicks and Kolb were elected wardens of the society. Hicks also served as a deacon in the church and as a messenger to and moderator in the Charleston Association in 1778.\(^{63}\) Richard Furman was involved in seeking incorporation from the state assembly for the Denomination of the Liberal Society. The society wished to build a “seminary of learning” for Santee youths that would make

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\(^{60}\) Hawes, 64-6, 68-9. Marshall’s visit occurred in February 1778. Zubly appears to have used the initial “A” Marshall in his diary, but the transcribed version has typed the letter “D” in its place. It was most likely Abraham Marshall because most sources state that Daniel Marshall remained close to his Kiokee congregation throughout the war years.

\(^{61}\) Townshend, 24; Howe, 404; Welsh Neck Minutes, SCL, 23.

\(^{62}\) Minutes of St. Michael’s Church, 137-8.

\(^{63}\) Pugh, “Diaries,” i, 172; McFadden, White, and Macaulay Families Papers (1769-1957), Box 1, SCL; Welsh Neck Minutes, SCL, 18, 20, 23. Other Baptists involved with the society included Thomas Evans and Abel Wilds, a deacon in the church.
education more affordable and accessible.\footnote{Richard Furman Papers, SCL.} Presbyterians from throughout the state joined with Anglicans in Charleston to establish the Mount Zion Society. This society was dedicated “for the purpose of founding, endowing, and supporting a public school in the district of Camden for the education and instruction of youths.”\footnote{Howe, 449. By 1780, over 260 South Carolinians had joined the society.}

Evangelicals shared more than the vision of expanded educational opportunities with their elite revolutionary counterparts. Republican censures against luxury and amusing activities, such as horseracing and cockfighting, found able proponents in the evangelical clergy and served to unite evangelicals and government leaders in the broader ideological refrains of the day.\footnote{Isaac, 247.} In 1778, Hart delivered a blistering sermon, published due to the financial support of “many Gentlemen,” on the sinfulness of dancing. This vice, among other “impieties,” needed to be repented of before “greater judgments” befell Charleston. In daring to attack the “darling” vices of Charleston society, Hart knew that he might receive the censure of the “gay gentry,” but he promised that he would continue “to maintain an open and vigorous war with all the vices and sinful diversions of the age.” This effort would, in the eyes of polite society, “forfeit” to him “all pretensions to polite breeding and good manners,” but he believed only “wicked parents” allowed their children to dance. Hart outlined several reasons for his injunctions against the activity. It did not glorify God, was not an activity of faith, could not be blessed in prayer, squandered time, wasted money that should be used for education and clothing the poor, was not an activity to be engaged in should one meet his maker, engendered conversation unbecoming to Christianity, promoted indecency among the participants and proffered obscene music, and did not fit the conduct of a minister. If a minister could not dance because it appeared
unseemly, then others should not engage in the activity. Hart closed his sermon by reminding his listeners that eternity awaited them. If the people of Charleston considered this fact, Hart concluded “we should have no more of balls, assemblies and dances; instead…our temple gates would be crowded, and the general cry would be, Lord what shall I do to be saved?”

Certainly the entire elite did not share the sentiment of Hart regarding the sinfulness of dancing, but ample evidence demonstrates that many leaders in South Carolina revolutionary society agreed with Hart’s strictures due to the influence of republican thought. When the Marquis de Lafayette invited Henry Laurens, then serving as President of the Continental Congress, to a play, Laurens declined because “Congress…passed a resolution recommending to the several States to enact laws for the suppression of theatrical amusements.” In a letter to his wife, Charles Pinckney, Jr. wrote that “all must be sensible of the particular protection of Providence, in blessings so often offered.” For Pinckney, a member of a prominent South Carolina family, “it is time for us to reform our false mode of reasoning and to be truly ashamed of our want of public virtue.” David Ramsay, by now a member of the Privy Council, wrote to Drayton lamenting the “spirit of moneymaking [that] has eaten up our patriotism” and the fact that the “morals” of the people had “more depreciated than our currency.” Anglican ministers also joined the chorus against the wickedness of the age. John Lewis, rector of St. Paul’s and army chaplain, complained that the “present age, to its immortal honor, is by no means inferior to

67 Oliver Hart, “Dancing Exploded. A sermon, shewing the unlawfulness, sinfulness, and bad consequences of balls, assemblies, and dances in general. Delivered in Charlestown, South-Carolina, March 22, 1778.” (Charlestown: David Bruce, 1778), 4-5, 10, 13-20.
68 Davis, 67.
any of the former” ages in its prevalence of “vice, immorality, and corruption.”

Evangelicals continued to combine, when appropriate, politics and the pulpit during the middle years of the Revolution. Oliver Hart honored both the Charleston Associations set fast days and those declared by the Continental Congress, preaching at least four fast day sermons between 1777 and 1779. Evan Pugh’s diary reveals that he too honored several fast days by preaching sermons suitable to the times. Pugh also took the opportunities presented to him by the frequent musters of the local militia during this time. He visited at least two musters and appears to have preached to one encampment of soldiers during 1776 and 1778.

Though religious leaders decried a perceived declension of religion in South Carolina and Georgia, Baptists churches continued to grow. Between the opening of hostilities with Great Britain and 1779, new churches were added, and existing churches enjoyed a growth in membership due to a revival which swept through South Carolina and Georgia in 1777. In 1778, Furman finally accepted Hart’s invitation to bring the Separate High Hills church into the Charleston Association. Regular Baptists in the two states continued close cooperation and decided to alternate association meetings between Charleston and the backcountry, evidently to support Botsford’s efforts at New Savannah in Georgia. In an attempt to spiritually feed parishioners suffering from the dearth of full-time pastors, the association sent Joshua Lewis to itinerate amongst those churches.

70 John Lewis, “Naboth’s Vineyard, A Sermon Preached at the Parish Church of St. Paul, Stono, on the The Last General Fast Day; and at St. Philip’s Church in Charles-Town, on Sunday, the First of June, 1777,” (Charles-Town, Peter Timothy, 1777), 6.
71 Hart, “Diary,” Hart Papers, Folder 8, SCL. Fast day and Thanksgiving Day sermon dates are September 4 and December 18, 1777, April 22, 1778, and May 6, 1779.
72 Pugh, “Diary,” 160, 167, 169, 172, 175, 181-2. Fast day sermons were preached on June 5, September 4, and December 4, 1777, as well as April 2, 1778. Pugh attended musters on September 21, 1776, November 23 and December 20, 1778.
73 W. Furman, 16; Mallary, 50; Townshend, 112-15, 155. Mallary states that Botsford saw 45 conversions during the 1777 revival.
destitute of ministers. In 1779, a large revival swept through the Welsh Neck church under the leadership of Winchester. Over two hundred new converts, white and black, were baptized. By September of that year, the Welsh Neck church numbered 220 white congregants alone. A separate congregation of black believers, numbers unknown, also existed under the leadership of the church. Little is known of Separate activity during these years, but John Leland, a leading Virginia Separate and friend of James Madison, itinerated into the Pee Dee area in 1777. It is possible, due to the strength of the Regular Baptists in this region, that he worked with them in the revival of 1777. In Georgia, the number of Baptist churches grew from three in 1774 to seven by 1780. Two of the additional churches appear to have belonged to the Separates, while the third was a Regular congregation. At least one church, Buckhead Creek in Burke County, went out of existence because its minister, Matthew Moore, left the state because he was a loyalist, a rarity amongst Baptists in Georgia.

The disestablishment movement in South Carolina revealed the issue that lay at the heart of evangelical support for the Revolution, the prospect of complete religious liberty. Evangelicals crossed denominational lines to work together and served as the bulwark of this effort. Presbyterian William Tennent joined with Baptists Oliver Hart, Richard Furman, and Evan Pugh to draft the influential dissenters’ petition. These men, joined by the Baptist pastors Elhanan Winchester and Edmund Botsford with the aid of Presbyterian layman William Hill, carried the petition to their respective areas across the state and

74 Broome, 29.
75 Ibid., 47-8. Though this revival sparked an increase in the number of Welsh Neck congregants in 1779, many of these converts were later excommunicated when Botsford took over the church in 1782 because they could not adequately discuss their conversion experiences to the satisfaction of Botsford. Winchester later moved to Pennsylvania where he left the Regular Baptists and began preaching universalism.
77 History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia, 23-4; Botsford, 12.
gained the signatures of thousands in South Carolina. Tennent played a prominent role in
the state assembly in presenting the petition and argued eloquently for the disestablishment
of the Church of England using republican arguments, common in America, highlighting
the roles of representation and the protections of written constitutions. Baptists early
sought to influence and win benefits from the new state government using petitions and
letters to government leaders. Baptists, under the leadership of Hart, also recognized the
practical benefits that might be won by presenting a unified voice to the government and by
maintaining political pressure. Evangelicals, however, did not fight this fight alone. They
were joined by more radical members of South Carolina’s revolutionary elite to procure
their goals. Christopher Gadsden and other revolutionary churchmen gathered with, and
certainly influenced, the evangelicals who produced the dissenters’ petition. William
Henry Drayton paid for its publication. Gadsden introduced Tennent before he rose to
address the assembly. C. C. Pinckney championed the effort to disestablish the church in
the legislature. These members of elite society, animated by concerns for the natural rights
of man, republican ideals regarding virtue and vice, or the practical necessity of union in
the face of the British, recognized the value of evangelicals and made common political
cause with them. Evangelical hopes were realized with the passage of the Constitution of
1778. Elites also gained in the bargain. They procured, from these newly freed
evangelicals, lasting loyalty to the state. Evangelicals had made a down payment in blood,
sacrifice, and loyalty by supporting the provisional government in the early struggles of the
Revolution. The new state repaid that debt in the provisions of the constitution. British
strategists soon turned south presenting evangelicals the opportunity to defend the prizes of
their earlier labor and the state which had secured them.

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Chapter 6

“Onward Christian Soldiers”: Evangelicals and the Winning of the American Revolution

Great Britain effectively lost the American Revolution with the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown in October 1781. South Carolinians have justly enjoyed the part her sons played in the events leading to Cornwallis’ capitulation, but historians have split in their assessment of the importance of the partisan bands which plagued the British in the Deep South. Historians with a vested interest in the overall importance of South Carolina’s history within the national framework have proclaimed that these militia groups forced Cornwallis to alter his plans and move northward in attempt to join Sir Henry Clinton. Other historians argue that militia groups were a harmful nuisance to Cornwallis, but, due to the proclivity of militia groups to fade in and out of scenes of combat, the presence of General Nathanael Greene and his regular Continental Army provided the unified and constant threat necessary to force the British to abandon the backcountry of South Carolina and move toward their demise in Virginia.\(^\text{78}\) It is not the purpose of this research to settle the difference of these competing historical views. It seems likely that a combination of these two elements played a complementary role in effecting the defeat of British plans in the Deep South. There is no doubt in the historical record that the rising of the militia in the summer of 1780 played a pivotal role in unsettling the hopes of Clinton and Cornwallis to

\(^{78}\) Walter Edgar, noted historian of South Carolina, wrote in his foreward to Michael Scroggin’s *The Day it Rained Militia*, that “the British know…they lost the war in the backwoods of South Carolina.” Edward McGrady, in his early tome on the war, unequivocally stated that “without the partisan leaders of South Carolina and their followers the independence of America would never have been achieved,” in McGrady, 563-4. However, Robert Middlekauff argued that the ability of Continental troops to hold their own under fire and their loyalty to the overall cause proved the deciding factor in the South, in Robert Middlekauff, “Why Men Fought in the American Revolution,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (Spring, 1980): 135-148. John S. Pancake agreed with Middlekauff’s assertion and stated that the “major factor in the American success was the tenacity and skillful strategy of Nathanael Greene,” in John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas, 1780-1782* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1985), 204.
rend the south from the United States. This said, the presence of Greene solidified American gains by maintaining a constant pressure on the British army. Though Greene and his forces deserve manifold credit for their role in the Deep South, this study has focused on the role of evangelicals in the American Revolution. Evangelicals made their greatest contributions to the actual war effort in the Deep South by serving, supplying, and encouraging the militia groups that rose to challenge and harass the British. These groups played a critical role in turning the tide against the British and affected overall British strategy. This change in strategy led to Yorktown, and evangelicals, particularly in South Carolina, deserve some of the credit for starting Cornwallis on his path to entrapment.

Having failed in their initial attempt at Charleston in 1776, the British concentrated their forces against George Washington in the northern colonies. Southerners, including evangelicals, focused their efforts on cementing the state governments that emerged after the Declaration of Independence. Though little actual fighting occurred in the Deep South until the close of 1778, evangelicals continued to monitor the events of the war unfolding in the north. Oliver Hart maintained his ardent patriotism. Commenting in his diary on the victory of the Americans at Saratoga, Hart described the “grand event” as one unequalled in history that “will shine in the Annals of America to the latest ages” and called for “Thankfulness to the Lord of Hosts from every true Friend to his country.” Hart, putting aside his religious differences with the Catholic Church, welcomed the news of the alliance between the United States and France. Hailing Louis XVI as “his most Christian Majesty,” Hart reveled in this new found source of American aid.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Hart, “Diary,” 135, 137. Diary dates are November 7, 1777 and May 26, 1778. Most American partisans shifted their view of France dramatically due to the treaty. Though the Quebec Act and its perceived establishment of the Catholic Church in the former French territories of North America had been used to galvanize support against the measures of the British ministry, France’s entry in the war changed numerous
In a series of letters to his brother, Joseph, Hart revealed his pride in the achievements of South Carolina and his continued connection to the American cause. On January 15, 1778, he told his brother that “with pleasure, I can inform you that Religion is set free here.” Hart promised to send a copy of the new state constitution when it arrived, but he asked that a copy of the Pennsylvania state constitution be sent to him. To facilitate his exchange of letters, Hart urged his brother to make use of Hart’s contacts among the South Carolina delegates to the Continental Congress including Henry Laurens and William Henry Drayton, with whom he was “well acquainted.”

In March, Hart reported that he was happy to still be active in the cause of America. The British cause was “unjust” and her measures “diabolical.” He lamented the damage to property being done by the war, “but I had much rather sacrifice my all, that that America should be enslaved.”

That summer, Hart continued to hammer the British. The Baptist pastor felt “indignation and resentment” and a “fire in [his] breast” for “retaliation.” Recounting a story from II Samuel 15 in which the prophet Samuel slew an enemy king, he “almost felt a Disposition to have them [British] treated like Agag.” Evidently, his passion was stirred by stories of British treatment of American prisoners despite the “leniency” of the Americans. Hart repeated his personal thanksgiving for the French alliance and closed the letter by pointing his brother to the blessing of God on the American cause. “During the whole of this struggle, the Providence of God hath appeared evidently in our Favor, and it would be impious to Doubt of a happy Issue.” Mixing his religious and republican views, Hart foresaw the day in

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views. The title for the French king, “his most Christian Majesty,” was also used by South Carolina government officials. Governor John Rutledge used the title in a proclamation issued on September 27, 1781, in William Moultrie, Memoirs of the American Revolution So far as it Related to the States of North and South Carolina, and Georgia, II, Reprint. (North Stratford, NH: Ayer Company Publishers, Inc., 1968), 413.

80 “Letter from Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, January 15, 1778,” in Hart Papers, SCL.
81 “Letter from Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, March 24, 1778,” in Ibid.

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America “when Religion [would be] freed from its shackles” and “learning, virtue, wisdom, [and] knowledge” might make “every person qualified to be a Senator.” Peace would bring all nations into the “trade, favor, and protection of America.”

Unfortunately, the prospect of peace hovered only as a mirage. The war was shifting south toward the end of 1778, and Hart recounted the dire prospects that awaited. In September, he wrote once again to Joseph outlining his growing distaste for loyalists. Hearing rumors of a massacre, “diabolical barbarities,” perpetrated by Tories in Pennsylvania, Hart told his brother that he believed Tories to be “unhappy people” who in his estimation were “some of the baseless [sic] Creatures under the heavens.” Hart repeated another rumor regarding a loyalist son who murdered his family and called the man “a match for Satan.” Anxiously awaiting news of American military success, Hart warned that both Tories in South Carolina and Creek Indians in Georgia were being stirred up and feared that without the imposition of “God in Mercy” much blood would soon be shed.

Hart’s forebodings became real in the fall of 1778. Royal officials who had been driven from the South Carolina and Georgia pressed London for action. These men believed that moving south would procure for the British war effort valuable supplies and would embolden the thousands of loyalists believed to be residing in the interior of these two states. By capturing the port cities of Charleston and Savannah, they argued the British should be able to control the backcountry and reverse American gains in the Deep South. Though initially cool to these overtures, by the spring of 1778, strategists in London decided that an effort to separate the south might be a winning plan. Installing Sir Henry Clinton as commander in chief of American operations, they forwarded orders for the

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82 “Letter from Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, July 5, 1778,” in Ibid.
83 “Letter from Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, September 10, 1778,” in Ibid.
capture of Charleston and Savannah. Viewing Savannah as the easier target, they hoped to use it as a base of operations to consolidate loyalist troops in the backcountry and a subsequent attack on Charleston. This movement south was to commence as soon as Clinton could dispatch troops from the northern theatre. Due to the extreme heat of southern summers, Clinton was urged by General Augustine Prevost, British commander at St. Augustine, Florida, to prepare for an assault on Savannah during winter. British troops were only to augment and support loyalist forces of whom it was believed many were ready to flock to the British standard. Clinton ordered a combined assault on Savannah sending transports from New York under Lt. Colonel Archibald Campbell to join General Prevost’s forces moving up from Florida.  

