

“THE CAUSE OF ZION”: DIVISIONS BETWEEN SOUTHERN BAPTISTS
IN ANTEBELLUM NORTH CAROLINA

by

KRISTIAN ALEXANDER STEELE
B.A. University of Central Florida, 2012

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ABSTRACT

This project examines the ways in which divisions within Baptist churches in antebellum western North Carolina were caused by the Second Great Awakening and the Market Revolution. More precisely, these schisms were reactions to theological changes made by the governing bodies of the Baptist denomination as well as the social reform endeavors propagated by the new emerging middle class. With state funding no longer going to certain churches in the early 1800s, denominations now competed on equal footing for congregants. Baptists began to adapt their theology in order to reach a broader audience. But their accommodations in doctrine were challenged by members of their own denomination who saw no reason to alter their interpretations of scripture. Concomitantly, a rapidly expanding market economy gave rise to a new middle class of individuals whose unique social perspectives differed sharply from both rural lower and upper classes in the South. And as more members of the Baptist ministry began identifying with this emerging class of professionals, citizens who found themselves disconnected from market centers and bereft of the benefits of a growing economy took issue with the unfamiliar social mentality propagated by these preachers.

Recent historiographic trends have upset traditional narratives that have long-argued social reform could not take root in the Old South. However, these studies have failed to fully examine the significant role played by churches in heated political and economic debates. Rather than only focus on how churches inserted themselves into the secular sphere, this thesis looks inside the churches and analyzes the degree to which socioeconomic and cultural forces radically changed the ways in which North Carolinians made sense of their world in religious terms.

To Vovô and Lydia, without whom this could not exist.

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INTRODUCTION

Immediately following the American Revolution, the states that composed the new republic began the disestablishment of state churches. Although not all of the former colonies had endorsed the Church of England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by the early nineteenth, no state was still directing state money into the Anglican—soon to be Episcopalian—Church. The separation of church and state, if not already an idiom, had indeed become part of an ideology shaping the new American culture, a culture which sought to distance itself from the trappings of Europe and monarchy. In a practical sense, the concept of “The Church” as a venerable and state-sponsored institution to which denizens would travel and attend was eliminated. In a new religious environment where no single denomination or type of church held a monopoly of power—or financial and ideological support from the government—a veritable marketplace of religious activity opened across the United States. Suddenly churches had to compete on equal footing for congregants; suddenly churches were coming to the people.

The first denominations to reach out, travel, and proselytize to the public were known as evangelical. To evangelize is to attempt to convert. This effort was aimed at both non-believers as well as those of different or competing denominations. Churches sent traveling preachers to communities apparently in need of the gospel, God’s Word. Keenly aware of the religious competitive atmosphere, preachers began appealing to the public’s emotions in attempts to personally and viscerally connect with un-believers’ feelings. Emotionally-charged church meetings hosted by these traveling preachers began to attract large crowds which, once excited

and impassioned, would demand the service continue, often for days at a time. This phenomenon was known as a revival. If considered a productive event, like a machine, these revivals created new believers who left the meetings with an energy and enthusiasm to spread the word themselves, either within the ministry or as church patrons intent on assisting in bringing others into the fold.

The extended series of revivals, evangelization, and church growth in the first half of the nineteenth century became known as the Second Great Awakening. During this time, evangelical denominations—primarily Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians—used traveling preachers and capitalized on revivals in order to swell their ranks. While their methods and relative successes varied by denomination, location, and other factors, one of the largest and lasting consequences of the Second Great Awakening was the organizational process that each denomination underwent. As membership grew, new churches needed to be planted. This required an organizational body above an individual church that could help facilitate the project. While some denominations already had sizable apparatuses for such projects, others had to be created in real time. As bureaucratic and organizational structures began to grow and see their oversight expand, the autonomy once held by local churches began to decrease. And even as denominations continued to grow at unprecedented rates, divisions within them began to appear.

This thesis examines divisions within the Baptist community in western North Carolina. While highlighting the complex adjustments churches made in the wake of the Second Great Awakening, schisms between Baptist churches in western North Carolina also reflect larger social and economic changes that were sweeping American society. Coincident with the Second Great Awakening, the United States was also experiencing the Market Revolution, the time in

which long-distance commerce began to take shape. It is best understood not as an event but as a process—a period of time in which methods of mass production were adopted (seen both with the implementation of the factory system and cash crop agriculture) by people who began to focus less on domestic production for the home and more on the potential benefits and profit that could be reaped by selling and buying goods within a market system that progressively incorporated more of the country. The Market Revolution fundamentally changed the ways in which ordinary people oriented themselves toward the market and modes of production. However, such changes were largely predicated on a resident's proximity to either market centers or roads, rivers, and other avenues of transportation. And as new roads, canals, and railroads began to crisscross the continent, small pockets of people and communities found themselves left out of, or having fallen between the cracks of, the Market Revolution. Baptists living in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina found themselves confronting new economic and social folkways that they did not recognize.

In a grand sense, the divisions within Baptist churches in antebellum western North Carolina were caused by both the Second Great Awakening and the Market Revolution. Put more specifically, these schisms were responses to theological changes made by the governing organizational bodies of the Baptist denomination as well as the social reform efforts propagated by the rising middle class. This thesis is a microhistorical examination of how Baptist churches in and around the Blue Ridge mountains attempted to make sense of the larger socioeconomic and religious changes that were sweeping across American society. The sources used are almost exclusively the records left by collections of churches (also known as associations), the polemical material printed by those on both sides of divisive arguments, and the larger

organizational bodies like the North Carolina Baptist State Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.

The first chapter analyzes the organizational process the Baptist denomination undertook during the Second Great Awakening. Large, bureaucratic institutions intent on plotting the locations of churches, revivals, and other auxiliary organizations like schools, seminaries, Sunday School societies, and temperance societies also oversaw a reevaluation of Baptist theology, partly in order to popularize their message in a competitive religious environment. The overhaul of religious activity by the North Carolina Baptist State Convention was combatted by congregants of churches in the western mountains who saw no reason to change the way they interpreted the Bible nor pay to submit to the oversight of an organization a hundred miles away.

For decades, western Baptists attended their local churches where they could elect their pastors from their own congregations and interpret the Bible according to Calvinist doctrines. The distinguishing feature of Calvinist theology was the emphasis it placed on *predestination*, the idea that God, since time immemorial, has always known who was and was not going to be saved and enter heaven, the kingdom of God, once they perished. This cosmology placed God outside of time with extreme and awesome power and sovereignty. However, as the Second Great Awakening unfolded, Baptist theology at large began to change. Broadly under the auspices of the State Convention and its parent organization, the Southern Baptist Convention, newly ordained Baptist preachers, their converts, and the churches they planted began to teach an Arminian theology, an understanding of scripture that emphasized human agency. Arminians explained that it was the human agent who *chose* whether or not they were to be saved. While this cosmology fit neatly into what historians have come to call the “Age of the Common Man,”

it consequently shrank the sovereignty of God. The twofold process of adapting Baptist theology to the times and bringing all local churches under the umbrella of larger hierarchical organizations is precisely what caused many western Baptists to break off from the denomination as a whole, self-styling themselves as “Primitive,” “Anti-Missionary,” and “Hard Shell” Baptists.

The second chapter analyzes the ways in which the emerging middle class and its attendant unique social ideology challenged conventional folkways long-held by mountaineers and other Primitive Baptists. Aside from the radical expansion of the national economy, one of the most significant consequences of the Market Revolution was the creation of a middle class of people now imbued with disposable time and income as well as a unique ideology that sharply varied from the rest of southern society. This does not suggest so much of a class conflict between East and West as much as a clash of world views. Notions of personal industry, frugality, and sobriety were popularized among new preachers and missionaries who, along with other supporters of the State and Southern Baptist Conventions, began to identify themselves alongside other groups of professionals like doctors and lawyers. While the complexity surrounding the professionalization of the Baptist ministry deserves its own thesis, here, the political issue and social reform movement of temperance is used as a representative conflict of social mentalities.