The British troops from Florida began pummeling the coastal regions of Georgia. The Congregational church at Midway received special attention. Located in Liberty County south of Savannah, the region had been a hot bed of dissent against the British since the earliest days of the colonial crisis. Moses Allen, a graduate of Princeton who had been ordained by evangelical leaders Tennent and Zubly, took the pastorate in 1776. An ardent patriot, he served as chaplain to the First Georgia Continental Battalion. The British roared into Liberty County leaving a trail of destruction. Burning the church building, homes, and crops, the British and their loyalist allies, “ill affected towards the American cause” drove Allen into Savannah in November 1778. British troops under Lt. Colonel Archibald Campbell took Savannah in December. Allen was captured and sent to a prison ship. He drowned in an attempt to escape. Jonathan Bryan was also captured and spent

84 Coleman, 116-8.
85 Ibid., 176.
86 Ibid, 176; Gildersleeves, 17.
almost two years in British custody.\textsuperscript{97}

Figure 2: From Edward McGrady’s *The History of South Carolina in the Revolution, 1775-1780*

British authorities quickly moved to re-establish royal authority in Georgia. Citizens were given a three month grace period to swear allegiance to the king and receive pardon for their acts of disloyalty. Those who refused were to be reported by their fellow citizens and could expect punishment. Campbell moved on Augusta in January, 1779.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 119, 136, 176; Gallay, 386-92. Lt. Colonel Mark Prevost, the brother of General Prevost, was responsible for burning the church building in Midway.
Many Georgians accepted pardons, but a sizeable number either fled from the state or bided time. Campbell organized twenty militia companies from those who sought pardon to combat threatened attacks from South Carolina rebel partisans. Soon, however, many of those who sought pardon abandoned their oaths and joined partisan leaders Elijah Clarke, John Twiggs, and John Dooly in their backcountry fight against the British. These men, aided by the New Light Presbyterian Andrew Pickens and his South Carolinians, destroyed a loyalist force at Kettle Creek, near present day Washington, Georgia, securing the area north of Augusta in patriot hands. Unable to procure Indian aid and facing a sizeable patriot force of North Carolinians under General John Ashe, Campbell withdrew toward Savannah. Ashe crossed into Georgia and moved his troops to Brier Creek, in Burke County, to keep an eye on Campbell. On March 3, Ashe was defeated by Lt. Colonel Mark Prevost and his combined force of British and loyalist troops. Moving northwest, Ashe crossed the Savannah River at Augusta and retreated into South Carolina.88

Though it is impossible to trace the number of evangelicals who served in the Georgia backcountry militia, there is strong evidence that evangelicals supported the American military efforts in Georgia in 1779. Edmund Botsford’s New Savannah Baptist Church was located in the Brier Creek area. After Prevost defeated Ashe, Botsford was forced to flee with his family and a slave into South Carolina. Botsford took up residence with Colonel Arthur Simkins in the Edgefield district of South Carolina. Simkins later recalled a quote by Botsford which affirmed his continued patriotism. “Notwithstanding we had lost our all, I do not remember that I ever felt an uneasy thought, nor did my wife express the least uneasiness. Indeed, instead of murmuring, it was rather a matter of

88 Ibid., 121-4.
boasting that we had suffered so much in the cause of our country.\textsuperscript{89} Certainly, Botsford underwent more internal strife than he was willing to admit, but he continued to aid the patriot cause. He served, in March and April, 1779, as a chaplain to a militia company in Ashe’s command as they retreated across South Carolina.\textsuperscript{90}

Botsford was not the only Georgia Baptist to minister to this company. John Graham, a Presbyterian schoolteacher and member of the company, kept a journal during his militia service and recounted that Abraham Marshall also preached to the men. These men were joined in their efforts by Joseph Reese, the Separate Baptist preacher from South Carolina. Though no texts of their sermons survive, the biblical sources from which these men derived their sermons were recorded by Graham. Evangelical invitations to salvation and encouragement in the face of defeat seem to be the themes highlighted by these Baptist preachers. Reese spoke, on March 14, from I Corinthians 15:57, “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Marshall, in his first sermon on April 1, used Isaiah 26: 9 as his text and certainly sought to encourage his listeners with the words of the prophet. “With my soul have I desired thee in the night…and when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” His second sermon, from Isaiah 27:13, refreshed his listeners with the promise that in God’s day “they shall come which were ready to perish…and shall worship the Lord in his holy mount.” Botsford reminded his listeners that God’s kingdom was “not of this world.” He focused on the call of the “Master” in John 11:28, and the cry of the Philippian jailer to

\textsuperscript{89} Mallary, 51. Botsford only saved two horses, a cart, one bed, a blanket and a sheet of all his worldly possession. During his stay in Burke County, Botsford had baptized 148 people. The church suffered greatly due the British invasion and ceased conducting official business during the Revolution, in Broome, 30.

Paul in Acts 16:30, “what must I do to be saved.” Though thoroughly committed to the American cause, these evangelicals had not forgotten their allegiance to the gospel.

Though six of the eleven chaplains to Georgia patriot forces were evangelical Baptists, it appears that only one preacher remained in the state during the entire conflict. Leading Separate Baptists Abraham Marshall and Silas Mercer, along with the Regular Botsford, fled before the British. They continued, however, to support the American cause in their exile. Daniel Marshall pressed on his ministry to the Separate Baptist congregation at Kiokee, northwest of Augusta. Little evidence survives regarding his role in the conflict, but anecdotal evidence states that he was briefly imprisoned on one occasion by Tories for his patriot stance and suffered the loss of his horses in another raid. The backcountry area in which he ministered produced indefatigable resistance to the British, and it is quite possible that Marshall, through his influence in the community, played an integral role in sustaining this resistance.

In South Carolina, Oliver Hart watched the British proceedings in Georgia with unease. He wrote again to his brother Joseph on January 14, 1779. Hart recounted the loss of Georgia and commented on the flight of Georgians northward and the conduct of American military leaders. Turning his attention to the invitation by British authorities for loyalist support, Hart lashed out at Tory avarice. Prophesying the upcoming horrors which besieged South Carolina, he stated that loyalists would “repair to the royal standard in hopes of possessing their neighbors’ estates…to accomplish which they would cut their neighbors’ throats.” Hart told his brother of the deprivations of the British in burning the church at Midway and wrote of the death of General Thomas Screven, the brother of his...
son in law. Tinges of doubt began to cloud Hart’s outlook. Though he had often asserted
the blessing of God on the American cause, he began to waver. “God knows the event of
these things. If He is on our side, all will be well.”

Hart wrote again to his brother in February. The British were planning an invasion
of South Carolina, and Hart believed they would be joined by “many disaffected in the
backcountry.” He lamented the declining state of virtue and the distressing state of the
economy. “We have been buying and selling, and preying on each other like vultures. I
wish we may not, in the end, have bartered away the state and purchased to ourselves
Ignominy and Distress in the highest degree.” Despairing of the situation, Hart proclaimed
“that unless Providence kindly and remarkably interposes on our behalf, we are an undone
people.” Hart lauded the return of John Rutledge as governor and stated that assembly was
ready to make him a dictator. Despite his confidence in Rutledge, Hart concluded his letter
repeating that “nothing can save us but the interposition of the great Governor of the
Universe.” In God alone “may we place all our confidence,” and Hart pled for his mercy
“to help a sinful people.”

When Hart wrote his brother again in May, the British had arrived in South
Carolina and were moving toward Charleston. Economic hardships prevailed mainly
caused by an inflation rate of eight hundred percent. Hart was joined in his concern for
the safety of Charleston by Evan Pugh. In his diary, Pugh noted the “news of Charlestown
being besieged by ye Enemy.” He felt “melancholy” about the fate of the city and “my
friends.” In July, Hart wrote again to his brother to tell him that the British were still in

93 “Letter from Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, January 14, 1779,” in Hart Papers, SCL.
94 “Letter from Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, February 16, 1779,” in Ibid.
95 “Letter from Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, May 3, 1779,” in Ibid.
96 Pugh, “Diaries,” 186. Diary entry is dated May 16, 1779.
South Carolina but had failed to take Charleston. With this bit of good news, Hart glorified God for “having once more appeared for us in a remarkable manner, which we ought never to forget.” Hart’s confidence seems to have risen, for though the British “give out that they will have Charlestown…I trust Omnipotence will still defend us.” Hart continued to lament the state of inflation and hoped “that some effectual method could be fallen upon to maintain the credit of our paper emissions.” This letter also reveals that Hart was a slaveholder.\footnote{“Letter from Oliver Hart to Joseph Hart, July 18, 1779,” in Ibid.} In his diary entries contemporaneous to these letters, Hart rejoiced that Charleston, though “sinful,” had eluded British capture. He credited the “providence of God” in detaining the British until fortifications were strengthened, bringing about timely reinforcement of American troops, and informing the British of an “impending attack from [General Benjamin] Lincoln” which caused them to retreat toward Georgia. Hart also rejoiced at the courage of “our troops” at the Battle of Stono and the evacuation of the British after the battle.\footnote{Hart, “Diary,” 142-3. Diary entries are May 13, June 21, and June 25, 1779.} Pugh also exulted in the deliverance of Charleston preaching a thanksgiving sermon on July 24, 1779.\footnote{Pugh, “Diaries,” 188. Pugh’s text was the familiar I Corinthians 15:57, “but God giveth us the victory.”}

Having failed in their initial foray against Charleston, the British returned to Savannah, leaving a sizeable contingent of troops in Beaufort, South Carolina. General George Washington and Congress desired to recapture the city, but no troops were available to augment General Lincoln’s forces in South Carolina. Without the aid of either the French or the Spanish, nothing could be done. John Rutledge, serving again as South Carolina’s governor, appealed to Admiral d’Estaing to bring his French naval command to the aid of Georgia. Though little was expected from this overture, d’Estaing appeared with his flotilla outside Savannah in September, 1779. Lincoln began immediately to gather
American forces for a combined move with the French against the city. In September and early October, the French and Americans began siege operations while the British played for time as they strengthened fortifications and brought their Beaufort contingent into the city. Bombardment began on October 3 causing great damage to the city. Due to pressure from d’Estaing, who feared the arrival of both hurricane season and the British navy, the allies made an assault on the city on October 9. Hampered by disjointed leadership and faced by a reinforced foe, the assault failed. Nine days later both the French and Americans abandoned the effort leaving Savannah in British hands.¹⁰⁰

Baptist leaders in South Carolina lamented the failure at Savannah. Hart’s son, John, was part of the assault on the city. Though the intelligence received was “disagreeable” to him, he thanked “God in his mercy” for sparing the life of his son.¹⁰¹ Pugh’s diary reveals his sorrow at the “loss of youths” from his Pee Dee area in the siege. On November 21, he preached a sermon for those lost “from these parts” to his congregation at Cashaway.¹⁰²

Though the vast majority of evangelical leaders in South Carolina and Georgia viewed the British invasion fearfully, John Zubly delighted in the prospect of a restored royal government. Through the dark days of his banishment to South Carolina, he maintained his loyalty to the crown. Writing in his diary on December 31, 1778, he remarked that his “conscience” did not “reproach [him] for the part [he] acted.” Zubly believed he had chosen “affliction rather than sin.” The arrival of the British army boded better days for Zubly. In May, 1779, he headed back to Savannah. He immediately began to preach again. He was invited by rector Edward Jenkins to preach to the Anglican faithful at

¹⁰⁰ Coleman, 127-9.
¹⁰¹ Hart, “Diary,” 144.
¹⁰² Pugh, “Diaries,” 191. Diary entries are for November 9 and 21, 1779.
Christ Church. His long absence had rendered the Independent meeting house “too much out of repair,” so Zubly was allowed to use the house of assembly. All around him were scenes of “distress and difficulty,” but he looked to rebuild his damaged congregation and property. In his diary, Zubly recounts moments of joy he received from preaching to attentive Hessian and times of melancholy brought on by the failure of the British to retake Charleston in 1779 and the fear of reprisals upon his family by angry South Carolina patriots. He prayed that God would have mercy “on this whole land and heal our breaches” and that God would give peace and “give it soon.” Zubly committed himself to promoting the “restoration of peace and order and religion” in all his writings and by “every means in my power.”

The siege of Savannah brought renewed hardships to Zubly’s work. His meeting house had just been repaired “at a considerable expense” when the British commandeered its use as a magazine. The allied French and American forces had concentrated much of their fire at the building causing new damage. Zubly appealed to Governor Wright for help in its repair so that “it may be restored to us for divine service.” His house had been used for a hospital for months, and he begged for assistance in repairing the damage done to his personal property. His slaves had been taken to strengthen the fortifications at Savannah, and Zubly asked that they be compensated for their service. He reminded the governor that “few men [had] suffered more from the rebels, or more severely felt the distresses of siege and army.” Both Zubly and his son had “delivered all our horses, saddles, and carriages to the army” and had suffered the loss of much property in South Carolina. Zubly enclosed a list of his losses to the governor and hoped that he might receive “your Excellency’s

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103 Hawes, 74-8. Diary entries are December 31, 1778, May 8, 9, 10, 11, 30, June 11, 14, and 27, 1779.
favorable consideration.”104 Though he had suffered much during the siege, Zubly joined many loyalists in drafting and sending a letter of congratulations to the governor after the repulse of the American siege. In the memorial, the loyal citizens of Georgia’s low country viewed the British success as a work of God. “We cannot pass over in silence the Deliverance afforded this Province by the interposition of Almighty God, when it was invaded by a Force of French and Rebels much superior to that which the Garrison consisted of. We attribute this Deliverance under God, to the bravery of the troops.” These citizens promised not to retaliate against their disloyal brethren as this would be “contrary to the Dictates of that Blessed Religion we profess.” They closed the memorial with a promise to continually pray for the king that “Almighty God…will pour down His Blessings upon Your Majesty, Your Royal Consort and Your numerous Offspring [and] that He will give You a long and happy reign and that Your Posterity may sway the Sceptre of the British Empire till Time is no more.” Christopher F. Triebner, the pastor of the Lutheran congregation at Ebenezer, joined Zubly in signing the memorial.105 Though it is impossible to attribute clearly the authorship of this memorial to Zubly, the language is reminiscent of many of his earlier published works. The royal authorities joined these citizens in gratitude to God for the salvation of the city by proclaiming October 29 a day of thanksgiving and prayer.106

Zubly proclaimed to friends and royal officials that he had been a “thorn” in the side of patriot leaders. The British retention of Savannah and their subsequent move

104 “Letter from John Zubly to Governor James Wright, November 30, 1779,” in Zubly Letters, GHS.
105 “To the King’s Most Excellent Majesty The Humble Address of the Judges, Grand Jury, and several other Inhabitants of the Province of Georgia,” in “Letter from Governor James Wright to Lord Germain, May 20, 1780,” in the “Letters of James Wright,” 300-3. Triebner had welcomed Campbell on his march from Savannah to Augusta in January, 1779. Though he remained a committed loyalist and left with the British when they evacuated Georgia, Triebner was unable to procure the loyalties of much of his congregation, in Coleman, 122.
106 Coleman, 129.
against South Carolina spurred Zubly to comment that the “Providence of God has interposed in our [British] favor in such a manner that even professed infidels would blush to discover, nay solemnly confess it.” He preached a thanksgiving sermon with “greater pleasure” than at any other time. Zubly decried the lack of religion that permeated “all denominations” and lamented that the war had separated him from former friends. He castigated ministers who sided with the patriots because they supported a “cause that extinguish[ed] all friendships and is attended with manifest disregard to an oath and a contempt of and neglect of the gospel and everything sacred.” Zubly spent the last years of his life separated from his evangelical friends. By December 1780, he was the only dissenting minister allowed to preach in British occupied territories. His diary illustrates the depth of his isolation. Though he preached to attentive gatherings of loyalists, his “own people {Independent, Presbyterian] universally shun me.” His friends, “not above one or three exceptions turned their back on my preaching.“ Zubly was particularly pained that his Presbyterian brother, James Gourlay of South Carolina, had been silenced by the British. “I am afraid he is swayed by motives inconsistent with loyalty which in the present scarcity of Gospel preachers is the more to be lamented. I am almost alone and…grievously disappointed…that the rebels should have any shadow of reason to call such a man theirs. How strong and how general is the destructive delusion!“ In June 1781, he wrote again that he was the “only Dissenter that can be admitted [to preach], arms from most divisions are still preferred even by Ministers to peace” with Britain.