For at least as long as Primitive Baptists had been electing their own ministers, these mountaineers had been distilling their excess crops of corn and wheat into whiskey. Given the difficulty in traversing the mountains in order to reach distant market centers, farmers found it a much more cost effective enterprise to sell the distilled spirits of their yield. However, as preachers and missionaries sent from the State Convention travelled westward to spread the

gospel and ensure all Baptists fell into the ideological fold, many westerners took umbrage at the notion that they should help fund local temperance societies. Many members of churches in the mountains and foothills, once having been found to belong to groups like the Sons of Temperance or even having been sympathetic to the temperance cause, were excluded and kicked out of their church homes. The subsequent responsive excommunications and realignments of churches in the early 1850s revolved almost entirely around the issue of temperance and the respective role the church and its preachers should play in its propagation or diminishment.

The final chapter attempts to elucidate more of the nuance within the fissures between Baptist churches. Not all North Carolinian Baptists found themselves falling wholly into either pro- or anti-Missionary camps, or even pro- or anti-temperance affiliations. Complicating matters further, those caught between the two polarities did not neatly fall into the foothills, conveniently and geographically demarcating the mountains from the piedmont. There were many mountain Baptists who greatly supported missionary efforts, the projects of the State Convention, and even temperance; while many Baptists in the foothills and piedmont despised attempts by missionaries to homogenize the denomination and encourage sobriety.

In this regard, a representative sample of churches was selected in order to show attempts made by those Baptists who conscientiously tried to avoid the polarization of their denomination. Efforts were made by the Jefferson Baptist Association over the 1840s and 1850s to maintain a middle ground of sorts between the two factions. The struggle to sustain a synthesis signifies three critical conclusions. First, although the Second Great Awakening and Market Revolution caused divisions within Baptist churches in North Carolina, they did not always necessitate them.

Put another way, while all Baptists experienced the changes wrought by theological and economic forces, not all of them reacted by self-identifying as either Primitive or Missionary Baptists. Second, the methods used by the Jefferson Association to hold out a median position reflect the ways in which all Southern Baptist preachers, churches, and associations borrowed elements of patriarchal southern culture as a means of both enforcing church discipline and embedding the denomination at large into the hegemonic discourse of the South. And finally, for many Baptists, denominational solidarity was far more important than internal divisions; they saw it pointless to bicker and bisect themselves when their real concern should be on the ground gained by other competing denominations.

Altogether, this project investigates a relatively small geographic area during a limited window of time. However, the conclusions suggested herein upset a number of conventional narratives within the religious and social historiographies of North Carolina and the South writ large. In the first case, the time frames traditionally attributed to the Second Great Awakening fall short of encompassing the organizing process set forth in North Carolina.¹ Second, the reasons attributed to the Primitive-Missionary schism have often been limited to analyses pertaining to local autonomy, failing to take the theological significance fully into account.² And lastly, although recent economic analyses have brilliantly charted the rise and fall of temperance in North Carolina, disturbing long-held, orthodox views regarding the inability of social reform

¹ Donald G. Matthews bookends the event in 1780 and 1830, respectively. See Matthews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Spring, 1969), 23-43.

² Bertram Wyatt-Brown finds ways to include politicized issues like temperance into his account by identifying what he calls "regional folk culture." See Wyatt-Brown, "The Antimission Movement in the Jacksonian South: A Study in Regional Folk Culture," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 36, No. 4, (Fall, 1970), 501-529.

to take root in the antebellum South, these studies have not lent enough attention to the religious domain; churches frequently housed heated political debates regarding the social role of alcohol.³ Much, if not most, of the quantifications used here are borrowed from Bruce E. Stewart's studies of distillation in southern Appalachia. In a larger sense, this thesis endeavors to connect two historiographies that have hitherto spoken past each other. While still primarily a project of religious history, hopefully the conclusions drawn in the coming chapters demonstrate that there are political and economic stakes entailed in any ostensibly spiritual or religious act; and the Southern Baptists of antebellum North Carolina, in attempts to make sense of their world in religious terms, were still voicing the disaffections and excitements of a people profoundly affected by political and socioeconomic forces.

³ See Bruce E. Stewart, *Moonshiners and Prohibitionists: The Battle Over Alcohol in Southern Appalachia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011).

CHAPTER ONE: “TO BEGIN AT JERUSALEM”: THEOLOGY AND THE BIRTH OF ANTI-MISSIONARY BAPTISTS

In late August, 1838, in the northwest corner of North Carolina, the Mountain Baptist Association formed a committee of five members. The committee was tasked with considering and forming a response to a request from Bear Creek Church, one of the association’s constituent churches. The request had asked “that the Association not meddle with the missionary business so as to break any fellowship or make any division among the churches.” After deliberation, the five brethren concluded that although they had “no authority over the churches and individuals,” and without explicitly denying the request, they advised their churches not “to deal with any member of their body who may have trespassed against them by joining any of the institutions of the day,” which referred to any among the temperance, Bible and tract, Sunday School, or other reform societies sprouting across early nineteenth century America. Going further, they announced that the association was to “drop correspondence with all associations” and only once their constituent churches had “put these things from among [them]” could they “walk together and still correspond as heretofore.”¹ Such was the ultimatum laid out by the Mountain Baptist Association.

Bear Creek was not the only church to make such a request. The committee formed by the Mountain Baptist Association felt the need to make a comprehensive decision because their response had to be geared “in answer to the request of several churches.”² Breaks in

¹ The committee consisted of two Elders: Drewry Senter and Brazille McBride, and three Brethren: E. Vanover, D. Tinsley, and J. Calloway. Minutes, *Mountain Baptist Association*, 1838, in Baptist Historical Collection (Winston Salem: Wake Forest University Library); J.F. Fletcher, *A History of the Ashe County, North Carolina and New River, Virginia Baptist Associations* (Raleigh: Commercial Printing Co., 1935), 17-18.

² Minutes, *Mountain Baptist Association*, 1838; Fletcher, *A History of Ashe County*, 17.

correspondence were taken seriously, as they signified non-fellowship between entire groups of churches, fundamental differences in liturgy and church practice. Non-correspondence decisions were usually aimed at a specific association or body of associations in an effort to highlight such liturgical differences. In the case of the Mountain Association, correspondence was dropped across the board and would only be continued with those church associations that not only disavowed any relationship to missionary activity, but also dismissed any member who advocated such activity. Having been founded just eight years prior, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina had been sending missionaries “to the western parts of the State” where there was a perceived “depressed condition of religion.”³

The Mountain Association itself was only two years old and was the only association west of Ashe County, incorporating the churches in and beyond the Blue Ridge mountains. Nestled within the mountains, the churches that belonged to the Mountain Association were far from cities or urban centers that hosted networks of communication and information that connected citizens across the country. Free from the discursive exchange of new ideas and mentalities of personal and spiritual reform that were sweeping across America, the Mountain Association’s churches were more reticent than many of their Baptist brethren from farther east to embrace the call to halt their drinking in the name of temperance; construct and maintain Sunday Schools and seminaries; and fund missionaries in their quest to save and reform mankind.

³ “Fields of Labor,” Minutes, *Baptist State Convention*, 1846.

The North Carolina Baptist State Convention was an organization that was built with the expressed intent to propagate such activity. It was an organizational body of church leaders that sought to plan, orchestrate, and map out the distribution of funds and people in a concerted manner in order to win as many converts to the Baptist faith as possible; and for those already part of the Baptist denomination, they could potentially “improve” their spiritual lives by supporting, financially or physically, the efforts of the State Convention. To those who began to self-identify as “Primitive,” “Hard-Shell,” and “Anti-Missionary” Baptists, missionaries and the messages they carried from the State Convention not only threatened the local autonomy of their churches, but their eschatology—their cosmological understanding of Christ’s return, His judgment, and the nature of Zion, God’s New Jerusalem.⁴

The Anti-Missionary sentiment, represented by the Mountain Association’s ultimatum, would spread in the years following 1838, causing not only further confrontations between associations but greater frustrations for the State Convention and its particular vision for the planting and orientation of its denomination’s churches. While the divisions caused by the Anti-Missionary conflict stemmed from larger factors that were transforming society, certain clergy and their congregations self-identified as Anti-Missionary or Primitive because they rejected key theological elements of the Convention’s mission, especially the nature and cause of revivals and the role of preachers. Both of these ecclesiastical elements were the hinges upon which the

⁴ While both Primitive and Missionary Baptists recognized and interpreted similarly the apocalyptic passages of Isaiah, Matthew, and Revelation, their theological divergence came in how they perceived salvation. Zion, for Primitives, was understood as a (pre)destination—an arrangement designed by the grand architect of the universe. For the missionaries celebrating the human ability to reform, society could potentially be perfected—but only according to a certain rubric, which was understandable and manageable by people. It is important to remember that for both sects, slavery was a critical and indispensable component of the perfect society. See Jack P. Maddex, “Proslavery Millennialism: Social Eschatology in Antebellum Southern Calvinism,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (Spring, 1979), 46-62.

denomination's function and form pivoted. If revivals were the methods and occasions for conversions, the evidence of the Holy Spirit's divine influence, then the preacher represented His emissary, chosen from among the congregation to lead. The planned revivals and traveling preachers that the Convention orchestrated and sent out appeared too artificial for Primitive Baptists to accept. Put plainly, Anti-Missionary Baptists, as staunch predestinarians, rejected the Convention's eschatology, its theological premise—that the parousia could be caused by human agents perfecting society.

The clash between Primitive and Missionary Baptists was indicative of the larger transformation at work within the denomination at large. For nearly four decades, North Carolina had experienced the peculiar consequences of what has been retroactively dubbed the First and Second Great Awakenings. The first was a religious revival that took place roughly between 1720 and 1760 and affected all of the American colonies, to one degree or another. It was characterized by the emotionality of younger, "New Light" preachers, who contrasted their orations and dramatic exhortations from "Old Light" elders.⁵ The movement primarily affected Presbyterians and other Calvinist churches, dividing preachers and congregants on issues regarding the education and zealotry of the clergy. And nowhere was zealotry more evident than at Presbyterian camp meetings, where enthusiastic speakers revved listeners into emotional frenzies, often resulting in large numbers of conversions. It took little time for the elders and established church members to start doubting the efficacy of providing the full benefits of church membership to those whose salvation appeared more an emotional response to an experience

⁵ William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 45, 60-61.

than a true acknowledgment and acceptance of Christ's grace. Old Lights increasingly discouraged camp meetings, forcing the Presbyterian denomination as a whole to eventually halt the practice.⁶

In the midst of the debate, Reverend John Thomson, a notable Old Light, was among the first ministers to traverse the Great Wagon Road to Salisbury, in the late 1740s, leaving a trail of schools and educational institutions behind him.⁷ He was followed by thousands of Ulster-Scot Presbyterians who would make western North Carolina home, after the resolutions of the Cherokee War in 1761 and the French and Indian War in 1763. Ulster-Scot, or Scots-Irish, Presbyterians brought with them a religious legacy of dissenter obstinacy that would prove lasting.⁸ The intense numbers settling in the Blue Ridge and western counties contributed significantly to the intensity of Calvinism that would come to define Primitive Baptist

⁶ McLoughlin makes a point to acknowledge the degree to which geography played in the difficulty of providing frontier or backcountry Presbyterian churches with educated preachers who would have had to cross an ocean and the width of a colony in order to be inadequately and sporadically paid by a disproportionately poor congregation of Scots-Irish settlers. *Ibid.*, 82-83.

⁷ After playing a critical role on the organizing committee of Francis Allison's "Free School,"—what would become the University of Delaware—Thomson spent years traveling through Maryland and Virginia, preaching and planting churches and schools. The precise date of Thomson's arrival in northwestern Carolina is unknown. He would die and be buried in the region in 1753, after having spoken as early as 1751. Robert W. Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle: Settlement of the Northwest Carolina Frontier, 1747-1762*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 186-188; John Kerr Fleming, *Historic Third Creek Church*, (Raleigh: Office of the Synod of North Carolina, 1967), 38, 136, 144; Maddex argues that "Southern Presbyterians—concentrated in the stricter Old School church—contributed to Southern intellectual life out of proportion to their numbers in the region." Maddex, 47.

⁸ In this instance, "western North Carolina" is defined as the area west of, and including, Rowan County. For more on the Ulster-Scot migration, see H. Tyler Blethen and Curtis W. Wood Jr., *From Ulster to Carolina: The Migration of the Scotch-Irish to Southwestern North Carolina*, (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1998); George W. Paschal, *History of North Carolina Baptists, Vol. 2* (Raleigh: The General Board, North Carolina Baptist State Convention, 1955), 1, 20. Paschal also emphasizes the sizable communities of German Moravians, Quakers, and Separate Baptists that also spotted the region.

perspectives in the coming years.⁹ It would be during the Second Great Awakening that many Presbyterians converted to Baptism, and many Calvinists became Arminians.¹⁰

Donald G. Matthews posits rough dates for the Second Great Awakening between 1780 and 1830. His hypothesis suggests that while the First Awakening dealt entirely with liturgy and church structure, the Second implied a “social function;” rather, it was “an organizing process” that provided purpose and direction to those suffering from the various “social strains of a nation on the move into new political, economic, and geographic areas.”¹¹ The most significant distinction between the First and Second Great Awakenings is the increasing challenge posed to the doctrine of the elect, God’s people pre-ordained for salvation. According to William McLoughlin, if the First Great Awakening “weakened the doctrine of predestination,” then the Second “finally subverted it entirely.”¹²

Theologically, this feature, more than others, was the critical point of departure between Primitive and Missionary Baptists. In the early 1800s, the disestablishment of the state-funded church meant that now churches had to compete for congregants. With tax dollars no longer funding “The Church,” a veritable marketplace of religion—what Jon Butler has elsewhere called the antebellum spiritual hothouse—opened and denominations now had to sell their

⁹ McLoughlin makes a special point of highlighting the degree of social unrest wrought by religious dispute in the South. He eventually argues that Separate Baptists, by virtue of their ideological contrast with the Eastern-based gentry, sell their region on their emphases on “self-discipline” and “social responsibility.” McLoughlin, 92-93; for more on religious dissenters and the class and political conflicts in which they engaged, see Carole Watterson Troxler, *Farming Dissenters: The Regulator Movement in Piedmont North Carolina* (Raleigh: North Carolina Office of Archives and History, 2011).

¹⁰ In this regard, Calvinism is taken to refer to the branch of theology emphasizing predestination and God’s supreme sovereignty. Arminianism is understood as a contrast to the prospect that God’s grace is offered only to “the elect,” who have been predestined to accept it.

¹¹ Donald G. Matthews, “The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Spring, 1969), 26-27.

¹² McLoughlin, 114.

messages to potential converts.¹³ This is why the Arminian doctrine appealed to so many Americans in the Second Great Awakening; this theology claimed that humans were spiritual free agents and were free to choose to accept Christ's saving grace. Many found this more inviting than the ambiguity inherent in predestination. Recognizing the new religious landscape, the Baptist denomination, as a whole, embraced this doctrine as a way to compete with Methodists, who had already pioneered methods of carrying such enthusiastically appealing sentiments to the "common man." However, there remained Baptists who were less enthused by such a change in perspective. Primitive Baptists retained their Calvinist doctrine, one defined less by man's free ability to choose and participate in their salvation and more defined by the concept of predestination, this doctrine claimed that God had already selected an "elect" group of men and women who are to be saved and damned.

The Presbyterian denomination was also Calvinist, and while it was the first to utilize the camp meeting to attract new converts, beginning in the First Great Awakening, they were less flexible in their doctrines than the Baptists during the Second. Interestingly, it was the eventual Presbyterian abandonment of camp meetings that allowed Baptists and Methodists to perfect the practice. In this sense, in North Carolina at least, "either the two Awakenings overlapped, or the First never ended."¹⁴ In the early 1800s, many elements of Baptist doctrine appealed to predominantly Presbyterian mountaineers. And although many converted to the Baptist faith, they did not give up their Calvinist belief in predestination. What the hard and fast dates McLoughlin ascribes to the Second Great Awakening fail to capture are the consequences of the

¹³ Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

¹⁴ McLoughlin, 13.

“organizing process” he identifies with the movement. Sure, many Baptist converts may have been brought into the fold during that window; however, the organizations—like the Baptist State Convention and the other “institutions of the day”—did not reach the mountains until the 1830s. The Primitive-Missionary conflict was not one born out of the aftermath of the Awakening, but rather a reckoning among Baptists of the changes taking place as a result of it.

From the 1830s through the early 1850s, Missionary Baptists were still very energized by the Awakening and were still enthusiastically attempting to bring what they considered religious improvements to the western parts of the state. However, Primitive Baptists nestled in the mountains, who hitherto had little organizational oversight, took issue not just with the new institutions missionaries were attempting to establish in their region but with the cosmology implied by the Arminian doctrine that animated it.