107 “Letter from Zubly to unnamed ‘Gentlemen’, April 9, 1780,” in Zubly Letters, GHS.
108 “Letter from Zubly to the Secretary of the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge Among ye Poor, undated,” in Hawes, 105; “Letter from Zubly to James Edmonds, undated,” in Ibid., 105-6.
109 Ibid., 83, 97-8, 100. Diary entries are December 31, 1780, April 5, June 6, June 17, 1781. His diary reveals that he had made contact with Oliver Hart’s wife and retained a special affection for her. He either acknowledged Hart’s patriotism and the necessity for him to avoid capture or made an effort to change his allegiance when he wrote Hart urging him to “go with flag,” in Ibid., 91.
The war hung heavy over him, and he feared for the safety of his son and brother who he described alternately as “prisoners” or “fugitives” from the patriots. He increasingly railed against the continued fight being waged by the Americans against the British. In a series of essays, published under the pseudonym Helvetius, printed in the *Royal Georgia Gazette* between July and October 1780, Zubly attempted to sway his audience toward reconciliation with the British. He was particularly incensed that the Americans had refused the peace overtures of the crown and had flown to the French papists for support. Zubly, an early leader in the fight against British ministerial measures, now unabashedly called those who had risen to fight the British rebels deserving of the judgment of God. In his sixth essay, published on September 28, 1780, he took special pains in outlining his disagreement with pro-American church ministers. Zubly based his loyalty on the commands of Scripture that forbad rebellion. Those preachers, who “profess[ed] regard and obedience to Scriptures” but had decided to fight their rightful sovereign, would learn that they had followed “specious pretence and appearances” and would “incur the greatest guilt, and involve themselves, their country and posterity, into ruin.”

Zubly’s last literary efforts proved futile, and he died as the lone evangelical voice crying for a return to the British. His evangelical brethren maintained their staunch attachment to the patriot cause and indeed played a major role in winning the American Revolution through their efforts against the British in South Carolina.

During 1780 and 1781, South Carolina became the focal point of the American Revolution. Major victories by the British at Charleston and Camden were followed by American triumphs at King’s Mountain and Cowpens. Interspersed among these battles

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110 Hawes, 88; Miller, 172.
111 “Helvetius Number 6, September 28, 1780” in Ibid., 191.
were dozens of militia skirmishes throughout the state. The state became the site of the most brutal internecine fighting during the entire war resulting in a staggering percentage of American casualties. In this period, an estimated 1,089 patriots were killed while 2,478 more were wounded. These numbers constitute eighteen percent of the total deaths and thirty one percent of the total number wounded on the American side for the entire war.\textsuperscript{112}

Through the combined, yet often disjointed, efforts of the militia and the Continental army under Greene, the British eventually foundered in their attempt to cut off the Deep South from the rest of America. Though Greene must be given great credit for solidifying American gains, it would do great injustice to overlook the facts that the militia, prior to his arrival, destroyed the grand hopes of a loyalist supported restoration of crown authority and provided through their sustained uprising sufficient excuse for Lord Cornwallis to change his strategy. It is within these militia groups that evangelicals provided their greatest martial contributions to the American cause.

The retention of Savannah allowed Clinton to proceed with earlier plans to send an expedition from New York to capture Charleston. Sailing in December, 1779, the British force arrived outside Savannah in January, 1780.\textsuperscript{113} At the end of January, the British sailed for South Carolina landing south of Charleston at North Edisto. They quickly moved toward Charleston. Governor Rutledge was given dictatorial powers, and the state government began to fortify the city in earnest. Clinton ordered troops from Georgia to join him, while Rutledge commanded that militia companies come to the aid of the city. Clinton’s orders were obeyed, but the overwhelming majority of the South Carolina militia did not rise to the defense of Charleston. The British took surrounding islands and crossed

\textsuperscript{112} Nadelhaft, 61.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 130.
the Ashley River to establish a siege of the city by mid-February. In early April, the British advanced far enough to begin bombardment of Charleston. Augmented by reinforcements, Clinton finished encircling the city and sent cavalry under Lt. Colonel Banastre Tarleton to cut off American reinforcement and destroy American cavalry units working outside the city. General Benjamin Lincoln, commander of the American forces in Charleston, initially refused British demands for surrender, but by early May, the British had closed to within one hundred yards of the American line and were pounding the city with artillery fire. Realizing further resistance was futile, Lincoln surrendered the city on May 12, 1780.114

The fall of Charleston and the subsequent occupation of much of South Carolina by British troops led to the flight of many of the state’s Baptist leaders. Hart had received intelligence of the British invasion fleet heading from New York to the city in late 1779. Though he retained confidence, after receiving the news, that God was still “able to defend us,” the appearance of the British fleet on February 11 convinced him that he should flee with his family from Charleston lest he be made a prisoner. Five days later he and his family left Charleston. Before the city fell on May 12, he continued to pray often “with tears that poor Charlestown might be spared and not suffered to fall into the Enemy’s hands.” He and his family enjoyed the hospitality of many friends as they moved away from the British advance. Finally, Hart left his family and South Carolina for Virginia on June 2 accompanied by his protégé Edmund Botsford.115

Botsford, after his time spent as a militia chaplain, had been invited to take the pastorate at Welsh Neck Baptist. After a short visit in October, 1779, he settled with his family in Pee Dee a month later. When the British captured Charleston and began moving

through South Carolina, he feared that his ardent support of the revolutionary cause might make him an inviting target for tory vengeance and decided to flee the state with Hart.\footnote{Mallary, 55-6.} Richard Furman also feared the wrath of the British for his prominent activities in stirring up backcountry support for the revolutionary government. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a bounty was placed on Furman’s head by Cornwallis because he feared “the prayers of that godly youth more than the armies of Sumter and Marion.” Furman took his family into North Carolina and Virginia to avoid capture though he did return to the High Hills area and preached to various militia groups.\footnote{W. Furman, 12, 72; Cook, 27. Wood Furman states that he preached to Patrick Henry during his travels outside South Carolina.} Joseph Reese did not leave the state, but he moved from Congarees west into the Fairforest district in an attempt to escape the arrival of the British.\footnote{Townshend, 177.}

Evan Pugh did not leave his congregation. He visited with and heard sermons by Botsford and Hart as they passed through his neighborhood. Pugh also continued to take advantage of opportunities to preach to groups of soldiers gathering to combat the British invasion. His diary relates the sense of dread which fell over him as he heard stories of the British successes against American cavalry and the forts around Charleston. Finally, Charleston fell. Five days later, Pugh sat at home “much terrified about ye English light horse coming.” Instead of fleeing, Pugh took the parole offered by the British in early June though he unsuccessfully tried to give it less than two weeks later. On June 29, he swore allegiance to crown. It is possible that this friend of American liberty took these measures because he suffered arrest at the hands of the British.\footnote{Pugh, “Diaries,” 186-97; Loulie L. Owens, “South Carolina Baptists and the American Revolution,” \textit{JSCBHS} I (November 1975), 39.}

The fall of Charleston struck the Baptists hard. The Association ceased to meet
until after the war, and many of its leaders were forced from the state. The Baptist church buildings in Charleston were used during the occupation as storage buildings for animal feed and salt beef.\textsuperscript{120} Though bereft of much spiritual leadership, many Baptists took an active role in the pivotal partisan warfare that dominated the South Carolina backcountry in 1780 and 1781.

The British conquest of Charleston also devastated the Independent Church in Charleston. There had been no settled pastor since the death of Tennent though James Edmonds and the evangelical Anglican William Piercy, among others, supplied the church with ministry. Edmonds, who had probably taken the pastorate in early 1780, was imprisoned by the British at the fall of the city and services stopped for over two years. Several leading members, including David Ramsay, Thomas (convert of Whitefield) and James Legare, and James Thompson (a clergyman and school master), also served time in British prison ships or in St. Augustine. Thompson and John Lewis, a patriot and Anglican rector of St. Paul’s, Colleton, split time preaching to the captives at St. Augustine. They British forced them to desist because the two preachers refused to pray for the king or give thanksgiving for British victories. Many members were eventually exiled by the British. Most settled for the duration of the war in Philadelphia where they continued to meet together. The British nearly destroyed the church building by using it as a hospital then a stable.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{121} Howe, 376, 395-6, 451-2, 454-5, 457, 461, 470-1, 474. The Legares also worshiped at the Presbyterian church on St. John’s Island. They opened their home to Anglican William Piercy and his family after both were paroled by the British. There was another Presbyterian church in Charleston. Called the “Scotch meeting-house,” the congregants of this church maintained doctrines of the Scottish church instead of imbibing New Light teachings. Alexander Hewat was pastor of the church during the early Revolution but evidently left for London in 1776. Most other congregants abandoned the church and Charleston when the British evacuated in 1782. Though the “Scotch meeting-house” had suffered during the British occupation, it
Presbyterian and Congregational churches in the low country suffered greatly during the British invasion and occupation. Moses Allen had served the Congregational church at Wando Neck, outside Charleston, before moving to Midway, Georgia and death in the service of America. The British used the church building as a barracks before burning it and many old church books upon evacuation in 1782. Hugh Allison, who had eulogized Tennent and complimented Tennent’s great patriotism, left his church at James Island and moved into Charleston when the British arrived. He died during the occupation. The Presbyterian church at Cainhoy in St. Thomas’ Parish was used by the Americans as a hospital during the siege. Wiltown Presbyterian, in Colleton County near Stono Creek, was served during the early Revolution by Oliver Reese who had been ordained by Zubly, Edmonds, and Tennent. Upon Reese’s death in 1776, Thomas Henderson took the pulpit and later fought the British invasion as a regular soldier. The Presbyterian church at Indian Land, later called Stoney Creek located in the Beaufort area, was served by ardent evangelical and patriot James Gourley. He was evidently forbidden to preach by the British while they occupied the state. Gourley also supplied Bethel Presbyterian (Pon Pon) in Colleton County. Isaac Hayne, who had been involved in the struggle for religious liberty, called this church home. He served as a militia captain and became a martyr to the American cause when he was hanged by the British for breaking his parole. Haynes was well known and well liked. After Lord Rawdon and Lt. Colonel Nisbet Balfour sentenced him to die, pleas for his life came in from notable patriots, loyalists, and even from Lt. Governor William Bull. These remonstrances fell on deaf ears, and Haynes was hanged in

was in much better shape than the Independent meeting house. Therefore, the Independents joined those from the “Scotch” group who had remained in Charleston in using the “Scotch meeting-house” for worship, in “Journal of Archibald Simpson,” in Howe, 474. Ramsay was elected to represent South Carolina in the Continental Congress and served until 1786.
The move south by Clinton had in no small way rested on the belief that the majority of southerners would rise against the American cause and join the British in securing South Carolina and Georgia. For several weeks after the fall of Charleston, this planned for scenario appeared to be reality. Clinton promised pardon and called for the inhabitants to form militias for the protection of their homes. He promised pay and provision “in the same manner as the King’s troops.” Those who maintained their position of rebellion and actively sought to foment continued resistance would be “treated with the utmost severity.”

Clinton agreed with Lord Cornwallis that winning Charleston without securing the backcountry would bring no real advantage to British war aims. However, he believed that the rapid reduction of Charleston made this a real possibility if “the temper of our friends [loyalists] in these districts is such as has always been represented to us.”

In hopes of winning the hearts and minds of the state’s inhabitants, Clinton issued orders for easy treatment of those who were not considered “obstinate enemies of the king and constitution.” To this end, he wished to see the loyalist militia restrained “from offering violence to innocent and inoffensive people, and by all means…protect the aged, the infirm, the women and children of every denomination from insult or outrage.”

Cornwallis forwarded the desires of Clinton to officers serving in the field recommending “in the strongest manner to use your utmost endeavors to prevent the troops under your

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123 Ramsay, II, 482-3.
124 “Letter from Sir Henry Clinton to Lord Charles Cornwallis, May 20, 1780,” in Cornwallis Papers, Reel 1, South Carolina Archives. Subsequent reference to South Carolina Archives will be abbreviated SCA.
125 “Order from Sir Henry Clinton to Major Ferguson, May 22, 1780,” in Ibid.
command from committing irregularities” against the citizens of South Carolina.\textsuperscript{126} A popular belief among those seeking to subdue the state placed the blame for revolution on “pseudo philosophical political dreamers” and the financial desires of the merchant class in Charleston. It was hoped that the backcountry South Carolinians were “inclined toward peace, for they gain nothing from this war.”\textsuperscript{127}

By the end of May, the results of this policy gave Clinton reason for encouragement. He wrote to Cornwallis that every piece of information received seemed to indicate that growing “numbers of the most violent Rebels” were offering their services to the British. He was especially pleased that a large number of propertied South Carolinians pledged renewed allegiance to the crown. This initial tide of patriot capitulation induced Clinton to believe that the “general disposition of the people to be not only friendly to government but forward to take up arms in its support.”\textsuperscript{128} Clinton confidently asserted to his superiors in Great Britain “that there are few men in South Carolina who are not either our prisoners, or in arms with us.”\textsuperscript{129} Reports from the backcountry stated that “the Commander in Chief has no reason to doubt that the inhabitants are very well disposed to take an active part” in the restoration of crown authority.\textsuperscript{130} To solidify these apparent gains, Clinton ordered British troops to march into South Carolina to encourage loyalists and awe wavering rebels into submission. Many patriot militia leaders, including notable

\textsuperscript{129} “Letter from Clinton to the Right Honorable Lord George Germain, June 4, 1780,” in Tarleton, 79-80.
\textsuperscript{130} “Letter from Lt. Colonel Patrick Ferguson to Cornwallis, May 30, 1780,” in Ibid.
Presbyterians Andrew Pickens, Isaac Hayne, and Andrew Williamson took the proffered pardons.\textsuperscript{131}

In early June, Clinton prepared to take his army back to New York. He left Cornwallis with approximately 4,000 men to secure the gains in South Carolina and prepare for push into North Carolina. By this time, most of the patriot militia in South Carolina had laid down their arms. It was at this point that Clinton made a fatal error. He issued a proclamation on June 3 in which he demanded that all citizens “take an active part in settling and securing his Majesty’s government.” By June 20, “all the inhabitants of the province who were then prisoners on parole…should…be freed from their paroles, and restored to all the rights and duties belonging to citizens and inhabitants.” If persons who fit this description balked at this command, they would be “considered as enemies and rebels…and treated accordingly.” Though most of the militia had been willing to cease open hostilities with the British, this injunction to take up arms as British militia against the remaining patriots, with whom they had served and whom they still considered to be their countrymen, led to the partisan rising which confounded British hopes in the state. Believing their pardons to be revoked if they did not fight with the British, a large contingent of backcountry militiamen took up their arms again to face the British.\textsuperscript{132}

Clinton was mistaken in his assessment of South Carolina. Field commanders venturing into the backcountry commented on the unsettled nature of the region and the scarcity of loyalist support. The inhabitants were “at present overawed by the presence of…troops” but had not disarmed. They had only turned in “useless arms” while they had “kept their good ones” in case the opportunity to rise again presented itself. Clinton’s

\textsuperscript{131} Ramsay, II, 483; Pancake, 80-1.
\textsuperscript{132} Ramsay, II, 484-5.
proclamation had provided that opportunity. Though most in the backcountry had been “ill disposed” to the British, they had not opened real hostility until Clinton’s revocation of their paroles. This action freed them to reveal their true sentiments and “nine out of ten of them…embodied on the part of the Rebels.”

It is well known that the majority of the men in these backcountry militia groups were Presbyterians and Baptist. Much has been written about the Presbyterian leadership of renewed antagonism to the British in the backcountry. What has been forgotten is that most of these Presbyterians belonged to churches that were served by New Light Presbyterian ministers. Though it is impossible to know for certain the exact number of evangelicals who served in the militia, the influence of New Light preachers in spurring active resistance to the British is well documented. New Light ministers and their congregations, joined by their Covenanter brethren under the leadership of William Martin, led the fight against the British in the northern and western regions of the state. In the northeastern corner of the state, in the Pee Dee area, Presbyterians and Baptists rose to thwart Cornwallis’ plans and battle loyalists. The rising of these various groups of militia led Cornwallis to make fateful changes to his strategic aims and hastened his movement into Virginia.