Along with the proper function of preachers, revivals were a significant point of theological disconnect between Missionaries and Primitives. During the First Awakening, camp meetings became a critical mechanism for spreading God’s word along the sparsely populated regions of the backcountry. Yet their excesses soon fractured the Presbyterians, who disagreed on the extent to which emotionally-charged conversions should lead to automatic church membership. These contentions among Presbyterians allowed Arminian denominations, namely Baptists and Methodists, to perfect the practice. It is in light of the varied nature of the Awakenings in western North Carolina that one recognizes revivals, often by means of camp

meetings, as “the most powerful engine” in the process of “church growth, frontier acculturation, and benevolent reform.”¹⁵

In the sparsely populated communities that were scattered across western North Carolina, revivals played critical social functions. Revivals brought together large groups of, ostensibly like-minded, people for a common spiritual goal. They united communities within an emotionally charged environment that celebrated an individual’s relationship with their savior. Even in worship, congregants doxologically praised the Almighty, uniting their voices in dramatic ecstasy, through a shared cosmological belief or understanding.

The result of such occasions was a revitalization of religiosity. While on the one hand this implies the large-scale conversion of non-believers, culminating in many new church members, on the other it “necessarily presupposes the existence already of that which is revived,” or it implies that some form of religion already must have existed in a particular area.¹⁶ To the former, revivals provided the energy and emotional momentum that propelled the organizing process. To the latter, they concretized the role of church life in the southern community by necessitating the adding of pews to the sanctuary or the construction of new churches altogether in order to accommodate the newly-saved. In regions and counties that had relatively poor transportation, commercial centers, or educational facilities, the church was one of the primary modes of social organization—save for the tavern. In this way, revivals can be seen as a crucial component to

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁶ C.B. Hassell, “Of the Chowan ‘Report on the Kehukee Association.’” in *The Primitive Baptist*, (Tarboro: George Howard, 1846).

church function and organization. And to this extent, the significance or authenticity of a revival carried a great deal of spiritual significance.

In 1845, the Board of Directors of the Baptist State Convention acknowledged “to produce a general revival of ‘pure and undefiled religion’ throughout our bounds—we need in addition to those already in the field, some two or three scores of effective and devoted missionaries.”¹⁷ The following year, among the resolutions passed was one regarding the newly formed Southern Baptist Convention, which sought a “revival of genuine religion.” The resolution itself would not have been complete without the request that in order to make such an event possible “that collections be taken up at the same time to aid those objects.”¹⁸ The request for money, on the part of churches, associations, and conventions would also become a target for Primitive Baptist derision.

That same year, C.B. Hassell, an Anti-Missionary polemicist, faulted the “man-made-artificial-revival Christians” for their belief that revivals “may be brought into existence at any and at all times, whenever the preachers choose to put their heads together for the purpose.” Speaking as a Primitive, Hassell recognized that “revivals occur occasionally, when the pleasure of the Lord is to favor of Zion with them.” Clarifying their nature, he understood a revival to be “a recall from a state of languor [...] it is a renewal of the benign influences of God’s spirit, in the hearts of his ministers and people, where it already existed, but in a languid state.”¹⁹

Primitives abhorred the prospect of standardizing the spontaneous. In an emotionally radiated

¹⁷ “Report of the Board,” Minutes, *Baptist State Convention*, 1845.

¹⁸ “Resolutions,” Minutes, *Baptist State Convention*, 1846.

¹⁹ C.B. Hassell, *The Primitive Baptist*, 1846.

atmosphere in which either joyous excess or existential dread accompanied the sermon or songs, imagining human destiny in such a way as to induce fear or guilt, only to topologically suture over such emotions with an overarching sense of security in salvation provided many southerners with a psychological release.

The fact that it had been done before is precisely what made it possible. The infectious spread of information concerning the camp meetings in the decades prior provided the appropriate ingredient symbols needed to reconstitute the experience elsewhere. It is in this way that revivals mimic the experience of the sublime. As David Nye suggests, “in moments of sublimity, human beings temporarily disregard divisions among elements of the community. The sublime taps into fundamental hopes and fears. It is not a social residue, created by economic or political forces, though both can inflect its meaning. Rather, it is an essentially religious feeling.”²⁰ Despite the focus of his analysis resting mainly on the social responses to technology of the time, here, his interpretation of the sublime makes for an excellent foil for understanding how Primitive Baptists and other Calvinists understood revivals to take place.

For Calvinists, and many of the Primitive Baptists, God’s absence was ubiquitous; humans were awash in a cloud of doubt, unable to affect or manifest His will through their own actions. Although immanent, his designs appeared to be a wilderness to the subject whose own individual action carried no significant spiritual weight. God’s will was unknowable and unalterable. The horizons of possibility offered by a theology that divorced human action from eternal consequences now came under threat by missionaries and reformers who dared to say that

²⁰ David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), viii.

the parousia could be caused.²¹ Public, doxological celebrations of human capacity for reform marked a new policing of the private sphere. Missionaries did not imagine that society would be accidentally perfected. If Zion was to be caused, it would be done according to a rubric, a script of reform. To local and non-local evangelicals, a westerner's "disorderly house" was both God's and the church's concern.²² Arminian missionaries contrasted the sublime spontaneity of the Calvinist revival, and envisioned parousia as the figurative pastoral of the evangelical Zion. The carefully surveyed and plotted landscape, or "fields of labor," called out for the productive reaping for the "the Lord of the harvest," to whom it was asked "that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."²³ The pastoral Zion is one in which wildness and spontaneity is tamed, controlled, and organized into fruitful fields. Humans could cause such a Zion, if they could reform and perfect society according to the evangelical paradigm. The Zion yet to be caused needed to be organized.²⁴

Indicative of the organizing process of the Second Great Awakening in North Carolina was the foundation of the Baptist State Convention in 1830. Having been created for the primary objective of encouraging and sponsoring missionary efforts, within three years of its inception, the Convention was also sponsoring the development of temperance societies deemed "worthy of the patronage of all religious and philanthropic individuals." Such efforts were aimed at restoring

²¹ Anne C. Loveland *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980).

²² In the 1858 meeting of the Senter District Baptist Association, a letter from Grassy Creek Church requested advice regarding congregants "that are making and selling spirits, and spoiling the youths of our country." The association suggested warning those who faced potential exclusion, but that "if any member should make or buy spirits, and allow a drunken crowd to drink at their house or still-house, so as to constitute a disorderly house, we advise our churches to exclude them." Minutes, *Senter District Baptist Association*, 1858.

²³ *Minutes*, Baptist State Convention, 1842, 1846, 1848, 1849.

²⁴ Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

fellow men “to the bosom of their families, and to the respectability of society.”²⁵ The methods by which social and religious respectability could be restored is characterized by what the State Convention’s Board of Managers called the “cause of Zion.”²⁶

In a theological environment that was increasingly highlighting the human participation in salvation—the choice of acceptance, followed by the immediacy of redemption—preachers like Lyman Beecher, Nathaniel Taylor, and Charles Grandison Finney began channeling new believers into reform societies as a means of perpetuating their faith. They also observed predictable patterns and created duplicable formulas for causing and sustaining revivals and other religious experiences. Salvation now entailed a personal choice in which the subject actively accepted salvation, often within exciting and crowded atmospheres where calculated deployments of doctrine imbued congregants with the power and enthusiasm to reform the world. Seen here, the Zion to which the Board of Managers referred is not the metaphysical or spatial dimension of God’s New Jerusalem made manifest through the millennium. Zion, as imagined and inscribed by the convention, is that of an imagined parousia, only revealed or made legible through its correlative cause. As a discursive formation, it existed in relation or proximity to human action; Zion would have to be produced.

In the Southern Baptist imagination, the methods by which a perfect society could be produced differed greatly from those imagined by northerners. While the reform impulse could be taken to logical extremes in the North, seen most dramatically with the Abolition movement, the South could only emphasize personal reform, an individual mandate to improve.

²⁵ David S. Williams, “Report on Temperance Societies,” *Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*, 1833.

²⁶ “Annual Report of the Board of Managers,” *Baptist State Convention*, 1854.

Consequently, temperance was the primary reform movement to gain serious traction in the South. For southern reformers, the social order did not need to be overturned. If salvation began with the individual, so too must reform. As Jack Maddex has argued, the millennium imagined by southern Christians was an affirmation of their own society, not a destruction of it.²⁷ Nonetheless, in order for such a millennium to arrive, organizations were needed.

On March 26, 1830, Samuel Wait addressed the purpose of the creation of the State Convention, then the North Carolina Baptist Benevolent Society. Recognizing the need of the “destitute churches and sections of country” within the state, he claimed, “the primary objects of the Convention are, the enlargement and intellectual improvement of the ministry.” In order “to accomplish any purpose of a general and arduous nature,” Wait continued, “combined and sytematick [*sic*] operations are absolutely necessary.” By this, he meant “a general system of united and harmonious movements is indispensable.”²⁸ It is unlikely that such aims would spur the reticence of those hesitant to link their church to a larger, eastern-located institution. Wait’s “systematick operations,” by name, posed little threat to local church autonomy. Wait explained the means by which such lofty goals would be accomplished. “‘By money,’ it will be said, ‘its operations are to be sustained and by money all its objects are to be acquired.’” Wait faced facts, “the Convention is a *monied* institution;” after all, “[w]here, pray, is the great sin of applying money to the advancement of religion, and of the interests of the church of Christ?”²⁹

²⁷ Maddex, 46-47.

²⁸ Appendix, *Baptist State Convention*, 1830.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Joshua Lawrence, a Primitive Baptist who self-identified as “A Clodhopper from North Carolina,” found no scriptural justification for such institutions. He excoriated the “reproaches of the Missionary Baptists and all those who advocate the new schemes of the day—who traffic and sell religious services.” To Lawrence, such programs were “a curse to our Israel” and “a great corruption.”³⁰ He placed Primitive Baptists directly within the heritage of the New Testament, recognizing a true prophet as one undistracted by finances. For him, the Convention was only concerned with “making money the mainspring of ministerial motion, instead of love to Christ and souls.”³¹ In the following pages, Lawrence had a meticulous breakdown of missionary payments taken from the ‘Minutes of the North Carolina Baptist Society for Foreign and Domestic Missions.’

Having already anticipated challengers like Lawrence, Wait justified the Convention’s position.

They who object to this, employ money to improve their farms and their houses, to educate and accomplish their children, to sustain the various political and literary institutions of their country; and in instances not a few, to gratify their taste, and to minister to their pleasure. Then why not employ money for the support of Christianity...?³²

Chasing his inquiry with a litany of biblical references, Wait failed to recognize the elitism that had already been built into the Convention’s constitution, which had been printed in the minutes concomitantly with his letter. If Article 4, which stated that the institution would be “composed

³⁰ Joshua Lawrence, *The Primitive Baptist: A Semi-Monthly Periodical—Edited by Mark Bennett* (Tarboro: George Howard, 1835), 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

³² *Baptist State Convention*, 1830, 63-64.

of such individuals and delegates from Associations, churches and societies as shall make adequate contributions to its funds,” was not enough to frustrate poor Baptist churches nestled in the mountains, then Article 5 would do the trick. It granted any church, association, or group one delegate “for every ten dollars paid into the Treasury.”³³ It appeared that, even five years before the Convention’s christening, Lawrence had feared the design of such an organization. What he called a “National Church,” built by reformers who would allow entrants to “come into it for pay, having a fixed price for members, directors, and presidents for life, and so they make a sort of half-brothers of the rich men of this world.”³⁴

Wait and Lawrence perfectly represent the diverging perspectives regarding the proper role of preachers and institutions between the evangelical Missionary Baptists and the Calvinist Anti-Missionaries. To the latter, an authentic preacher was a prophet; a cultural signifier representing the religious trope of the quasi-nomadic monk, the child of God having experienced an authentic conversion—followed by baptism by total immersion—who then gave up everything to preach the Word. Primitive Baptist views of proper clerical activity frequently evoked the likenesses of Paul, John the Baptist, even Martin Luther and George Whitefield. Such analogies were self-conscious extensions of the Reformation project, an active attempt to mimic, or even re-create, the pre-Constantine Church.

For the predestinarian Calvinists, God’s will must be mysterious if it is to be authentically His. By contrast, to the Primitive, the missionary signified the Convention. He was

³³ “Constitution,” *Baptist State Convention*, 1830.

³⁴ Joshua Lawrence, *American Telescope*, 1825 in John G. Crowley, “‘Written that Ye May Believe’ Primitive Baptist Historiography, in *Through a Glass Darkly: Contested Notions of Baptist Identity*, ed., by Keith Harper (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 205-227.

indicative of the larger body of churches, committees, and boards of directors that made his presence not only possible, but part of an orchestrated scheme to plant churches, organize temperance societies, and, eventually, ask for money. The source of Anti-Missionary frustrations surrounding such a visitor is that it means the preacher no longer spontaneously ruptures the mundane with spiritual authenticity—protracted or otherwise—by means of the Holy Spirit. The missionary represented man-made, polemically mass-produced artificiality whose “systematick operations” could only yield artificial religious experiences. Conventioneers, like Samuel Wait, did themselves few favors when they condescendingly quoted from passages like Matthew 9:36-38, which likened the missionary cause to a kind of soul harvest, a computational process of conversion and organization.³⁵ According to Primitives, God had already done the cultivation; He planted the seeds of salvation before time began, and the souls of the elect would be harvested only when He decided. Human calculations only threatened God’s omnipotent sovereignty.

Evangelical preachers did, however, find receptive audiences among the ranks of bourgeois social reformers who, when not occupying the pews in church, were spending their disposable time and income on other reform endeavors. The “cause of Zion” was used synonymously with the “great cause of missions, education, the dissemination of useful books, and tracts,” in addition to the “cause of Temperance.”³⁶ Bertram Wyatt-Brown has noted the degree to which Bible, Tract, and other reform societies adopted similar organizational structures

³⁵ Matt. 9:36-38 (KJV).

³⁶ “Annual Report of the Board of Managers,” *Baptist State Convention*, 1854; R. McNabb “Report on Temperance,” *Baptist State Convention*, 1838.

as emerging industry and corporate systems.³⁷ In many respects, the developmental patterns of both the corporation and reform societies were symbiotic, insofar as the same people were often part of both institutions, magnifying the cultural valency of new power relations.

The technologies of power harnessed by the architects of Zion were the pulpit and the printing press. Unprecedented amounts of printed polemical material could now be distributed through increasingly open avenues of transportation.³⁸ As stated by Wyatt-Brown, “[t]he efficient and economical use of giant steam presses, of the widening networks of canals, rails, and steamboat lines, and of the postal service required that the societies’ central offices be located in eastern metropolitan areas.”³⁹ Missionaries, acting as emissaries for the State Convention, rode out to western counties, encouraging the construction of local temperance societies and denominational schools, circulated and disseminated a theology of reform. James Thomas, an agent for the State Convention, traveled to western counties only to find that “the use of strong drink [was] taking deep root.” Writing back to the Convention, he claimed to have seen “not less than 17 distilleries in operation” during his travels, and that it was “wo[e]ful to tell, many professors of religion, who say they desire the prosperity of Zion, to do good, eschew evil, and abhor drunk[e]ness in all its forms, make, sell, use, give, and send abroad this awful evil, and they often quote the Scriptures to justify their course.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, “The Antimission Movement in the Jacksonian South: A Study in Regional Folk Culture,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 36, No. 4, (Fall, 1970), 506-508. Wyatt-Brown argues more in sectional terms, highlighting the degree to which “Yankee commercialism” affected the missionary movement.

³⁸ Alan D. Watson, *Internal Improvements in Antebellum North Carolina* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, 2002), 24-47, 106-128.

³⁹ Wyatt-Brown, 506-508.

⁴⁰ “Report of James Thomas, Agent,” *Baptist State Convention*, 1835.

In the same letter, Thomas described his project in the biblical rhetoric of Isaiah, in which the dark wilderness, into which he ventured, was illuminated and rendered into a “fruitful field” and forest.⁴¹ Sermons and lessons regarding proper habits of consumption were frequently discussed in terms of production patterns. Before concluding his own report in 1848, William Jones claimed that the “good seed of the word formerly sown in this State, is springing up; and if judiciously cultivated, will produce a bountiful harvest for the granary of the Lord.” Such productive imagery preceded four additional pages of financial accounting.⁴² The signatures of the methods of production and the fiduciary terms with which missions were inscribed were the immediate targets of protest by westerners who increasingly self-identified as Primitive and Anti-missionary Baptists.⁴³

Primitive Baptists countered the threat of cultural hegemony implicit in Baptist reform doctrine through church exclusions and breaks in correspondence, as well as through their own publications.⁴⁴ Joshua Lawrence, in his own *American Telescope* decried the “monied” interests which seemed to have corrupted a divine enterprise. He faulted missionary support of “such

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² “Report of the Agent of the Convention,” Appendix, *Baptist State Convention*, 1848.