The earliest setback to British hopes occurred in the New Acquisition district of South Carolina near the border of North Carolina. The inhabitants of the New Acquisition region consisted mainly of Presbyterians under the care of New Light patriots Joseph Alexander, Francis Cummins, and John Simpson. The major churches in the area were Bethel, Beersheba, Bullock’s Creek, and Bethesda. Here resistance to the British remained

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133 “Letter from Colonel Nesbit Balfour to Lord Cornwallis, June 24, 1780,” in Pancake, 81; “Letter from Lord Rawdon to Lord Cornwallis, July 7, 1780,” in Ibid., 89.
steadfast even in the dark days following the fall of Charleston.\textsuperscript{134} Capitulation had been briefly discussed at a muster at Bullock’s Creek meeting house but had been voted down. Small victories, including one over a group of loyalists at Mobley’s meeting house in Fairfield, by these partisans led to the arrival of a force of British loyalist troops led by Captain Christian Huck. Huck’s actions rapidly set the region ablaze. He and his men sought to detain John Simpson because they believed him to be the source of promoting resistance to the British. They arrived outside his home church at Fishing Creek on June 11, a Sunday morning. They missed Simpson by two days because he had marched off to serve as a soldier in one of the local militia companies. Huck and his band evidently murdered one of Simpson’s congregants, rifled through his belongings, and subjected his wife and family to ill treatment before burning his house.\textsuperscript{135} Huck reportedly let it be known that even if “the rebels were as thick as trees, and Jesus Christ himself were to command them” they could not withstand him.\textsuperscript{136} He and his men continued to ravage the area until July 12, 1780. Alternately called the Battle of Huck’s Defeat or Battle of Williamson’s Plantation, Huck’s forces were surprised and routed by partisans. Huck died in the battle, and the spirits of backcountry partisans were enlivened. Across the northern reaches of the state, volunteers poured in to join various patriot militia commanders, including Thomas Sumter, William Hill, and Edward Lacey, in their fight against the British.\textsuperscript{137}

New Light Presbyterian congregations across the backcountry rose to challenge the

\textsuperscript{134} Scoggins, 28-9; Moultrie, II, 236-7.  
\textsuperscript{135} Edgar, 54; Howe, 512-3; “Letter from Colonel James Williams to Mrs. Williams, July 4, 1780,” in Gibbes, II, 135-7.  
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 73-4; Joseph Gaston, “A Reminiscence of the War of the Revolution, in South Carolina,” ed, George Howe Historical Magazine (Columbia: N.p, August 1873), 90-1, SCL. Another variation of Huck’s alleged quote was that if “God Almighty was turned rebel, but that if they were twenty Gods on their side, they should all be conquered,” in Moultrie, II, 217.  
\textsuperscript{137} Edgar in Foreword to Scoggins; Tarleton, 85. Tarleton, referring to the Presbyterians at Waxhaws, stated “the Irish were the most averse of all other settlers to the British government in America.”
British. In the northwestern portion of the state, Joseph Alexander, an ardent patriot and New Light, encouraged his congregants at Bullock’s Creek. Many came armed to church meetings to protect themselves and Alexander from loyalists and the British. Alexander’s influence was widespread throughout the area, for he also itinerated among several churches in the New Acquisition and Fairforest regions. Another church in the region, Bethel, was served by Francis Cummins, a New Light admirer of Whitefield. Cummins served several stints in the militia, and the vast majority of Bethel’s congregants sympathized with the Americans. Near present day Spartanburg, Alexander founded the Presbyterian church at Nazareth. Representatives of this church, including Captain Andrew Berry, an elder in the church, served at various battles sites across the south including Musgrove’s Mill, King’s Mountain, Ninety Six, Brier Creek, Augusta, and Cowpens.138

Southeast of these congregations lay the Presbyterian churches at Duncan’s Creek and Catholic. At Duncan’s Creek, New Lights James Creswell, John Harris, and Joseph Alexander ministered. Creswell, a patriot who had aided Tennent on his backcountry mission, died in 1776. John Harris served in the provincial assembly and aided Tennent’s work as well. At Catholic, located between present day Columbia and Charlotte, an amalgamation of Presbyterian groups met. Though it would be erroneous to label this congregation as New Light, a substantial portion of its membership was, and Simpson rotated with William Martin in its supply. Either the church building or a branch of this church was burned by the British in 1780.139

Presbyterian congregations dotted the landscape south and westward to the

138 Howe, 430-1, 433, 435, 518, 542, 544.
139 Ibid., 427. Creswell’s “warm advocacy of Republican doctrines and his public deliverances on the liberty of the people subjected his widow and family, through the war, to frequent petty annoyances from the Tories,” in Ibid., 430.
Savannah River. Creswell also served Little River Church. From this area between the Laurens District and Newberry, bitter struggle between loyalist and partisan militias broke out. The church also suffered from this division. At least one elder, James Burnside, sided with the loyalists. However, another elder, James Williams later won fame in his service and death at King’s Mountain. In the Abbeville and Ninety Six districts, Long Cane Church, with its five branches, was served mainly by John Harris with visitations by Creswell and Alexander. Harris boasted that every member of his church held Whig principles, and traditional stories relate that he preached with a gun in his hands and a powder horn around his neck. Though several notable militia leaders emerged from this church, the most famous was the partisan leader Andrew Pickens, an elder at the Upper Long Cane branch. Pickens, who had initially taken the parole offered by Clinton, rejoined the war when loyalists burned his home. Believing the terms of his parole violated, he led or was involved in a number of prominent partisan victories, including Kettle Creek, during 1780 and 1781.  

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In the far north central part of the state, Waxhaw Presbyterian served a large contingent of Presbyterians. This region became the site of much conflict between the British and partisans, and members of this church provided the bulk of men actively opposing the British. William Richardson, an ardent New Light, had served as pastor until his death in 1771. During the early Revolution, Simpson, Alexander, and James Edmonds, a co-worker with Tennent in Charleston, supplied the pulpit. In 1779, Thomas Craighead, son of noted New Light and patriot Alexander Craighead from Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, became minister. He was driven out by the British in 1780. Waxhaw served as a rendezvous for Presbyterian patriots and a hospital for the wounded, including

140 Ibid., 428, 430, 438-9, 441-3, 448, 526-7, 550; Pancake, 85.
the Continental soldiers mauled at the infamous Buford’s Massacre by Tarleton and militia members wounded at the battles of Rocky Mount and Hanging Rock. The British attacked a gathering at the church after the massacre killing and imprisoning many. The British also reduced the church building to ashes.141

In the northeastern portion of the state near the Pee Dee and Black Rivers, the main Presbyterian churches were Williamsburg, Black Mingo, Salem, Indiantown, Aimwell, and Hopewell. Williamsburg had no regular pastor during the Revolution, but her congregants enjoyed visits by evangelicals Edmonds and Thomas Hill, an “English Independent and a missionary of Lady Huntingdon’s establishment.” The most famous of its partisan leaders was elder John James who fought with Francis Marion and Nathanael Greene. Thomas Reese, another New Light patriot and Princeton graduate, pastored the church at Salem. He had been tutored by Joseph Alexander. Killings by loyalists of his congregants eventually drove Reese into North Carolina. Hill also supplied Indiantown.142

These churches provided a disproportionate number of men to Marion’s legendary brigade. Established by members of Indiantown Presbyterian, Hopewell Church, just north of the Pee Dee River on the road between Cheraw and Georgetown, supplied five of

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141 Ibid., 417, 421, 536-8, 540. It was at this attack on the church that Andrew Jackson and members of his family were captured. Colonel Abraham Buford was attempting to aid Charleston when he heard the city had fallen. His continentals were attacked by Tarleton’s cavalry and destroyed. The slaughter, attributed to the lack of quarter given by Tarleton’s troops, helped stir backcountry resistance and similar partisan atrocities who practiced “Tarleton’s quarter” upon many unfortunate loyalists who fell into their hands.

142 Ibid., 407-14; William D. James, A Sketch of the Life of Brigadier General Francis Marion and a History of his Brigade from its Rise in June 1780 until Dishanded in December, 1782, Reprint (Marietta, GA: Continental Book Company, 1948), 82. Lady Huntingdon was Whitefield’s major benefactor. James may have been the grandson of Princeton president John Witherspoon. Howe places James as the founder of Indiantown and an elder at Williamsburg. He is also claimed as elder to the Indiantown congregation during the Revolution, in A Historical Sketch of Indiantown Presbyterian Church, 1757-1957 (N.p. Indiantown Bi-centennial Commission, 1957), 17-8. SCL, SC Counties Vertical Files (Williamsburg Co.) It is possible that all these different Presbyterian churches were offshoots of Williamsburg much like the branches of the Presbyterian church at Long Canes.
Marion’s captains. At least 200 of Marion’s fighters came from this group of churches.\textsuperscript{143} This support did not go unnoticed by the British. Tarleton and Major James Wemyss followed a scorched earth policy in three invasions of the area during 1780 and 1781. Wemyss ordered the church at Indiantown burned because he considered Presbyterian churches to be “sedition shops.” Bibles, “Rouse’s Psalms,” and the house of James also met the torch. These incendiary acts did not squelch the ardor of the Presbyterian residing in the Williamsburg area who continued to aid Marion throughout the remainder of the war.\textsuperscript{144}

Evangelical Baptists also rose to challenge the British. In the New Acquisition district, members of the Sandy River Baptist Church under the pastoral care of James Fowler, a Scots Irish settler who was ordained by the Baptists, joined their Presbyterian brethren in fighting the British. Joseph Camp, a member of Buffalo Baptist, a Separate congregation near the North Carolina line, was arrested by Cornwallis’s troops and interrogated regarding American troop movements.\textsuperscript{145} In the Newberry district, the patriot congregants of Littleton’s meeting house suffered great loss during the Revolution.\textsuperscript{146} The greatest number of partisan Baptists was found in the Pee Dee area around Welsh Neck and Cashaway churches. Colonels Abel Kolb and George Hicks, along with Major (later general) Tristram Thomas, were members of Welsh Neck. Major Robert Lide was a friend of Evan Pugh at Cashaway.\textsuperscript{147} Kolb, who had helped found the St. David’s Society and been elected to represent the Pee Dee area in the state assembly, marched to the aid of

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 414; \textit{A Historical Sketch of Indiantown}, 15. Major Wemyss led a group of loyalist soldiers.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 481-5. Rouse’s Psalms received special ire from the British because it was a Scottish version of the Psalms favored by the Scots-Irish settlers, in Edgar, 134.
\textsuperscript{145} Scoggins, 29-30; Townsend, 139.
\textsuperscript{146} W. Furman, 63-4. This church numbered nine widows with orphans in a six square mile district after the war.
\textsuperscript{147} Townsend, 177-8; Pugh, “Diaries,” vii, 152, 194, 199, 204-5. Pugh’s daughter married Hugh Lide, the son of Robert Lide. One entry in Pugh’s diary refers to Lide as a colonel.
Charleston in 1780. After the city fell, he took his men back to the Pee Dee and became a colonel in Marion’s Brigade commanding the area around present day Society Hill, South Carolina. He was a fierce foe of the loyalist bands that roamed the Pee Dee. He paid for these activities with his life on April 28, 1781. A loyalist force surrounded his home and threatened to burn it down around his family. Kolb decided to surrender and in the process of handing over his sword was gunned down. General Greene had noticed the service of Kolb and sent Marion condolences upon hearing of his death.\textsuperscript{148} Thomas, the son of Robert Thomas who pioneered Baptist work in the area, waged “an exterminating war with tories” in the district around Cheraw.\textsuperscript{149} Several Baptist ministers, including both Regulars and Separates, served in the army. It is estimated that forty percent of Baptists in South Carolina served militarily or provided supplies for the patriot cause.\textsuperscript{150}

By August 1780, the British experienced opposition from across the northern half of the state. In the Pee Dee, Cornwallis described a hornet’s nest of anti-British sentiment. “The whole country between Pedee and Santee” was in “an absolute state of rebellion…and detachments of the enemy have appeared on the Santee and threatened our stores and convoys on the river.” Cornwallis’ victory at Camden did little to dissipate the militia rising in that quarter. Cornwallis complained to Clinton that “the disaffection…of the country east of Santee is so great, that the account of our victory (Camden) could not penetrate it.” Loyalists who tried to spread the news were being threatened with death. This


\textsuperscript{149} Annie C. Munnerlyn, compiler, “Baptist Churches of the Pee Dee Section and Early Ministers,” MS [R] vol. bd. 1966, SCL; James, 64-5.

\textsuperscript{150} Townshend, 177-8, 278. Townshend estimates that 1,500 Baptist men were of military age and that 600 aided the fight against the British in some way.
state of affairs led Cornwallis to moves of greater severity against captured militia. He ordered Wemyss to “punish severely” parole breakers and ordered the executions of several.\(^{151}\) Cornwallis recognized the success of Marion and believed “that there was scarcely an inhabitant between the Santee and Pedee that was not in arms against us.” To convince the inhabitants that “there was a power superior to Marion,” Cornwallis sent Tarleton into the Pee Dee to gain control of the region. Tarleton reported that the militia had “flocked” to him and that his arrival had stopped a general revolt that would have cut off supplies to the army at Camden.\(^{152}\) Tarleton may have quieted the region for a brief time, but soon Cornwallis found the prevalence of the militia in the Pee Dee made it uninviting territory for his army.

In the northwestern corner of the state, the militia delivered a catastrophic blow to loyalists at King’s Mountain and crushed British hopes for staunch loyalist support in the backcountry. Cornwallis had moved on Charlotte and was being covered by a force of loyalists under the command of Major Patrick Ferguson. On October 7, 1780, Ferguson’s force was destroyed by a combined force of American partisans composed of Virginians, North Carolinians, South Carolinians, Georgians, and “over mountain” men from what is today Tennessee. Most of these men belonged to New Light Presbyterian congregations, and most of the leaders were Presbyterian elders. Before breaking camp in North Carolina, they were encouraged by a sermon from Samuel Doak, a New Light Presbyterian minister educated at Princeton.\(^{153}\) Ferguson had bragged that his position at King’s Mountain, located on a high hill southwest of Charlotte near the North Carolina border, was

\(^{151}\) “Letter from Cornwallis to Clinton, August 6, 1780,” in Pancake, 98; “Letter from Cornwallis to Clinton, August 23, 1780,” in Ibid., 109; “Letter from Cornwallis to Clinton, August 29, 1780,” in Ibid., 110.
\(^{152}\) Tarleton, 174, 201; “Letter from Cornwallis to Clinton, December 3, 1780,” in Ibid., 200.
\(^{153}\) John Buchanan, *The Road to Guilford Courthouse: The American Revolution in the Carolinas,* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997), 213. The subject of the sermon was “the sword of the Lord and of Gideon.”
impregnable and that “God Almighty himself could not drive” him out. By the end of the battle, Ferguson was dead, and loyalists throughout the backcountry, hearing of his defeat, lost their nerve.\textsuperscript{154} The defeat of Ferguson forced Cornwallis back into South Carolina. Clinton later revealed that he viewed King’s Mountain as the beginning of a chain of events that “ended in the total loss of America” because “it encouraged that spirit of rebellion in both Carolinas that…could never be afterward humbled.” Clinton believed that Ferguson’s defeat produced “a general panic and despondency” among the loyalists of the region.\textsuperscript{155}

Three months later, in January 1781, General Daniel Morgan with his Continentals, accompanied by militia, delivered a staggering blow to Tarleton at Cowpens, northeast of Spartanburg. Evangelicals noted the twin successes as evidence that God was still working for their cause. George Park, a member of a New Light Presbyterian church served by Simpson, Edmonds, and Alexander, wrote to his brother affirming that “God wrought Special Miracles” by the hands of the militia at King’s Mountain and that “God had subdued” Tarleton at Cowpens.\textsuperscript{156} Oliver Hart, now settled in New Jersey, received word of the victory at Cowpens and noted in his diary that Morgan had given credit “under God, to the justice of our cause, and the bravery of our troops.” Hart added his own prayer that “the Almighty will continue to own our righteous cause, spirit up our troops and subdue the enemy, until the independence of America is fully established.”\textsuperscript{157} His fellow Baptist preacher, Pugh, noted Tarleton’s defeat and commented that “many people” gathered “all day,” evidently discussing the good news.\textsuperscript{158}

\textsuperscript{154} Pancake, 82, 118; McGrady, 789-90.
\textsuperscript{156} “Letter from George Park to Arthur Park, July 23, 1782,” in George Park Papers, SCL; Howe, 422.
\textsuperscript{157} Hart, “Diary,” Hart Papers, Folder 2, SCL. Diary entry is February 15, 1781.
\textsuperscript{158} Pugh, “Diaries,” 203. Diary entry is January 25, 1781.
The rising of the partisan militia proved to be an insurmountable problem for British commanders in South Carolina. In October, Lord Rawdon wrote to Major General Leslie that no army of size rose to meet him but that small bands of mounted militia harassed him and easily slipped away. They could not be pursued because any area left behind by the British would soon turn into a cauldron of partisan activity. Where there were no settled British troops there was partisan ascendancy. Rawdon complained that this reality “greatly circumscribes our efforts” and of the “difficulty which must attend a defensive war on this frontier.” Cornwallis wrote to Clinton outlining the danger to his army that the militia posed. “The difficulties I have had to struggle with have not been occasioned by the opposite army (they always keep at a considerable distance, and retire at our approach) but…the perpetual risings in the different parts of this province.” The partisan militia almost always bested any loyalists they faced which rendered “the assistance of regular troops, everywhere necessary.” Colonel Balfour wrote Clinton in February stating that he was taking a portion of his garrison “over the Santee” which he hoped would “free the country between the river and the Pedee of those parties of the enemy which of late have so much infested it, and restore to the lower district of the province that peace they have for some weeks been deprived of.”