⁴³ Kenneth Moore Startup, *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997). He argues that southern clerical criticisms of capitalist culture is indicative of broader anti-commercialist tendencies across the South. See also Walter Brownlow Posey, *Religious Strife on the Southern Frontier* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 43-75. Posey argues that denominations rarely maintained stable relationships, either within themselves or with other “sects.”

⁴⁴ When discussing the epochal historical bloc, Antonio Gramsci finds its composition at the threshold of “spontaneous philosophy” and the material circumstances surrounding its articulation. In this case, the cultural, geoeconomic, and theological preconditions of North Carolinians, when expressed in and through relations of production, constitute such a threshold. Mikhail Bakhtin’s understanding of language as the site of heteroglossal, dialogic contests of ideology also assist in explaining how what Fredric Jameson calls the “master code of religion” houses such socioeconomic contests. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, (New York: International, 1971), 323; M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981; repr. Psychology Press, 2002), 74.

merchandizing and covetousness, and greediness of filthy lucre in religion.” In a diatribe titled, “A Watchman, crying with the children of Zion,” Lawrence excoriated those

various intrigues of hypocrisy, practiced under the sanction of scripture and benevolence, to make gain by godliness, carried on by the societies of the day, of whom the devil may say, with more reason than he did of Job: Did they serve God for nought?—Do they divide the spoil of benevolence from the priest to the printer?⁴⁵

Lawrence identified the secular alliances forged by missionaries, and saw such cooperation as innately corruptive. In more theological terms, the “hyper Calvinist” perspectives of Primitive Baptists divided the spiritual from the secular realm.⁴⁶ Anti-missionary Baptists, who had always called forth their own preachers by motion of the congregation, resented the notion that, as a denomination, they were responsible for founding schools, religiously instructing enslaved peoples, or augmenting consumption habits in accordance with largely alien, transplanted doctrines that seemed to be reproduced en masse.⁴⁷ Chief among the critics of evangelism, Joshua Lawrence rejected the idea that revivals could be planned or organized. Revivalism, like any other form of divine intervention, could not be genuine if its impetus was human engineering. This is, of course, antithetical to Charles Finney’s famous claim that the “connection between the right use of means for a revival and a revival, is as scientifically sure as

⁴⁵ “Communications,” *The Primitive Baptist*, (Tarboro: George Howard, 1843). Joshua Lawrence also published *The American Telescope*, under the pseudonym “A Clodhopper.” For more on Primitive Baptist historiography, see John G. Crowley, “Written that Ye May Believe,” in *Through a Glass Darkly: Contested Notions of Baptist Identity* ed., Keith Harper, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 205-226.

⁴⁶ Wyatt-Brown, 511.

⁴⁷ Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1980), 224, 186-256. She shows the dialectical engagements between evangelicals, who insisted that enslaved people should be treated as “fellow heirs of immortality,” and hard-shell Christians who resented the imposition of new strictures upon the private sphere.

between the right use of means to raise grain and a crop of wheat.”⁴⁸ Even Finney’s understanding of eschatology was made legible through the imagery of agrarian industriousness.

In 1846, the “Fields of Labor” report suggested that “special attention ought first to be given to the towns, and then the most suitable places in the country. The New Testament plan is ‘to begin at Jerusalem.’ The great mistake [...] has been the neglect of the towns, particularly in the middle and western parts of the State.”⁴⁹ Nearly a year prior, the Convention had

justly apprehended that the cause of benevolence must suffer in the Western part of our State, if the churches shall deem it unnecessary to send their delegates to the meetings of our annual Convention. Western Carolina presents an inviting field to the missionary, and our brethren in the mountains have manifested a commendable zeal in their efforts to supply their own destitution.⁵⁰

At the annual Jefferson Baptist Association meeting, after an impromptu-protracted meeting and revival, the construction of “a school of high character at some suitable point within associational limits” was proposed. Among the resolutions was “that the committee be instructed in making the selection of a suitable location for said school to have particular reference to the most wealthy and densely populated community.”⁵¹

Such financial preoccupations reveal the increasingly professional nature of clerical and ecclesiastical activity. The managerial activities of missionary enterprises were also occasioned

⁴⁸ Charles G. Finney, *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*, ed. William G. McLoughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 33.

⁴⁹ “Fields of Labor,” *Baptist State Convention*, 1846.

⁵⁰ The Minutes, *Baptist State Convention*, 1845 continue, emphasizing that “the opinion is gaining ground that more should be done for Home Missions than we have done...” One of the significant points of distinction Christine Leigh Heyrman makes is the degree to which home, private life fell increasingly under the purview of churches and pastors. See Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁵¹ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1854; Fletcher, 51.

by the social and cultural mores of the growing professional (middle) class. For the missionaries and their State Convention, a Baptist that “act[s] with that energy and independence which the dignity of [their] position should inspire” was a frugal, sober, and productive Baptist.⁵² The agricultural industriousness implicit within missionary discourse not only shows the synergism of proper consumption and production modalities, but the cultural hegemony wrought by a Zion, not to be found in the Calvinists’ frontier wilderness, but a parousia to be caused by rendering the wild into a fruitful field, to be counted, quantified, and commodified.⁵³

The divisions between Primitive and Missionary Baptists were indicative of larger changes sweeping southern society. A growing middle class imbued with a reform impulse sought to plant and organize Baptist institutions in a way that replicated this doctrine. The evangelical organization process was meant to increase the professionalism of a clergy that had hitherto been primarily elected from among the laity. However, such efforts on the part of larger associations and conventions spelled doom for the local autonomy that many western churches had come to appreciate. Professionalization meant standardization. When Reverend Wait spoke of enlarging and intellectually improving the ministry, he and his contemporaries gauged this improvement in a convention where they could express their opinions and have their social mentalities take shape on a state-wide level because they had paid for the privilege. While the concept of organizing a process by which society could be perfected did not frighten all

⁵² “Annual Report of the Board of Managers,” *Baptist State Convention*, 1854.

⁵³ As scholars like Giorgio Agamben continue to illuminate the theological genealogies of modern political economy, economic analyses of evangelical theology can help explain, not just the cultural hegemony contained within church doctrine, but how congregants made sense of their own lifestyles in spiritual terms. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa and Matteo Mandarini (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 277-286. He traces the signature of *oikonomia* from its original liturgical roots to contemporary ideas regarding the invisible hand.

western—or even all Primitive—Baptists, the qualifications regarding how such a process should take shape were disputed. No such element was contested more hotly than temperance.

Irrespective of the ostensible agreement between many Primitives and Conventioneers on the religious and spiritual imperative of sobriety, the enforcement of abstinence from alcohol not only clashed with the authority of local churches to control their congregants, in many cases, it directly challenged cultural folkways that had been entrenched longer than any church west of Salisbury.

CHAPTER TWO: “ALL THIS IS DONE BY PICKING THE POCKETS OF THE POOR”: TEMPERANCE, EXCLUSION, AND MIDDLE CLASS IDEOLOGY

In 1851, the congregation of Little River Church called for a vote of exclusion for two men. These men were charged with belonging to the Sons of Temperance, an accusation that held particular significance in western North Carolina. Many members of the congregation found that belonging to secular, secretive organizations that claimed moral missions analogous to those of the church was both unnecessary and spiritually dangerous. The vote was called, and upon the count, all but twenty-nine church members had voted for exclusion. A second vote was called, this one to dismiss the dissenting twenty-nine from fellowship as well. Both motions carried, and the thirty-one temperance advocates and sympathizers were excommunicated from the church. Non-fellowship agreements were taken seriously and were most often appealed to the corresponding association to which a particular church may belong. In the case of Little River, a query was brought before the board of the Lewis Fork Baptist Association regarding the verdict of the exclusion vote. The query asked “[is] it sufficient ground for an exclusion from fellowship according to the principles of the Baptist churches, for a member to join the Order of the Sons of Temperance [?]” The answer: “Yea.”¹

The men and women turned out of Little River Church, along with those dismissed from other churches in neighboring counties, would go on to found the Taylorsville Baptist

¹ Minutes, *Lewis Fork Baptist Association*, 1851, in Baptist Historical Collection (Winston-Salem: Wake Forest University Library). Ninety-nine votes were cast altogether, seventy in favor of exclusion and twenty-nine dissenting. G.W. Greene, “The Baptists of the Upper Yadkin Valley,” *North Carolina Baptist Historical Papers*, Vol. III, 77; cited in George Washington Paschal, *History of North Carolina Baptists*, Vol. 2 (Raleigh: The General Board, North Carolina Baptist State Convention, 1955), 307.

Association and, within the preamble of the new association's constitution, state that "it is no violation of the word of God for any member of the church [...] to join any Society having for its object the promotion of the cause of temperance." Within the subsequent articles, the constitution also called to any "who are oppress[ed] or cramp[ed] by their Respective Churches" and for them to join "in the promotion of [the] Gospel of Christ and the Cause of Temperance."²

In western North Carolina, such schisms within and between southern Baptist churches in the first half of the nineteenth century were caused by larger socioeconomic changes, namely the emergence of the middle class. These divisions were indicative of larger conflicts regarding the social role of alcohol. In a period of rapid market development and evangelical revivalism, Baptists who found themselves distant and disconnected from urbanizing areas or districts characterized by market exchange also found themselves at odds with the new social mentalities held by the emerging middle class. Notions of personal industry, frugality, and sobriety were frequently propagated by petite-urban professionals in attempts to reconcile themselves with new, dynamic environments characterized by proto-industrial work schedules and regimented lifestyles. However, for mountain Baptists whose production schemes and cultural folkways had always involved the free flow of alcohol, the logic of temperance found little traction. For the many corn farmers in and around the Blue Ridge Mountains, it was more cost-effective to transport gallons of distilled whiskey rather than bushels of corn over the hills to various market centers.³

² *Taylorsville Church Book*, Alexander County Library, Taylorsville, North Carolina, 3-4.

³ Bruce E. Stewart, "'This Country Improves in Cultivation, Wickedness, Mills, and Still': Distilling and Drinking in Antebellum Western North Carolina," *The North Carolina Historical Review* Vol. 83, No. 4 (Fall, 2006): 461-462, 478.

This is not to say that all missionaries and their supporters existed upon an economic tier above that of all Primitive Baptist preachers and their congregations. Rather, the middle class had a particular social outlook that was unfamiliar and altogether new to the region.⁴ New social mentalities emerged in tandem with a class of people who now had disposable time and income. Predominately living closer to urbanizing areas, those who could market their crops, goods, and services to increasingly dense populations began to self-identity with the unique perspectives of bourgeois culture. Many recognized themselves as “professionals” whose expertise was gauged by the standardization of industries. In an atmosphere where both technology and infrastructure accelerated the construction—and magnified the intensity—of communication networks, many Baptist preachers found themselves caught up in conversations that were channeled through vertically integrating organizations.⁵ In the same way that schemes of mass production appeared to de-skill and alienate individual artisans, whose wares were now robbed of their craftsmanship through industrial uniformity, correspondence with—and adherence to—state and national conventions appeared to deprive local churches of their autonomy. Anti-Missionary Baptists

⁴ The purpose here is not so much to characterize a “class conflict,” but to highlight a cultural conflict that was both housed within religious establishments and inflected by larger economic forces. To this degree, the use of the term “class” does not refer to the relations of production into which antebellum southerners were born and lived their lives, but rather how they made sense of their own production and consumption schemes through collective mentalities. “Class,” here, refers less to a static thing and more to both E.P. Thompson’s relationship between those who “feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves and as against other men whose interests are different from (and largely opposed to) theirs” and J.D. Wells’ “middling southerners [who] by the 1850s had come to see their interests and values as fundamentally different from those above them and below them.” E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Random House, 1966), 9; Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 6, 9-10.

⁵ Although the traditional parlance for this term refers to the economic synergism of umbrella institutions guiding smaller, independent production relations underneath them, here, it recognizes that organizations like the Southern Baptist Convention orchestrated dozens of auxiliary efforts, involving everything from the printing of polemical material, the organization of benevolent societies, the planning and construction of schools, as well as correspondence with individual churches. It is also a nod back to connections already drawn between the missionary movement and commercial interests. See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, “The Antimission Movement in the Jacksonian South: A Study in Regional Folk Culture,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 36, No. 4, (Fall, 1970), 508.

adopted the moniker “Primitive” precisely to represent their protest of what they saw as the modernization of the ministry. While no one was speaking explicitly as being part of a new “class,” temperance ideology arose from the same conditions that created other bourgeois mores. To this extent, the ethic of temperance, seen as both support for the political movement and (more importantly) as an ideology or aspect of a social world view, represented one of the most controversial and sweeping differences between Baptists in antebellum western Carolina.

In order to chart the increasing intensity of the temperance debate among Baptists, larger socioeconomic developments outside the churches need to be examined. The bourgeois reform impulse emerged within, and as a result of possibilities created by, the Market Revolution. As commercial channels cut through the South, a distinctly new mindset emerged among groups who both benefitted-from and supported the extension-of these new economic modalities. However, these groups, specifically with their advocacy of personal sobriety, found themselves combatting a substance that, for nearly a century, was absolutely integral to the economic and cultural expression of a region. Once calls for this reform endeavor echoed through the sanctuaries nestled in the mountains, congregations divided, members were excluded, and networks of correspondence were severed.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the American population and economy grew at unprecedented rates. At its most basic, the Market Revolution was the period of time in which mass production and long-distance commerce emerged in the American economy and transformed the daily lives of every person. According to John Lauritz Larson, this period is best understood as the “tipping point,” the horizon beyond which faceless and impersonal market

forces eclipsed “personal, familial, and cultural connections by which people had tried to mitigate the hard facts of material life.”⁶

Between 1800 and 1860, the Deep South experienced the “Cotton Boom,” where cash crop agriculture entrenched racial, chattel slavery into southern society. According to contemporary American mythology, Eli Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin, which mechanically removed the seeds from previously unmarketable short staple cotton “revolutionized the British and American textile industries and eventually spread westward from inland Georgia and South Carolina to Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas.”⁷ In the North, mass production was increasingly characterized by the factory system, in which the specialization of employees de-skilled the craftsmanship that commodity production had previously entailed. This is not to say that belching smokestacks suddenly dotted the skylines of northern metropolises; the majority of northerners were still farmers. Only now, rising populations, combined with expanding “wildcat” bank credit to increase westward land settlement, would eventually produce all the food urban and factory areas would need. However, questions immediately arose regarding how to get food, goods, and services to and from the hinterland and urbanizing zones, or like in North Carolina, how to connect the Blue Ridge Mountains and French Broad Valley to rivers and railroads in Ohio and Tennessee.⁸

⁶ John Lauritz Larson, *The Market Revolution in America: Liberty Ambition, and the Eclipse of the Common Good* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 9.

⁷ David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 125; for more on the de-bunking of the myth that Eli Whitney was the sole inventor of the cotton gin, and by implication, the faulty party of slavery’s profitability in 1800s America, see Angela Lakwete, *Inventing the Cotton Gin: Machine and Myth in Antebellum America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

⁸ Alan D. Watson, *Internal Improvements in Antebellum North Carolina* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 2002), 119.

Larson argues the “cotton-fueled land boom, population growth, frontier expansion, and rising productivity (from new land as well as improved production techniques) all stimulated rising expectations that quickly took the form of demands for improved transportation—internal improvements.”⁹ Construction of new roads, bridges, canals, and railroads knitted otherwise disparate sections of the nation together. New York’s construction of the Erie Canal, completed in 1825, symbolized the most successful marriage of coastal shipping and inland water transportation. In North Carolina, a state with few east-west natural waterways, connecting Atlantic coastline shipping with the interior seemed an impossibility. However, the potential for canals to link its existing rivers to other interior water routes proved promising. At least according to Salisbury’s *Carolina Watchman*, a “liberal system of internal improvements” might in fact cause the blessings of the market to “flow to every class,—capital would come in and seek investments in all the various pursuits of civil and social life.”¹⁰

Although southern, not everyone in North Carolina grew cotton, or even cash crops. However, everyone did begin to experience the boom-and-bust (business) cycle of the market. Under the faceless auspices of a capitalist economy, local and communal elements that had formerly characterized trade were being irreversibly replaced by anonymous transactions that contributed to a more amorphous and mysterious force. The apparently heartless actions of the economy were explained, by some, as God’s will. At the same time political debates arose regarding the government’s responsibility in mitigating financial disaster. In the years immediately following 1815, while the rest of America was experiencing the “Era of Good

⁹ Larson, 30.