Cornwallis decided to move into North Carolina in an attempt to get Greene to follow him. In doing so, he evidently hoped that the removal of the Continentals might enervate the militia. Greene did follow and engaged Cornwallis on March 18, 1781 at Guilford Courthouse in present day Greensboro, North Carolina. The battle ended when

159 “Letter from Colonel Lord Rawdon to Major General Leslie, October 24, 1780,” in Clinton, 468-9; “Letter from Colonel Lord Rawdon to Major General Leslie, October 31, 1780,” in Ibid., 470.
160 “Letter from Lord Cornwallis to Clinton, January 6, 1781,” in Ibid., 485; “Letter from Colonel Balfour to Clinton, February 14, 1781,” in Ibid., 487.
Greene withdrew from the field. Cornwallis now faced a choice whether to proceed across North Carolina to the safe haven of Wilmington or return to South Carolina to aid Rawdon’s efforts. He decided not to re-enter South Carolina. Cornwallis wrote to Major General Phillips a month after Guilford Court House that he had chosen the Wilmington route because he did not think he could aid Rawdon in time, and this would have placed him in a dire predicament due to geography of the country, “the numerous militia, the almost universal spirit of revolt…and the strength of Greene’s army.” Having received “the disagreeable accounts, that the upper posts of South Carolina were in imminent danger, from an alarming spirit of revolt among many of the people;“ Cornwallis believed that a move into Virginia “would tend to the security of South Carolina.“ He thought that a catastrophic defeat in South Carolina would energize partisans in North Carolina and the “spirit of revolt in that province [North Carolina] would become very general, and the numerous rebels…be encouraged to be more than ever active and violent.“ In May, after having arrived in Virginia, Cornwallis sent a dispatch to Clinton trying to allay worry about the degenerating situation in South Carolina. He did not believe British forces would meet with any “serious misfortunes.” However, he added, with a hint of hopefulness, that should Rawdon be forced to abandon Camden and set up a defensive perimenter inside the Santee and Congaree regions, the British would only be giving up indefensible posts and a “part of the country, which for some months past we have not really possessed.”

Though Cornwallis tried to reassure the commander in chief, Clinton had received a letter from Lord Balfour in South Carolina detailing the dire nature of the British situation.

position. Balfour wrote to inform Clinton “that the general state of the country is most distressing…the enemy’s parties are everywhere” and that “the defection of this province [was] so universal that I know no mode short of depopulation to retain it.”

Clinton immediately sent a letter to Cornwallis seeking to know the reasons for his move into Virginia. Balfour’s letter had alerted him to the “disordered state of Carolina and Georgia,” and Clinton dreaded “what may be the consequences of Your Lordship’s move unless a reinforcement arrives very soon in South Carolina.” Clinton argued that Cornwallis should only have moved northward when South Carolina was safe.

Before Clinton’s letter arrived, Cornwallis sent him the rationale for his move to Virginia. Cornwallis understood his orders to be the “security…of South Carolina.” Because his moves in North Carolina had failed to reduce the uprising in South Carolina, he moved into Virginia in an effort to cut off supplies to the southern Continental army and the militia in the backcountry of South Carolina. Cornwallis argued “that until Virginia was to a degree subjected, we could not reduce North Carolina or have any certain hold of the backcountry of South Carolina.” In this letter, Cornwallis paid backhanded tribute to southern militia. “I will not say much in praise of the militia of the southern colonies; but the list of British officers and soldiers killed and wounded by them since last June [1780], proves but too fatally that they are not wholly contemptible.” Cornwallis justified his move away from South Carolina again the next month repeating the same rationalization to Clinton he had given Phillips in April. A move back into South Carolina made possible the destruction of his army. Cornwallis reiterated his belief that a “defensive war on the frontiers of that province, which I have long since declared…to be in my opinion

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162 “Letter from Colonel Balfour to Clinton, May 8, 1781,” in Clinton, 520.
163 “Letter from Clinton to Cornwallis, May 29, 1781,” in Ibid., 523-5.
impracticable, against the rebellious inhabitants supported by a continental army.”

Clinton was dismayed at Cornwallis’ decision to move against Virginia. He wrote to Lord Germain that he had left “a very fair proportion of my army” in South Carolina, a number “thought sufficient to secure South and recover North Carolina.” This force had proven insufficient for the task. Clinton informed the ministry that the “sanguine hopes of the speedy reduction of the southern provinces” was not a present possibility because “many untoward events…have thrown us too far back to be able to recover very soon even what we have lately lost there.” British hopes for retaining their conquest had rested on “the good will of the inhabitants.” In South Carolina, good will was in short supply, and Clinton lamented that British failures had made the forecast for recovery bleak. Clinton wrote Cornwallis stating clearly his disagreement with the tactical moves the latter had made. Clinton argued that Cornwallis could have marched much more easily from Guilford Court House back to South Carolina than to Wilmington. Had Cornwallis done this, Rawdon and his force could have met him with supplies at the Pee Dee. Clinton argued that no army had stood between Cornwallis and Rawdon, and therefore, the juncture could have been executed and “the country would probably have been…opened.” In claiming that no force stood between Cornwallis and Rawdon, Clinton, from the relative safety of his post in New York, evidently decided not to acknowledge the potency of the seething masses of partisan militia that Cornwallis did indeed face and from whom his forces had suffered much loss.

164 “Letter from Cornwallis to Clinton, June 30, 1781,” in Ibid., 535; “Letter from Cornwallis to Clinton, July 24, 1781,” in Cornwallis, 74-6. In a letter to Clinton on May 26, 1781, Cornwallis had asserted the “infinite difficulty of protecting a frontier of three hundred miles against a persevering enemy, in a country where we have no water communication, and where few of the inhabitants are active or useful friends,” in Ibid., 80, 83.
The necessity of supplying Cornwallis with sufficient troops for the southern campaign hampered Clinton’s efforts in the north. Clinton wrote Cornwallis asking him to return any troops that were not necessary for his safety. In a letter to Germain, Clinton lamented the lack of troops at his disposal. Because these troops had been necessary to stave off disaster in the south, Clinton had been hamstrung in taking more offensive steps in the northern theater. Clinton told Germain that had he had these troops he would have been able to attack Continental stores at Philadelphia and been in a position to take advantage of any missteps by Washington’s army.167 Whether Clinton would have made use of these troops in the manner he describes is open to conjecture, but it is plausible to assume that Washington may not have been able to disengage his force for the march to Virginia if Clinton had been able to make more active forays outside the confines of New York City.

Cornwallis’ decision to move north eventually sealed the fate of the Revolution. He and his men were hemmed in at Yorktown and surrendered in October 1781 to a combined American and French force. The loss of Cornwallis’ army effectively ended any real hopes the British had for regaining America. The rising of the militia in South Carolina played a key role, by necessitating the reinforcement of the southern British army, in debilitating Clinton’s ability to break out of his box in New York. It also precipitated Cornwallis’ move into Virginia which led ultimately to his surrender. The partisan militia was composed of many South Carolinians of differing religious stripes, but the backbone of this militia was composed of New Light Presbyterians, located throughout the state with particular strength in the northern and western regions, joined by Baptists in the Pee Dee area. If credit is to be

given to the militia for their role in destroying British plans in the Deep South, as many
historians have done, that credit must be extended to leading evangelical ministers who
provided inspiration for the rising and to the evangelical militiamen who followed their
lead and discomfited the British at every turn. South Carolina appears to have been the
anvil upon which the British aims for the colonies were finally broken. As such,
evangelicals played a major role in wielding the hammer. For their role, they deserve a
share in the credit for winning the American Revolution
Chapter 7  

Post-war Evangelical Growth and Political Activity

The war in the Deep South produced great devastation. Roaming bands of partisan and loyalist militias took turns committing great outrages against their foes. The fighting between militia groups became synonymous with murder and pillage.¹ The work of religion received a temporary setback due to the mustering of many of the faithful and to the destruction that the war unleashed. Some ministers, particularly in the coastal cities occupied by the British, continued their routine functions, but others, mostly those aligned with the Americans in the backcountry regions, joined in the actual fighting or were forced to flee leaving the remains of their congregants to snatch fleeting spiritual sustenance from licentiates or lay exhorters.² Church buildings, particularly those used by evangelical groups that supported the Revolution, throughout South Carolina and Georgia were desecrated by improper use (stables, storage) or burned in fits of rage by armed combatants. The British were particularly guilty of these outrages. In the case of New Light Presbyterians, the fires kindled by the British served as a sustaining pillar of resistance. 

Government officials in the revolutionary governments also used the “sacrilegious” actions


² Records of German St. John’s Lutheran Congregation of Charleston, South Carolina, Translated by Henry Sylvester Jacoby, (N.p., 1938), 57, 97-8, in GHS; The Minutes of St. Michael’s Church of Charleston, 139-41; Edward Jenkins Memo Book, 1780-1782, St. Michael’s Church Records, Microfiche, SCL.
of the British against the “holy Temples of the Most high” to flay the inhumanity of the invaders and to augment support for the righteousness of the American cause.³

The number of Presbyterians in South Carolina before the war dwarfed that of Georgia. Presbyterian churches suffered particularly under the hand of the British. Charred remains of meeting houses dotted South Carolina. In Georgia, the strength of Presbyterian evangelicalism had been Zubly’s Independent Church. Archibald Simpson, a Presbyterian preacher who spent the war marooned in Scotland, returned to find the low country between Charleston and Savannah a scene of desolation. He traveled to Savannah in 1784 and noted that Zubly’s church was in a “very ruinous condition...having been a hospital.” Despite the lamentable state of the country and of religion, he preached to “numerous and well behaved audiences.”⁴

The Independent Church in Savannah did not recover until the 1790s. In general, Presbyterians in South Carolina could not match the phenomenal growth of other evangelical groups, namely the Baptists and the newly arrived Methodists. Still, Presbyterians in South Carolina, enjoying the benefits of quiet and peace, began to restore centers of worship throughout the 1780s.⁵

Baptists recovered more quickly than Presbyterians. By 1782, the British had been pushed into coastal enclaves surrounding Charleston and Savannah. Though small

3 Edgar, 65; John Rutledge, “The Speech of His Excellency John Rutledge… to the General Assembly…the 18th Day of January, 1782,” 2; “Act of Confiscation and Banishment, May 4, 1782,” in Candler, I, 374. The Georgia Assembly noted the cruelty of the British could only be transcended by the “Abandoned profligacy of setting torches to temples dedicated to the service of the most high God...a violation of every right human and divine.”

4 Excerpt of diary of Archibald Simpson in Howe, 464-69; “Letter from Archibald Simpson to John Lambert, May 3, 1784,” in Ibid. Simpson noted that Zubly “in his last days played an inconsistent part, changing sides from Congress to the British, and died despised by both; yet I am persuaded he was a real good man and that he is now in the kingdom of heaven.” Simpson also catalogued the destruction of the Anglican church building at Sheldon, South Carolina and the “ruinous condition” of Christ Church in Savannah.

5 Howe, 551, 561; Heyrman, 262-3; Robert Smith, “Historical Sketch: Of the Presbyterian Church in Savannah, transmitted to the editor, by their present worthy Pastor, the Rev. Robert Smith,” in Georgia Analytical Repository, ed Henry Holcombe, I, no. 2 (Savannah: Seymour, Woolhopter, & Stebbins, 1802), 50.
skirmishes continued to occur, a measure of normalcy began to return. In South Carolina, Baptist leaders, with the exception of Hart who had accepted the pastorate of a Baptist church in Hopewell, New Jersey, filtered back into the state. Edmund Botsford, who had been invited to take the helm of Welsh Neck in 1779, returned to fill the post in January 1782. Furman returned from North Carolina. The Charleston Association met again for the first time since the British invasion and commissioned ministers to visit destitute churches. In November, 1782, Baptists celebrated a “day of thanksgiving for the interpositions of providence in favor of America.” In 1783, Botsford, Furman, and Pugh revived the standing committee of the Regular Baptists.\(^6\)

The brutality of the war in South Carolina gave rise to instances of church discipline. The leaders at Welsh Neck called for the examination of those accused of “plundering.” One member, Gideon Parish confessed and made restitution. Others, including Tristram Thomas, were accused of “disorderly walking” during the conflict. After examination, the church was satisfied with the explanations, and the men were restored to fellowship.\(^7\) The war ravaged the Separates. The Congaree Association, the primary vehicle of Separate coordination and communication, collapsed due to the Revolution. The psychological toll taken by the war on the unity of the Separates is illustrated in the founding church principles of a new Separate congregation formed, in 1784, on Padgett’s Creek in the Fairforest region. This church, established in an area in which partisans and loyalists fought constant skirmishes, stated that they would “open our doors to any orderly minister or Church of the Separate Order, that doth not tolerate War.”\(^8\)

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\(^7\) Welsh Neck Minutes, 31.

\(^8\) Townshend, 175, 180.
Older historical work credited the post-war growth of Baptist strength in the South to the energy of the Separates. Though this may have been true in other regions, it was not true in South Carolina. Separate and Regular Baptist churches continued to exist in the 1780s, but these designations gradually dissipated as the two groups moved closer together in fellowship. Though no formal union ever came into existence, the Baptists of South Carolina and Georgia followed the lead of their brethren in North Carolina and Virginia. The Baptists in these states united together in 1787 under the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. In doing so, both groups united in common beliefs regarding a Calvinistic understanding of salvation and the primacy of biblical authority for church and secular life. Separates acknowledged the long standing Regular desire for more cooperation among the Baptist churches.9 This confession, which had long been acknowledged and acceded to by the Regular Baptists in South Carolina and Georgia, now became the overarching creed of nearly all Baptists in the South and signaled the rise of Baptist doctrinal hegemony in the region. The willingness of the Separates to make these concessions was coupled by a softening of Regular opinion toward the revivalist history of the Separates. The Separate tendency to utilize every public gathering for the proclamation of the gospel, considered “irregular,” was now looked upon as a commendable quest for “precious souls…constrained by the love of Christ.” Through their efforts, “thousands of able and evangelical writers and preachers [had] been raised up, and many gospel churches formed.”10 It appears then that the surge in Baptist strength which followed the war came about principally via the augmentation of the cooperation between Regulars and Separates


begun before the war, the acquiescence of Separates to the doctrinal principals of the Regulars, and the infusing, though toned down, zeal brought into the relationship by Baptists of Separate origin.

Examples of Separate and Regular cooperation in the decade following the war are numerous. One instance can be seen in the formation of the Cheraw Hill Baptist Church. This church was an offshoot of Welsh Neck and was formed into a distinct congregation in January, 1782. Officiating ministers at the constitution meeting included Botsford, the Regular patriot, and Philip Mulkey, the Separate whose loyalist leanings were earlier catalogued.11 Further evidence of mingling is seen in the minutes of the Charleston Association. In 1785, Silas Mercer, the Separate co-worker of Daniel Marshall in Georgia and a leading member of the Georgia Association, was the primary speaker at that year’s association meeting.12 Joseph Reese continued to hold out against joining the Charleston Association, but he continued his close fellowship with his Regular brethren. The most able Baptist leader in the state, Richard Furman, had taken his church into the Regular fold during the war and, in 1785, became the pastor at Charleston Baptist Church from which he led South Carolina’s Baptists until his death.13 In 1789, the Bethel Association organized to serve Baptist churches in the northwestern region of the state near Spartanburg. This group numbered 1,360 members in 1791. Though retaining certain Separate characteristics and enfolding many of the earlier Separate churches, this association and the Charleston Association maintained close fellowship by sending messengers to the annual meetings of the respective conferences. Henry Holcombe, a veteran of the Revolution and Regular pastor, preached the opening sermon to the Bethel Association conference in 1791. He,

11 Welsh Neck Minutes, 31. Date of the church’s formation was January 12, 1782.
12 Townshend, 112-5.
13 Ibid., 27.
along with the other Regular messengers, was received “unanimously and affectionately.” A day of thanksgiving was set aside by the conference for “the union and good correspondence subsisting between us and the Charleston Association.” In the circular letter sent from the meeting, the conveners noted the “great satisfaction to every generous and catholic spirit concerned” at the fellowship with their Regular brethren and encouraged the “use of all means, tending to the farther consolidation of this desirable union.”

By 1785, the Charleston Association recouped any numerical losses from the war and had almost doubled its membership from 1775. This growth continued into the early 1790s. The annual meeting in 1788 recorded 1,563 members. This number had increased to 2,008 by 1791. These numbers, when compared to those of the Bethel Association, show that assigning the growth of Baptists to the Separates misses the evangelical activity of Regulars. Baptist leaders concerned themselves with more than church discipline and evangelism. They also made plans for petitioning the legislature for various church incorporations and recovery of lost church lands. They also took the time, in a theme continued from Revolutionary days, to lament the iniquity which swirled around them. Using the fall of the Jewish nation due to its sinfulness as an illustration, the circular letter from the 1791 meeting implored Baptists to be grateful to God for delivery from “the horrors of war,” the “land of plenty” in which they resided, and the “greater degree of liberty, civil and religious, than any other nation in our world” they enjoyed.

In Georgia, Separates and Regulars enjoyed fellowship from the earliest days of Baptist work. This continued in the decade following the war. Alexander Scott, who had

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14 Minutes of the Bethel Association, Held at the Baptist Church on Jamey’s Creek, Spartanburg County, South Carolina, Begun on Saturday, August 13, 1791; Minutes of the Charleston Association, Held at the Welch Neck, Pedee, November 5, 1791.
15 Ibid., 112-5. Records indicate that in 1775 the Charleston Association counted 529 members. That number had grown to 890 in 1779. By 1785, the count stood at 966 members.
16 Minutes of the Charleston Association, Charleston, October 27, 1788; Charleston Minutes, 1791, 5.
served with Daniel Marshall before becoming pastor of the Regular congregation at Bethel Baptist Church [on the Black River in South Carolina], preached at the Georgia Association’s meeting in 1788, as Mercer had preached for the Charleston Association in 1785. The growth of Baptists in Georgia mirrored that of South Carolina. When the war ended in Georgia, there were eight known churches. At the 1788 Georgia Association meeting, at least 33 churches existed with nearly 2,500 in membership. By 1794, sixty Baptist churches operated in the state with a membership approaching 4,500 communicants.17

Evangelicals continued their involvement in and concern for political matters after the successful conclusion of the war. Oliver Hart published a sermon soon after the conclusion of the war in which he outlined his beliefs regarding the propriety of Christian involvement in the affairs of governance. Hart stated that “civil, or even military office, is by no means incompatible with true piety. It is therefore weakness in the extreme to exclude professors from acting either in the government or defense of their country.” Though Christians were “most likely [to] succeed and prove a blessing” in service to the state, Hart did remind his brethren that service to Christ and the church must take precedence to public service.18 The most comprehensive treatment of civic duty by a southern evangelical veteran of the Revolution was by Henry Holcombe. Writing in a series of essays published in his own Analytical Repository in 1802, Holcombe urged evangelicals to be vigilant in the performance of their duties to the state. He reminded his

17 Minutes of the Georgia Association, At an Association, begun and holden at Clark’s Station, on the Saturday before the third Sunday in October, 1788, and days following, 3; History of the Baptist Denomination in Georgia, 24.
18 Oliver Hart, A Humble Attempt to Repair the Christian Temple. A Sermon Shewing the business of officers and private members in the church of Christ, and how their work should be performed: with some motives to excite professors ardently to engage in it. Preached in the City of Philadelphia, October 21, 1783, (Philadelphia: Robert Aitken, 1785), 8.
readers that the privilege of voting had been won at a considerable cost and that Christians need to pay attention to “political affairs.” While some might look askance at a minister involved in politics, Holcombe reminded readers that the Apostle Paul had considered his Roman citizenship a prized possession. Christians had the same “natural rights” as other citizens and should exercise them so that their “moderation” and “virtue” would “be made known to all men.” Holcombe realized that politicians might act contrary to right, but Christians needed to respect the offices they held and bear patiently “inconveniences” to rights. A time might arise when the laws of God had to be obeyed before those of man, and he even stated that there may come a future day when a new revolution might justifiably occur. Holcombe attacked the doctrine of non-resistance arguing that self-defense allowed for use of the sword to combat “submission to iniquitous measures.” Free men must ever be vigilant lest they “resign themselves and their posterity to all the horrors of slavery.” The best way for Christians to guard against this possibility was to avail themselves of the opportunity to vote in all elections to which they were eligible.¹⁹

Evangelicals did indeed continue political involvement. In South Carolina, at least ten Baptists served in the state senate or house. Evan Pugh and Richard Furman, with three other Baptists, were elected to represent their districts in the convention called to ratify the state constitution in 1790. While at the convention, Furman argued against the exclusion of the clergy from the legislature in the state constitution and supported ridding the new constitution of the older provisions which had enforced Protestant qualifications for office. Of this group, we know that Pugh voted for ratification. Henry Holcombe was selected to

¹⁹ Holcombe, “To the friends of Religion, in the State of Georgia, on their Duties, in reference to civil Government,” in Georgia Analytical Repository, I, no. 3 (Savannah: Seymour, Woolhopter, & Stebbins, 1802), 96-101; Ibid., no. 4, 169-171; Ibid., no. 5, 227-8. By the time Holcombe wrote, the nation had split into political parties. He urged Christians to be involved in both state and federal government but to avoid being caught up in party spirit.
the ratifying convention for the federal constitution and voted for its adoption. Colonel Arthur Simkins served as a presidential elector in 1789. In Georgia, Abraham Marshall and Jeremiah Walker took part in the state constitutional convention in 1789. When this constitution was amended in 1795, Benjamin Davis, Thomas Polhill, and Silas Mercer were delegates. When the state constitution was again considered in 1798, Baptist ministers attending were Polhill, Davis, George Franklin, Benjamin Mosely, Thomas Gilbert, and Jesse Mercer. Mercer is credited with much of the writing on the section of the 1798 constitution outlining religious liberty. The presence of such men as Marshall, Walker, and the Mercers is illustrative of the steps many Separates had taken to full involvement in political life. Little is known about Georgia Baptist involvement in the ratification debate over the federal constitution. However, the Georgia Association meeting in 1788 called for a day of fasting and prayer to implore, among other things, God’s favor in making “the Federal Government, shortly to commence, a blessing to these States.”

Most evangelicals in the Deep South were avowed republicans. These evangelical proponents of republicanism included educated lowcountry clergy like William Tennent and backcountry Separate Baptists like Silas Mercer. They mixed republican and Christian tenants so freely that it is sometimes difficult to ascertain where republicanism and Christianity diverged. Almost all evangelicals in the south were fervent apologists for the republican form of government ushered in by the break with Great Britain. The same sins or “vices” that affronted God undermined the republic. Tenants of right Christian living or

20 Townshend, 278-9; W. Furman, Richard Furman, 20; Rogers, 70; Pugh, Diaries, 301; Holcombe, “To the friends…,” no. 5, 227. Baptists who served in the state senate were Tristram Thomas, William Thomas, William Dewitt, Morgan Brown, and Robert Ellison. Baptists who served in the state house of representatives were Arthur Simkins, Thomas Sereven, Frame Woods, John Grimball, and David D. Stoll.
21 Campbell, 263.
22 Georgia Association Minutes, 1788, 4.
“virtues” that marked out a true servant of God also illuminated the good republican citizen. The triumphal march of Christ’s kingdom against the hosts of Satan had been aided by the triumph of republicanism over the bigotry and persecution of stringent church-state alliances. This evangelical republicanism retained a strong hold on the minds of southern evangelical leaders for decades after the war and is evidenced by their political writings into the early 1800’s. Southern evangelicals may not have always agreed on the proper ways to implement republican goals, much as they disagreed on points of theological doctrine, but they almost universally agreed that the only proper form of government was that of a republic.23

The thorniest political difficulty facing evangelicals in South Carolina and Georgia was the role of government in the support of religion. Almost total agreement reigned on the need for religion to inculcate the virtues necessary for the sustenance and longevity of republican government. Evangelicals split over the best way to diffuse religion into the populace. Baptists almost universally opposed any legislative measures involving pecuniary support for religious instruction. Presbyterians, however, were divided. In the famed debate in Virginia over Patrick Henry’s attempt to provide public support for teachers of religion, Baptists rallied against the measure while Presbyterians initially supported the legislation before finally rejecting Henry’s proposal. This long-running debate finally culminated in the passage of Thomas Jefferson’s immortal statute for religious freedom in 1786. Though no exact replication of this dramatic debate in Virginia occurred in South Carolina or Georgia, the same question emerged during the 1780s

23 Noll, 117-20. Noll, among others, has highlighted the republican views of evangelicals. Most of his work, however, focuses on the north and the connection between Puritan and republican values. His general outline holds true for southern evangelicals. However, most of the active evangelicals in the deep south had more connection to the Great Awakening evangelicalism of George Whitefield than to Puritan theology.
revealing the divide among evangelicals regarding the proper role of the state in religious matters.

Baptists in Georgia had early opportunity to voice their preference for limited meddling of politicians in the sphere of religion. Members of the state government began, almost immediately after the withdrawal of the British from Savannah, to try to implement earlier calls for the establishment of laws “for the encouragement of virtue and the suppression of vice.” Echoing familiar republican tenants of the age, the committee for recommending bills intoned that “religion and learning being the two great pillars on which will depend the happiness of individuals and the greatness of our nation” recommended a law “be passed for the promotion of these purposes.”24 Nothing was accomplished that session, but, when the assembly met again in January, a bill was brought for consideration for the promotion of “religion and piety and securing to religious societies certain rights and immunities, and for granting an aid to build and repair places of public worship, and erecting school houses in the several counties of this state.” The bill was read twice in committee before being brought to the whole house for consideration on February 12, 1784. After consideration, members, in a move reminiscent of the happenings in Virginia, asked for more time to consider the bill.25 In 1785, a more specific bill was brought forward declaring “that a knowledge and practice of the Christian religion tended to make good men and citizens, and that the regular establishment and support of religion were among the most important objects of legislative action.” The outline of the bill provided the opportunity for counties to allow any group of thirty families to choose a preacher who “on every Sunday [would] publicly explain and inculcate the great doctrines and precepts of the

24 Candler, III, 384, 387-88.
Christian religion as opportunity shall offer.” The state would pay the salaries of these preachers from the tax revenue collected from the counties. All “religious societies already in existence were confirmed in all usages, rights, immunities, privileges, and public appropriations which they already held.” Though the Virginia bill had failed, the Georgia bill passed into law.26

Despite guarantees of free exercise and tolerance in the law, Baptists rose to challenge what appeared to them the restoration of an establishment of religion. A remonstrance, whose crafting is credited to Silas Mercer, was presented to the assembly in either the fall of 1785 or the spring of 1786. The objections to the law tread much of the same ground as that of Tennent’s petition to the South Carolina assembly. Mercer equated establishment with “oppression” and wrote that “religious oppression” was “the most intolerable.” He reminded the assembly that “laws which best secure the liberty of the subjects, and especially those which preserve religious liberty inviolate” tended to draw citizens closer to “the State” and to each other. The law, though certainly meant for the good of both state and religion, would injure both. Mercer outlined the different spheres of civil and religious “government.” Civil government had its origins in the mind and will of the people. Every citizen had a “right to a share in that to which he is subjected.” Religious dictates came from the “word of God” apart from the will of the people. Christians recognized only Christ as their “King and Lawgiver” in matters of conscience and belonged to “a kingdom not of this world.” While it was true that Christians were “bound to obey magistrates, to pay them tribute, to pray for them, to fight for them and to defend them,” only Christ could be acknowledged as the “King and Lord of the conscience.” The church did not need, nor should it ever use, the same tools as civil government in ruling its

26 Coleman, 222-3. Only the Chatham County (Savannah) Episcopalians tried to use the bill.
domain. Excommunication and exclusion from church society were the only punishments scripture allowed. To introduce legislative control on any area of church governance was to invite encroachment at the will of the legislature and portended to a future day when the legislature might establish “a particular denomination in preference and at the expense of the rest.” Mercer acknowledged, in a tone of conciliation, that this could not have been the mind of the legislative body, but he continued to blast the law as opening the door for the legislature to decide “who shall preach, where they shall preach, what they shall preach.” Mercer, revealing that republican ideology permeated even into Separate Baptist circles, reminded his audience of the causes of the recently won Revolution. “The Three Penny Act on tea was a trifle in itself, but a badge of slavery, and a precedent [for] more destructive measures.” Established religion would bring tyranny and promote the craven desires of unprincipled men to procure and protect sinecures by demanding “uniformity” and state enforcement of the laws that gave them ascendancy. Certainly morality was “essential to good government, and…laws should be made for the punishment of vice without regard to any religious denomination, and protection should be offered to each in their own rights,” but civil rulers had no power to “judge heresy and establish systems of religious opinions or modes of religious worship.” Once involved, the legislators would be necessarily called upon to enforce punishment for those who disobeyed the legislature’s view of proper doctrine. This, Mercer argued, would lead to “fines, imprisonments, tortures and deaths of various kinds, on a religious account.” In a government which allowed each citizen to follow the dictates of his own conscience “unbribed and unmolested,” the government could avoid these “genuine but diabolical offspring[s] of ecclesiastical establishments.” The law was never enforced but remained part of Georgia law until repealed by the
Constitution of 1798.27

It is of little surprise that Mercer became the ardent spokesmen against the plan in Georgia. In 1783, he had written a long treatise in which he outlined his opposition to kings and the imposition of established churches. This treatise gives insight into why many southern evangelicals supported the American cause. As earlier discussed, evangelicals mainly supported the cause because of the promise of religious liberty, but Mercer’s publication allows us to see more clearly some of the theological underpinnings of this position. Mercer used two biblical themes to make his argument against royal authority. First, he turned to the Book of I Samuel to highlight the impropriety of the Hebrew people’s desire for a king against the command of God. Second, Mercer attempted to use the prophetic writings of Daniel to illustrate God’s prophetic judgment against the kingdoms of the earth. By using these scriptures, Mercer wished plainly to show that “kings were given for a curse to the Lord’s people.” In the first illustration, Mercer argued that the king appointed, Saul, had instituted “arbitrary measures” and “destroyed the liberty, property and lives, of the people.” Mercer traced the fall of Israel to the Babylonian captivity laying the blame on the unrighteous activities of the kings of Israel and the foolish choice of the Jewish nation to replace the rule of God with that of an earthly king.28

Mercer then moved to the prophetic writings of Daniel to highlight God’s impending judgment against the kingdoms of the earth. The Babylonian ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, had dreamed of a statue containing several metallic parts. The Hebrew

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27 “To the Honorable, the Speaker and General Assembly of the State of Georgia, the Remonstrance of the Baptist Association, met at the Kiokee meeting-house, the 16th of May, 1785, sheweth:” in Campbell, 261-3; Coleman, 223. The last portion of the remonstrance has been lost. Interestingly, Jesse Mercer, Silas’ son, was instrumental in writing the portion of the Constitution of 1798 dealing with religious liberty.

28 Silas Mercer, Tyranny Exposed; and True Liberty Discovered. Wherein is Contained the Scripture Doctrine concerning Kings: Their Rise, Reign, and Downfall: Together with the Total Overthrow of Antichrist. (Halifax, NC: Thomas Davis, 1783), 3-10. Mercer had fled from Georgia to North Carolina ahead of the British and published this just prior to his return to Georgia.
prophet Daniel revealed to him that these parts represented various kingdoms of the earth. This statue had been destroyed by a boulder symbolizing the destruction of the empires by God. Mercer explained the prophecy, through the prism of amillennial Christian interpretation, resting the majority of his treatise on the appearance and destruction of the “little horn” during the time of the last empire. This “little horn” symbolized, for Mercer, the appearance of the Antichrist in the form of the papacy in the years following the fall of the Roman empire. The papacy had “assumed the place of Christ” and tried to rule in “Christ’s stead” over Christianity and could, according to Mercer, be accurately described as “Antichrist.” The establishment of Christianity as the official religion of Rome, which Mercer inaccurately ascribed to Constantine, had allowed the papacy to reinstitute the persecution of Christians that had ceased through the beneficence of Constantine. It was the government establishment, “that idolatrous community,” of Christianity that had allowed the rise first of the papacy and then that of the national churches. The Catholic church and the regents who wished to consolidate power had mixed “civil with ecclesiastical” power. The arm of royal authority had allowed church officials to “persecute or inflict penalties upon…nonconformists.” The establishment “took the scripture out of the hands of the common people,” proscribed any but those sanctioned by the church to minister the gospel, and instituted traditions, namely infant baptism, to cement royal and ecclesiastical control over the people. 29

Mercer, however, saw the coming destruction of both kingly and ecclesiastical power. It had already begun in the preaching of evangelical stalwarts, such as Whitefield, who declared “the everlasting gospel” and the “necessity of regeneration.” All must be “converted” because all were “fallen creatures” who could “do nothing to recommend

29 Ibid., 18, 20, 30-5, 41.
[themselves] to God.” Through Christ’s grace, mankind could receive “justification” and “sanctification” and break the power of ignorance foisted upon them by false religious systems. That the destruction had already begun, one need only look at the United States of America. Mercer exulted that the “Antichrist has already lost his power…and the very basis of his synagogue, namely the ecclesiastical establishment, is forever destroyed.”

God, according to Mercer, planned to bring about a general destruction of the Antichrist and his royal henchmen by turning the “sword of the nations” against them. He would accomplish this stirring within the hearts of the people the courage to “revolt and declare independency to these kingdoms, and protest against their arbitrary government.” God will enlighten the people to their “civil and religious liberty…undoubted right[s].” The people then would “obey the Lord” and “shall separate themselves and contend for their liberty and oppose these kings who have given up their power and strength to the beast.” Mercer, later in the treatise, argues that those Christians who followed a policy of non-resistance to the Crown had erred in their interpretation of scripture. Christ’s “kingdom of peace” could not occur until the Antichrist had been destroyed. As Christians had the right to resist robbers and murderers, they had the “duty” to stand against “tyrannical nations [which] will make war against…innocent free people, to destroy their liberty, property, and lives.” God’s justice called “aloud for every man to stand in his own defense in every just cause.”

Great Britain had been worthy of resistance due, in part, to its retention of an established church with all its concomitant acts of violence against those who dared follow a dissenting path. It was obvious to Mercer that God had begun this work in America and that those who had thrown off the shackles of royal and ecclesiastical governance had been involved in fulfilling the prophetic word of God.30

30 Ibid., 37, 40, 44-5, 53-8, 61.
Though God’s work had its beginning in the United States, Mercer was confident that others around the world would see the benefits enjoyed by free Americans and be roused to emulate the example of the revolutionaries so that God’s kingdom of peace could reign throughout the world. These benefits included general “Liberty” and the specific right of every man “to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience.” The British people themselves would soon come to value their own liberty “better than gold” and would “oppose all arbitrary measures” and rise up in defense of their violated constitution declaring themselves “independent.” They too would throw off “the yoke of tyranny, and form themselves into states, and submit to the peaceable reign of Christ.” Mercer believed that God would allow this type of “blessed revolution” to occur throughout the kingdoms of the earth. These kingdoms would declare themselves “states” and become “republics” because the republican form of government was “the most likely to secure a general peace, and make war to cease in all lands.” Because republics were governed by representatives of the people’s own choosing, Mercer was confident that the governments of these republics would “preserve the liberty of the inhabitants” and the rulers “shall be God’s ministers to the people for good.” These governments would also recognize the proper division between civil and religious governance. This recognition promised bright prospects for societal peace which would allow for the furtherance of the spread of the gospel. Mercer believed that Christ’s triumphal reign would commence when republicanism had wrought its transformative political and social powers throughout the earth. He closed his pamphlet with a poem entitled “The Happiness of a Free Government.” He outlines the characteristics of a land blessed by God. It is “the land whose rulers are chose [sic] by the people’s voice alone…those men who govern by the
power with which the people them invest…[the] place where freedom stands and liberty erects its throne…and tyranny… never known…and where ministerial tool hath neither power, nor place, nor home.”31

Mercer’s rabid republicanism and disdain for establishment earned him notice, and his pamphlet enjoyed some circulation. Francis Asbury, the early American Methodist leader, read a copy while traveling through Virginia in March 1784 and commented in his journal that Mercer’s republicanism was “gone mad.”32 Though Asbury may not have approved, Mercer’s views on the separation of civil and ecclesiastical authority were echoed by Oliver Hart, the longtime leader of South Carolina Baptists who had relocated to New Jersey during the last few years of the war. Hart argued that “magistrates, whether supreme or subordinate, have no power in, or over the church, in virtue of civil office.” Civil authorities had “no authority to enact laws to bind the consciences of men” and “no coercive power to compel men to be of this, that or the other religion.” Hart affirmed again the general Baptist position that no civil authority existed that had the right “to impose taxes on church members, or any others, for the support of religion.” Voluntary support, the only biblical “mode” according to Hart, was the proper way to bear the “expenses of the Christian church.” Hart was adamant that to “impose taxes for this purpose, is to take the subjects money without their consent; which is no better than robbery, under the covert of

31 Ibid., 46-7, 58, 63.
32 Francis Asbury, The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury in Three Volumes, I, eds Elmer T. Clark, J. Manning Potts, and Jacob S. Payton (Nashville: Abington Press, 1958), 458. Asbury did not share Mercer’s contempt for established religion or the rule of kings. In his journal, he stridently attacked Mercer’s views stating that establishments were nothing to fear in “these days of enlightened liberty.” He mocked Mercer’s anti-royal and anti-establishment sentiments by stating “if the nations of Europe believed the sweeping doctrines of Silas, they would be right to decapitate every crowned head, and destroy every existing form of church government.” Asbury also sarcastically attacked Mercer’s view of the importance of baptism by immersion. He wrote “if plunging-baptism is the only true ordinance, and there can be no church without it, it is not quite clear that ever Christ had a church until the Baptists plunged for it.”
law.”

Though Baptist sentiment ran counter to state support of Christian institutions, not all evangelicals in the Deep South frowned on public support for ministers and Christian education. Thomas Reese, the New Light pastor of the Presbyterian church in Salem, South Carolina and fellow evangelical supporter of the Revolution, viewed public support as necessary for the inculcation of virtue so vital to the survival of a republic. Reese published a long pamphlet in 1788, entitled *An Essay on the Influence of Religion in Civil Society*, in which he laid out his arguments for public financial support of Christian teachers and clergy. In the body of his essay, Reese stated that religion, particularly Christian religion, most ably met the key challenge to republican government, that of producing virtuous citizens. Good laws, the power of reason, the motivation of self-love, and a high sense of morality all had their place in and were useful for strengthening a republican nation, but these could not create within the mass of the people the virtues necessary, in the long run, to sustain republican government. Government used laws to suppress vice and encourage virtue, but these laws served only as a deterrent to bad behavior, not as a reward for the good. Reason, self-love, and one’s own moral sense may guide the highest minded among the people, but the nature of most individuals pushed them to shatter these barriers of self-imposed restraint in the pursuit of individual aggrandizement and material riches. For Reese, only Christianity offered the power to transform the hearts of the masses to virtuous pursuits. He based his argument primarily on the future state of rewards and punishments inherent in the teachings of Christianity. Men and women who were motivated by the knowledge that God watched their actions and rewarded or punished their deeds held themselves to a higher standard and allowed virtue to reign in their private and public lives.

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Public oaths held little meaning for those who cared not about God’s ultimate power to judge their testimony, and a people who did not take their oaths seriously rendered the long-term security of their social compact and system of justice tenuous.\footnote{Thomas Reese, \textit{An Essay on the Influence of Religion in Civil Society}, (Charleston: Markland and Melver, 1788), 3-21, 57-60.}

Christian teachings also encouraged the development and exercise of behaviors, such as benevolence, gratitude, contentment, and charity, outside the purview of human legal standards but that were most beneficial to a commonwealth because they strengthened social unity. Reese hammered this particular point home by reminding his readers of the current stress occurring in South Carolina due to the cleavage between the low county and the backcountry over the division of power in the state. “Discontentment with our present condition, envy of wealth and power, and an immoderate fondness of change are the source of innumerable evils in society…and, if I mistake not, much of the present uneasiness, strife, and political contention in South Carolina may be traced to the same source.” Reese argued that civil society was enormously benefited by the peace and stability that resulted when the citizens held the Christian belief of a future state of rewards for those who accepted the providence of God for their lives in the present day.\footnote{Ibid., 12, 25-9, 45.}

Christianity also inculcated such prized republican virtues as temperance and moderation. Men often became “too eager and violent” in their pursuits “of wealth, honor, power, and sensual gratification.” Laws may restrain certain of these pursuits, but the teachings of Christianity positively asserted the necessity of curbing the appetites that produced these pursuits. Such harmful societal sins as gluttony, drunkenness, lust, idleness, sloth, and negligence lost their appeal to the virtuous Christian. Reese attacked the pursuit of great wealth which led to “overgrown estates.” Once procured, the
possessors opened themselves up to sins against both God and the republic, including “luxury, sensuality, and effeminacy.” Reese viewed these vices as portents of the “destruction of governments; and peculiarly repugnant to the spirit, and hostile to the liberty and happiness of a republic.” Luxury, for Reese, was the use of God’s providential gift of earthly wealth to the injury of oneself or those committed to his trust. Sumptuous living led to enervation. The man who regarded religion, loved his country, and desired to promote the public good exercised the moderation which Christianity enjoined. No sumptuary laws could benefit the republic as much as the inculcation throughout society of Christian teachings on the proper usage of wealth. Reese particularly feared for the security of the republic due to the rising pursuit of luxury and its concomitant vices. He pointed to the fall of Rome as an example to America. “Once famous for her contempt of wealth, her virtue, and her valor…[Rome] at last fell a sacrifice to luxury. The spoils of Greece and the riches of the East, proved her ruin, and overturned that mighty fabric which it had been the work of ages to rear…virtue fled—vice broke in like an irresistible torrent.” Reese warned that “vice degrades a nation…and at last terminates in public misery and ruin.”

Reese acknowledged that “most politicians” recognized the need for a moral people in a republic, but he argued that “many of them seem to forget the inseparable connection between religion and morality.” He contended those who believed that morality “independent of all religion” was possible were deluded by a chimera. Morality could never be accomplished without the nurturing presence of religious teaching. The truth that morality was necessary for the “well being” and “the very existence of civil society” rendered it a top priority to the government. Reese proposed that officials spread moral virtue by their own public example and by instituting a program of Christian instruction.

36 Ibid., 60-73.
throughout the state. Against his fellow evangelicals, Reese argued that government could do this without invading “the rights of conscience.” Because the mass of South Carolina citizens were ignorant of proper Christian teachings, the state must first find a way to supply “able, pious, and faithful ministers” to those parts of the state lacking them. To accomplish this, Reese suggested that the state make a concerted effort to educate “pious and promising youth from among us” and encourage the dissemination of literature. Reese noted that there were ministers located throughout the state, but most of them, though “useful” because they taught “the doctrine of a future state,” were “illiterate.” Government support of education promised the quickest means to make more ministers ready to supply the moral needs of the people. Though others may wish to speed up the process by importing ministers from Great Britain, Reese balked at the proposal. America was now independent, and through its “important revolution” had “rejected the government of Great Britain, as equally odious and intolerable.” Preachers from Great Britain would bring their own attachment to that “odious” government with them. It would be much better to recruit a cadre of men who had imbibed “the principles and spirit of freedom and independence with the milk of their mothers.” Imported ministers might “facilitate our return to servile dependence on Great Britain,” so it was better to wait until “true republicans” could be prepared to take on the important task of educating republican citizens in the necessary Christian virtues.37

This program of instruction and the maintenance of these ministers necessarily required funding. Reese disagreed with his evangelical brethren on how this funding

37 Ibid., 73-9. Reese’s views on public education appear both noble and sinister to the modern reader. His desire to see education broadened to those outside the wealthy seems commendable, while his assertion that the state should take children from parents who “cannot, or will not provide for, and educate their children, in a proper manner…as [this] might afford some rational prospect of their being useful to society” might leave most readers appalled.
should be garnered. He acknowledged that support through the “free contributions of the people” was the best way where the people were “generally sensible of the utility of religion,” but many South Carolinians were “so totally sunk in vice and ignorance” to know “of the necessity and importance of religion.” Because religion played such a vital role in a republic and was “absolutely necessary to government”, Reese argued that citizens should have no moral or constitutional difficulties in paying for the support of religion. It was no different than any tax for the support of government because “every citizen reaps advantage from it [religious instruction] in a political view.” Reese was unsure whether such laws should actually be passed due to inherent dangers, such as providing state support for “idle, ignorant, or vicious ecclesiastics,” but he asked his fellow evangelicals to at least consider toning down their attacks on any future government financial support of religious instruction. Reese recognized that many of his evangelical brethren believed that true preachers of the gospel “will sacrifice every earthly consideration to the desire of saving souls,” but this was not the reality for most men who needed “some hope of a comfortable subsistence.”

Reese closed his pamphlet by returning again to the republican themes of virtue and vice. Citizens needed to support Christian instruction because it promoted the “great designs of the American revolution” and tempered the “vicious” nature of man. Others might lament “political factions and civil dissension…the precarious state of our trade, the scarcity of money and the weight of our taxes,” but Reese feared most the “rapid progress in vice.” For Reese, the new nation was rapidly heading to a place of “moral corruption, to which if we arrive, we can no longer exist as a republic.” Men sunk in vice were “prepared for slavery” because they could no longer “think, or judge, or act for themselves.” Reese

38 Ibid., 79-82.
contended there was only one way to “preserve our liberty,” and that was in “preserving our virtue.” The only way to preserve virtue was to “promote religion.” He begged his readers to remember the awful sacrifices they made during the Revolution and the “signal interposition of Heaven” before allowing themselves to “be effeminated with luxury and plunged in vice.” Reese closed by urging the state’s leaders and “all lovers of their country” to remember their revolutionary opposition to the morals of the monarchical court and conduct themselves in a manner that would do service to the republic and give proper example to all who watched their conduct. In doing so, the country’s journey to corruption might be checked, and the wrath of God against their ingratitude for his deliverance stayed.  

Both Mercer and Reese illustrate how firmly attached evangelicals in the Deep South were to the republican experiment. Both believed that government should do that which was in its power to stimulate the populace to virtuous living while suppressing vice through proper legislation. The divergence of opinion lay in the best way for government to accomplish these ends. For Mercer and the Baptists, the best approach was for the government to remove itself from the religious arena and allow the spirit of God through the transformative gospel message to change the lives of the citizens. This was best accomplished by freeing religion and religious practice from any government constraint or

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39 Ibid., 83-6. Reese again used the collapse of the Roman republic as a warning to his audience. Julius Caesar “saw that Rome must have a master, and why not Caesar as well as another?” Brutus had risen to defend the republic, but the “Roman spirit was departed.” The people refused to take the opportunity to return to “their liberty.”

40 Henry Holcombe’s series of essays show the staying power of republicanism in southern evangelicalism. Written nearly fifteen years after Reese, Holcombe reminded his readers that “without Religion there can be no virtue.” He added that “virtue is the very life of a Republican Government.” The virtues of “industry, economy, punctuality, sobriety, chastity, and a reverence of GOD, are as necessary to Republicanism, as ‘health, peace, and competence’ are to happiness.” Holcombe likened a “lazy, drunken impure, and profane Republican” to an “honest thief, a brave coward, an ugly beauty, and a chaste prostitute,” in Holcombe, “To the Friends…,” no. 5, 230-1.

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support. Government support lent itself to corruption and the breeding of religious disputes, while a level playing field allowed true religion to flourish and produce the virtuous citizens necessary for the stability of the republic. Reese and many other Presbyterians believed that the best way to improve the virtue of the citizens was to fund their instruction in it. They believed that Christianity was the most vital source and best teacher of the necessary virtue and encouraged government involvement in supporting Christian teachers. Where Baptists saw government involvement as interfering in matters of conscious and a bitter reminder of past persecution, many Presbyterians viewed it as a proper function of the republic concerned with its longevity.41

Evangelicals in the Deep South also divided, in the decade following the war, over the exact meaning of religious freedom. This division did not fall neatly along denominational lines. All were committed to the superiority of Protestant Christianity, and most seemed quite content to exclude other religious groups from the blessings of republican freedom. Reese described the spirit of Islam as “bloody and vindictive.” It had risen and spread through military conquest. He also, referring to Montesquieu, repeated the belief that Catholicism was most suited to monarchical governments while Protestant religion best suited republics. Reese did not think much of Catholicism and decried the “enormous power claimed by the Pope in things merely civil, and the superiority which he arrogates over all Christian rulers.”42 Mercer left little doubt as to his feelings regarding the Catholic Church. The papacy was the Antichrist. He believed God had ushered in the American Revolution and established the American republic as the vanguard to the

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41 For a fuller treatment on the way religious groups in a republic have “generally supported national consensus, cheerleaders at the patriotic parade” while failing to yield independence to “governmental direction,” see Martin E, Marty’s Religion and Republic: The American Circumstance (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 2.
42 Ibid., 43, 81.
establishment of Christ’s kingdom. Mercer argued that all enemies of Christ’s kingdom including “heathens, Papists, Pagans, and Mahometans, will perish out of his land, and these sorts of sinners will be consumed out of the earth,” while “unbelieving rebellious Jews also shall be converted to the Lord Jesus Christ in the latter days.” It is less than likely that Mercer was arguing for religious freedom for these groups on par with his Baptists. Mercer, in the remonstrance presented to the Georgia assembly, specifically worried about a future “establishment of a particular denomination” which gives evidence that his views regarding religious liberty centered more on the liberty of Christian sects rather than universal religious freedom. Though Henry Holcombe wrote his series on Christians and government in the early 1800’s, he was part of the leadership of the Charleston Association in the late 1780s. Looking back over the preceding fifteen years, he wrote that “the people of this country have very properly refused to give preference to any one denomination of Christians.” However, by 1802, Holcombe believed that America had “virtually established Christianity by their laws.” These, however, were not the only evangelical views. Oliver Hart argued that the religious liberty won by Protestant Christian groups during the American Revolution established the happy precedent upon which all religious groups, including “Jews, Turks and Heathens,” might claim their natural rights to follow the dictates of their own consciences. Hart argued that “every man may judge for himself what is, and what is not the true religion; but none can determine for others…[and] none should be compelled to worship God in a way that they do not choose. Richard Furman worked in the South Carolina state constitutional convention to eliminate all preferences for Protestants. The diversity of opinion held by southern evangelicals who participated in

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43 Mercer, 49, 65; Campbell, 262.
44 Holcombe, “To the Friends…” no. 5, 229-30.
the American Revolution serves as a reminder of the bedeviling difficulty the modern historian has in producing neat explanatory categories for participants in such momentous historical debates as that of church-state relations in the founding era.

Though southern evangelicals may have held different opinions regarding the role of religion in the state and to whom religious liberty extended, all who participated in the struggle against Great Britain looked back with pride at the Revolution and their involvement in it. Thomas Reese wrote that he yielded “to none in attachment to his country.” Reese reveled that he had “been the companion of his countrymen in tribulation, ha[d] shared in the dangers, and severely felt the effects of a distressing war; and count[ed] it his glory and happiness to have contributed his part in bringing forward a revolution unequalled in the annals of the world.”

Henry Holcombe used the fact that he had “often risked, and was always ready, in the late war, to sacrifice his life for the Independence of these states” to give weight to his political writings. Edmund Botsford boasted in the sufferings in he had endured for the sake of his country. The outcome of the Revolution changed the way at least one evangelical numbered his days. When Evan Pugh wrote out his will in 1802, he referred to the year as the “27th year of American Independence.”

Evangelicals used the occasion of Washington’s death to present their views of meaning of the American Revolution in general and of Washington in particular. In doing so, they took special pains to encourage their listeners to follow his example in leading a virtuous Christian life. Richard Furman declared Washington a “friend of religion, of liberty, and of man.” He reminded his audience of Washington’s “regular attendance on

46 Reese, 87.
47 Holcombe, “To the Friends…,” no. 5, 227.
48 Mallary, 52.
49 Evan Pugh Papers, SCL.
divine worship” and stated emphatically that “Washington was to America the valuable gift of God.” God had made him to America as Moses and Joshua to the people of Israel. The Revolution had ushered in “liberty, both civil and religious,” and these had been established by the constitution. These events were “important objects in God’s government” and “intimately connected with the honor of God, and the interests of the Redeemer’s kingdom.” As long as Americans “preserved inviolate” these liberties and continued to “acknowledge the interposition of the Deity, supplicate, his throne, fear his judgments, render thanks for his principles,” Furman believed that “America will remain the object of his favor.” The best mode to accomplish these directives was to cling to Christianity, “the holy religion our patriot [Washington] professed.”

Henry Holcombe echoed many of the same themes in his funeral sermon. Washington’s shining “morality and religion” and his high estimation of Christianity had allowed him to outshine his peers. Holcombe took the opportunity to use Washington’s religious beliefs to attack “atheists” and “deists,” whom Holcombe termed as “gloomy monsters” because they believed man’s soul to be mortal, for undermining the hope that Washington would enjoy eternal life. Holcombe was also more specific in connecting the necessity of religion for living a virtuous life. Those who attacked religion vainly claimed “the tribute of patriotism” because religion undergirded republican society. Washington knew this, and Holcombe implored his listeners to follow Washington’s example of “patriotic virtue and genuine piety.” Holcombe closed with a prayer thanking God for the example of Washington and asking that he might implant “the importance of religion” in

50 Richard Furman, Humble Submission to Divine Sovereignty the Duty of a Bereaved Nation. A Sermon, Occasioned...Death of His Excellency General George Washington, Late Commander in Chief of the Armies, and Formerly President, of the United States of America (Charleston: W.P. Young, 1800), 2, 15, 18-9, 23, 28.
the minds of America’s citizens so that “the blessed Gospel may diffuse its divine influence and exert its transforming efficacy throughout this favored land!” If this occurred, Holcombe believed “our civil and religious liberties and privileges [would be] transmitted unimpaired to the latest posterity.”

The fullest treatment of the Revolution by a southern evangelical came in a July 4th address made by Furman to his church, the South Carolina Society of the Cincinnati, and members of the American Revolutionary Society in Charleston in 1802. Furman compared America’s deliverance to that of the children of Israel from Egypt. One of his major goals was to show that “the American revolution was effected by the special agency of God.” Furman listed several reasons why he believed God had brought on the Revolution. Since the American cause had been just, God had shown himself to be a “patron of those engaged in the cause of justice.” America’s population, made up mostly of Christians “who believed in revelatory scripture,” had been the object of God’s affection. God had used the Revolution to show his divine providence. God’s providence was seen positively to act for the American in the “strength, wealth, and unity of [the] colonies, [and] quality of citizenry to face the task.” God had also controlled the British government in such a way that they adopted “wrong measures” and “frustrated” them in their efforts to regain the colonies. Furman believed that the outcome of the war in America’s favor and the subsequent ratification of the Constitution had been God’s work. America had been “originally designed as an asylum for religion and liberty,” and now had become “a theatre, on which

51 Henry Holcombe, A Sermon, Occasioned by the Death of Lieutenant-General George Washington, Late President of the United States of America; Who was born, February 11th, 1732 in Virginia, and Died, December 14th, 1799, on Mount Vernon, His Favorite Seat in his Native Country; First Delivered in the Baptist Church, Savannah, Georgia, January 19th, 1800, and Now Published, at the Request of the Honorable City Council. (Savannah: Seymour & Woolhopter, 1800), 5, 9, 12, 15.
the power and excellency of both were to be exhibited to the greatest advantage.”

Furman revisited the causes of the war. Americans had acted as “free people” in defending their right to the guarantees of the British constitution. These guarantees included “the right of rejecting every internal law, or scheme of taxation, which had not obtained their own approbation and consent; or of representatives whose interests and feelings were intimately connected with their own.” Furman referenced the Declaratory Act and its “extraordinary claim of ‘a right to bind the colonies, in all cases whatsoever.’” To the demands and measures of the British, the Americans, out of a “regard to the cause and honor of God,” refused to comply and defended their rights. Armed resistance had been the last, but necessary, recourse for the Americans. Furman acknowledged the great sacrifices made by “our patriot statesmen and soldiers” but reminded his listeners of the invaluable role of the patriot clergy. These men, “did not render a less essential service…by inculcating those sentiments, setting those examples, and taking that lead in religion which inspired our citizens with zeal in the cause of liberty; formed their minds into a suitable temper for receiving the Divine blessing, and rendered them…courageous to meet the dangers they had to encounter.” God had indeed blessed America with “peace and success.” Because of this, America must always “ascribe glory to God.”

Combining republican and evangelical themes, Furman pointed to religion as the key to “securing liberty” and the best way to express gratitude to God for his blessings. He echoed the sentiment of most of the founding generation when he declared “without virtue there can be no real happiness, either in individuals or the body politic; and without

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53 Ibid., 8-11, 16.
religion there can be no genuine, stable virtue.” Furman did not wish to usher in “the establishment of a national religion, by civil authority; this does not correspond to our principles or feelings.” However, Furman made clear that evangelical Christianity should be the religion of the virtuous American. It was important for those in his audience to recognize the scriptures as the divine revelation of Jesus Christ and “the complete atonement” offered therein. Christianity had been a “powerful, effective influence…on the American revolution…[and] our fairest prospects of national happiness arise from the predicted accomplishment of its grand purposes.” Furman took the opportunity during the celebratory address to point his audience to a superior cause for “admiration, gratitude, and joy” than liberty. God had through his grace effected the “redemption of a ruined, guilty world, from the power of sin, the tyranny of Satan, and the demerited wrath of God.” The fact that God had blessed America, the “important reason why we should remember, and honor the day of our deliverance,” should encourage men to trust him.  

Southern evangelicals in the two decades after the war expanded numerically. Regular and Separate Baptists continued their cooperation begun before the war and finally, though unofficially, united. Evangelicals also continued their involvement in politics. They voiced in their sermons and publications a strong attachment to republican principles. All were sure that religion was the most efficient way to inculcate these principles, but they were divided over the proper way to facilitate the spread of republican virtues. Baptists fought attempts to support Christianity through government funding mirroring their denominational brethren in other areas of the nation, while some Presbyterians allowed for the possibility of governmental support of religion. Evangelicals

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54 Ibid., 16-8. Furman also took the time to warn against the spirit of party, encourage vigilance against “demagogues,” and enjoined a “rational jealousy for liberty,” in Ibid., 18-9.
reveled in their newly won religious liberty, but they divided over the extent that liberty should be allowed to others. All, however, were proud of their involvement in the creation of the American republic through the Revolution. Southern evangelicals spent the two decades after the war encouraging their fellow citizens to live the virtuous lives necessary for the success of the nation. They wept when the nation wept. They rejoiced when the nation rejoiced. They gloried in the belief that God was working through the establishment of the American republic to usher in his kingdom. In all this, they did not change the central evangelical message. Christ, through his redemptive work, offered the only true hope for earthly virtue and eternal redemption.
Chapter 8

Conclusion

For too long, the focus of scholarly work on evangelicalism in the South has been on the Separates, making their history the history of southern evangelicalism. It is well known the Separates engendered animosity among the southern gentry, Anglican clergy, and even their more educated evangelical brethren in the mid-eighteenth century. This has led many to believe that southerners looked askance at evangelicalism. In doing so, two critical points are missed. First, many evangelical groups in the South, particularly those whose churches were in the low country, enjoyed good relations with and freely moved among the elite of South Carolina and Georgia. Indeed, some of the leading citizens of these states were evangelical. Second, there was a monumental shift occurring in the leading evangelical group, the Baptists, during the years immediately preceding the war. Separate Baptists and Regular Baptists began to move together in a number of ways signaling a growing cooperation which paved the way for union and explosive growth in the decades following the Revolution. Through this association with their more politically active brethren, Separates became more involved in political affairs, toned down some of their more “enthusiastic” practices, and eventually submitted to the creedal system of the Regular Baptists. This movement was accomplished, not to placate gentry demands, but to facilitate greater fellowship with their Christian brethren.

These findings challenge the historiographical paradigm in three significant ways. First, we must shed the notion that social challenge was a primary goal of evangelicals. The works of Isaac, Mathews, and Heyrman will continue to influence our understanding of the social views of radical evangelicals, but they must not be allowed to stand as true pictures
of a mythical, hegemonic southern evangelicalism.\(^1\) Though each offered caveats regarding the diverse nature of evangelicalism, none paid significant attention to those evangelicals who challenged their model of evangelicals as social outcasts. Certainly, many converts were won by the social inclusion of the radical evangelicalism of the Separate Baptists, but the same message of conversion was preached by other practitioners of evangelicalism in South Carolina and Georgia, notably the Regular Baptists, Princetonian Presbyterians, and Independents of Charleston and Savannah. These latter groups grew, both in numbers and influence, without the violent opprobrium of southern society.

A second challenge to reigning historiography involves the role of evangelicals in the American Revolution. Studies of evangelical history that center on Separate Baptists have hidden the influence evangelicals had in the Revolutionary era. Evangelicals were involved in all stages of Revolution. William Tennent and John Zubly were deeply involved in persuading their fellow southerners to defend their constitutional liberties in the years leading to the outbreak of war. Tennent and Oliver Hart, commissioned by South Carolina’s Provincial Assembly, went into the backcountry to cement support for the revolutionary government. In this endeavor, these men were joined by various Separate Baptist and New Light Presbyterian preachers. When war broke out in South Carolina and Georgia, Baptists, both Regular and Separate, urged support for the revolution and served as chaplains in the patriot military. Backcountry New Light Presbyterians, led by their gun-toting pastors, marched off to face down the invading British after the lowcountry had succumbed. These Presbyterians, joined by Baptists in the northwestern corner of South

Carolina, formed the backbone of the militia that bedeviled Cornwallis into making his ill-fated move into Virginia. Evangelical contributions to the origin, prosecution, and success of the American Revolution have been too long unnoticed due to our ignorance of the scope of the work of evangelicals in these southern states. These contributions directly contradict older assumptions, including those of the eminent historian John Murrin, that evangelicals played an inconsequential role in the coming and prosecution of the American Revolution.²

The third challenge centers on the timing and historiographically suggested motivations for evangelical social shifts in the South. The focus of most historians of southern evangelicalism, most notably Heyrman, has been on the transformation of southern evangelicals from social outcasts to purveyors of influence as members of the dominant religious system in the region. Heyrman attributed most of this change to evangelical acquiescence to the slave mores of the upper classes. This may be true for the newly arrived Methodists and certain upper South Baptists, but it cannot explain the growth and strength of Baptists in South Carolina and Georgia nor the influence of evangelicals within the upper circles of society and government during the 1770s. Separate Baptists and Regular Baptists in these two colonies/states enjoyed a good working relationship from the 1760s until their de facto union in the late 1780s. There does not appear to be any radical change on the issue of slavery during the late 1700s amongst these Baptists as they were growing into the greatest religious force in these two southern states. There is also the possibility that we might need to reassess Nathan Hatch's conclusions regarding the timing of Baptist moves toward respectability.³ Evan Pugh and Richard

² Murrin, 161-4, 166-7.
Furman were involved in educational societies during the 1770s and 1780s which gives evidence that southern Baptists were involved in attempts at educational respectability earlier than we have projected.

Evangelicals have been viewed as a strange “other” in the history of the South during the last decades of the eighteenth century. Certainly, some were outcasts, but by the time of the American Revolution, evangelicals held positions of prominence in southern political society. Evangelicals were elected as representatives to the revolutionary provincial assemblies, while others worked diligently to influence government in ways favorable to evangelical concerns. This labor involved cooperation and aid from societal elites. Evangelicals and elite Carolinians, men with the names of Pinckney, Gadsden, and Drayton, worked together to procure religious liberty, the primary object of evangelical desires. This political activity continued in the years following the Revolution. Evangelicals served in state and federal government and helped ratify state and federal constitutions. Evangelicals, ranging from Separate Baptist to Presbyterian, waded into the political issues facing the new nation, particularly when those issues affected strongly held beliefs regarding the mixture of church and state. Evangelical leaders encouraged their followers to be involved in politics and to guard their liberties. The most precious of these liberties was religious freedom. Evangelicals divided over who should enjoy this liberty. Some had a broad conception looking forward to the day when followers of other religions would claim the right to follow their own consciences. Others saw little place for any religious groups other than those who accepted the main tenents of Protestant Christianity.

Evangelicals also held the mainstream political views common during the Revolutionary era. Those who involved themselves in political concerns were almost
universally republican. Republicanism was the political religion of educated evangelical clergy and of backcountry Separates. Evangelicals combined republicanism and Christianity. They preached virtue and attacked vice. The lifestyle enjoined was right for the good Christian and the good republican. Evangelicals believed that virtue was essential to the maintenance of their republican dreams. Christianity was necessary to instill true virtue. Hence, evangelicals urged their fellow citizens to respect religion in general and Christianity in particular. It is important to remember that Evangelicals did not present a unified voice as to the best way to propagate virtue in the republic. Some evangelicals preferred that the government support Christian teachers as the chief means of diffusing virtue. Baptists, who were the largest evangelical group in South Carolina and Georgia during the early years of the republic, opposed public funding fearing the possible return of an established church. They believed that the government should not meddle in religious affairs, and the most effective method for procuring the virtue so necessary for the republic was to allow the unfettered message of Christ transform lives.

Evangelicals were proud of their involvement in the American Revolution. They had been a part of God’s historic program. He was ushering in his kingdom, and America was the beachhead through which he would accomplish his grand designs. Because God had so signally blessed the American cause, evangelical leaders urged Americans to be grateful for his beneficence. Evangelicals reminded any who would listen that Christianity had sustained the revolutionaries, and that God had blessed America because her people were mostly Bible-believing Christians. Southern evangelicals remembered the American Revolution as their own journey from Egypt to the promised land, and they reveled in the republican government which had opened the door to their experience of religious liberty.
Evangelicals in the Deep South did involve themselves in politics, society, and war in the closing decades of the eighteenth century. Practices for some did change, but these changes had more to do with growing ties of Christian fellowship than societal pressure. However, these evangelicals did not change their central message to make themselves more palatable to those around them. God’s grace, extended through Christ’s sacrificial death, was the only hope for the eternal happiness of the individual. This grace was accessed through the conversion of the individual. This had been the message of evangelicals in the Deep South in 1750. It was still the message of these evangelicals in 1802.

These conclusions provide opportunities for fresh investigation along a number of paths. It is clear that evangelicals played a political role in South Carolina and Georgia beginning in the late 1760s and continuing through the Revolution into the early national period. It is also clear that by the 1770s, Separate and Regular Baptists were moving closer together doctrinally and practically. By the 1780s, Baptists were experiencing unprecedented growth in the Deep South. In light of the political and military roles played by evangelicals in South Carolina and Georgia, it is possible that work done studying evangelicals in the other states may uncover greater participation by evangelicals in the constitutional debate leading to the Revolution and in the war itself. Evangelicals in the Deep South were republicans. From the Presbyterian Tennent to the Separate Mercer, republican ideology animated their political lives. This supports the work of Wood, Middlekauff, and Noll, but there is room, particularly in light of the backcountry/low country split in these two states, to delve more deeply into evangelical concerns over

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representation in the new state governments. Perhaps, a conclusion falling between the republican synthesis and the “radical egalitarianism” posited by Gary Nash might be arrived upon by a careful analysis focusing on the political positions taken by evangelicals during the early national period. By synthesizing the republican political ideological underpinnings of southern evangelicals, the societal changes wrought by the Revolution, and the struggle between the lowcountry and backcountry for control of state government in these two states, we might find a conclusion which better blends ideological and class studies. It is also possible that a deeper study of the division among evangelicals regarding the role of the state in church life might give us a fuller picture of evangelical political concerns during the Confederation period and shed light on the debate regarding the Constitution and its establishment clause. Further study of the state ratifying conventions might also reveal a greater evangelical presence in the debates over the Constitution than simply downplaying evangelical influence because of their diminutive presence at the Philadelphia Convention in 1787.

The greatest potential for transformative work on southern evangelicals lies in the social arena. Conclusions by Isaac, Mathews, Heyrman, and Hatch all have aided in our understanding of evangelicalism from the late colonial period through the early national years. However, many of these conclusions seem to be based on conceptions of evangelical ostracism and apoliticism. Because evangelicals were not monolithic in their views of political activity and slavery, social histories that rely on a single version of the southern evangelical message have concluded that evangelicals changed their views in order to experience social acceptability. This evangelical surrender to societal demands,

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particularly on the issue of slavery, has been the dominant narrative over the past thirty years explaining evangelical growth. Further research of evangelical views of slavery, especially of those evangelicals that owned slaves in the colonial and early national period, might give a fuller picture of southern evangelicals than that of hypocritical syncophants. By evaluating the work of Stephen Marini regarding the explosion of evangelical revivalism in New England during the American Revolution and early national period, a similar work on revivalism in the South prior to Cane Creek and the 1800 starting date for the Second Great Awakening might shift current historiographical conclusions regarding the “democratization” of American Christianity and the triumph of evangelicalism in the South.
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