¹⁰ *Carolina Watchman*, October 16, 1846.

Feelings,” North Carolina’s economy stalled. Robert Calhoun has described the ways in which the Old North State does not fit the traditional narrative of progress the years between 1789 and 1835 usually provide. According to Calhoun, “a languishing economy and torpid political and social life” rendered North Carolina “a pastoral, lethargic entity within a buoyant, restless nation.”¹¹ For Donald Matthews, the rugged individual voluntarism and apprehensive posture taken toward outsiders and powerful institutions that had characterized the region was shunted with the Second Great Awakening and its supporters’ “insistence on initiating the individual into a permanent, intimate relationship with other people who shared the same experience and views of the meaning of life and who were committed to the goal of converting the rest of society.”¹² Matthews’ hypothesis of the Second Great Awakening is echoed by Calhoun’s conclusion that the ever-expanding enterprise of the “congregationally autonomous Baptists and the creation of a system of church discipline and collective responsibility for the welfare and morality of wayward individuals—taken together—brought organization and cohesion to seemingly democratic, voluntary, ungovernable religious bodies.”¹³

North Carolinians were not the only Americans that attempted to make sense of the peculiar ways in which the Market Revolution affected their locality through the evangelical perspectives provided by the Second Great Awakening. Positioned along the route of the Erie Canal, no region was as caught up in religious fervor in the first half of the nineteenth century as

¹¹ Robert M. Calhoun, “A Troubled Culture: North Carolina in the New Nation, 1790-1834,” *Writing North Carolina History*, ed. Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 76-110.

¹² Donald G. Matthews, *Religion in the Old South*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1977), 40-43.

¹³ Calhoun, 89; see also Donald G. Matthews, “The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Spring, 1969), 23-43.

was the “Burned Over District” in upstate New York. Rochester, in particular, experienced a relative explosion of economic activity as commercial traffic moved up and down the canal, between the Great Lakes and Atlantic Ocean. Improvements in production schemes and steam-powered transportation allowed commodities and finished goods to churn out of her factories and travel the same routes as preachers’ polemical material. In a booming economic atmosphere, it was clear that the post-revolutionary disestablishment of official religion had created opportunities for religious and moral ideas in a social marketplace of their own. As the burgeoning national economy grew, so did a class of people who came to benefit from and support the expansion of commercial and business interests. According to Paul E. Johnson, it was during this time of religiously-charged economic activity that “the middle class became resolutely bourgeois,” carrying with it “the stamp of evangelical Protestantism.”¹⁴

Pushed by the millennial motivation to perfect society, many business owners saw Christian discipline as the most effective tool with which to standardize the practices and perspectives of the workforce. There appeared no more effective way to create a sober workforce, intent on improving their own attentiveness to (increasingly repetitive) labor, with prompt attendance than through temperance societies, revivals, and Sunday schools.¹⁵ The workplace rigors of mass production that demanded regimented schedules and subdued spontaneity and drinking customs were obstacles to proto-industrialists who were recruiting former artisans and farmers. Paul Johnson essentially argues that the recasting of industrial work discipline, along with the bourgeois ethics of personal industry, frugality, and sobriety were

¹⁴ Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 8.

¹⁵ Johnson, 6.

surreptitious methods of social control. Whether or not there was indeed an insidious scheme to peddle an opiate to the masses of Rochester does not affect the real marriage of evangelical Protestantism to the bourgeois mores held by the new middle class thanks to common membership in the American Temperance Society.

As early as 1833, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina sought “that immediate efforts be made to form Societies in all our churches and neighborhoods, and by example and every lawful means, to put a stop to the destructive practice of intemperance.”¹⁶ While a self-conscious middle class might not have existed until the 1850s, according to Jonathan Wells, in most of the South, as early as the 1830s, signs of an emerging, nascent middling mentality could be seen. In North Carolina, at least, the communication networks forged within and through Baptist churches and the elaborate hierarchical organization of their corresponding conventions provided a means of introducing middle class ideological ideas in advance of a petite-urban bourgeois self-consciousness. As Wells suggests, “the fact that emerging classes can be influenced and shaped by ideas emanating from sources far removed from them geographically” might help explain how those professionals in urbanizing environments, despite their decades of cultural intercourse with surrounding rural populations, developed a consciousness of class that “owed more to their connections to, and admiration of, the northern middle class.”¹⁷ Although churches had requested the state government’s assistance in halting liquor sales on church property and at elections as early as 1800 and 1817, intensive extra-local efforts aimed at

¹⁶ David S. Williams, “Report on Temperance Societies,” Minutes, *Baptist State Convention of North Carolina*.

¹⁷ Wells, 6, 10.

changing the conditions that encouraged self-reform did not surface in Baptist discourse until later decades, most explicitly the 1830s through the 1850s.¹⁸

Southern Baptist churches, as well as the southern middle class at large, adjusted their respective ideologies to accommodate slavery. Christine Heyrman has argued that southern evangelicals, over the course of the nineteenth century, underwent a process of social accommodation in the South, which essentially minimized the more radicalizing elements of millennial evangelicalism released elsewhere (like the Burned Over District) and emphasized more conservative mentalities that would eventually buttress the status quo.¹⁹ Similarly, John Boles concluded that at least by 1820, “evangelicalism was definitely no rebellious force but rather a pillar of the establishment.”²⁰ Due to its elaborate inner hierarchy and emphasis on congregational authority, the Baptist church had a great deal of cultural purchase among the lower classes at the turn of the nineteenth century. However, during the same period of social accommodation to hegemonic principles, namely slavery, support for education and the construction of schools grew alongside other reforms, like temperance. By the 1830s, the Baptist organizing process was in full swing with an increasingly educated clergy at the helm. Wells considers the “triumph of evangelical religion in the South” to be its “growing respectability in elevated circles;” over time, Baptists succeeded in attracting “converts from the middling sort as

¹⁸ Bill Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites: Class and Culture in Antebellum North Carolina* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992), 197; Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 455.

¹⁹ Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

²⁰ John B. Boles, *Religion in the South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1985), 32; Wells, 70; see also similar conclusions regarding evangelical conservatism in Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

well as the backcountry poor.”²¹ While evangelical doctrine was filing down its more socially subversive edges, the Baptist denomination in particular was beginning to alienate predominately uneducated, lower class congregants who saw such emphases on reform efforts more as impositions upon local autonomy than of actual sources of improvement.

Because of the fact that a local church’s negotiability within the State Convention was proportional to the money donated, rural churches from poor areas also resented the increasing attention urbanizing areas were given from missionaries and Convention agents. In a report filed in 1846, agents were reminded that “special attention ought first to be given to the towns, and then the most suitable places in the country.” The report suggested that there had been a general “neglect of the towns, particularly in the middle and western parts of the State.”²² In 1851, an association entertained a proposal for the construction of a school “within associational limits;” however, the representatives were careful to emphasize that the school “have particular reference to the most wealthy and densely populated community.”²³ Such sentiments were excoriated by Primitives, who in their own correspondence, considered these schools to be predominately secular institutions that only reproduced the very knowledge that constructed them. Writing in response to “Nehemiah,” one Primitive asked if it was not

the design of sending young men [to theological schools] to furnish them with words, high flowery words, eloquent words, the words which men’s wisdom teaches, the wisdom of schools, the wisdom of words, the wisdom of the world—and to preach in a style that may please the great of this world.²⁴

²¹ Wells, 73; Boles, 26.

²² “Fields of Labor,” Minutes, *Baptist State Convention*, 1846.

²³ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1851.

²⁴ “A Reply to Nehemiah, of Georgia,” Communications, *The Primitive Baptist*, 1843.

The claim that such schools served only to perpetuate the ideologies of the class that established them at the expense of the less fortunate was repeated throughout the communication as the author suggested that attendees “may escape the cross of being called country rustics, while the poor and unlearned can’t understand half the words they say, although among this class the most of God’s chosen people lie.”²⁵

Primitive Baptists saw their denomination changing around them. Along with the increasing institutionalization of denominational efforts, most often hierarchically organized and disproportionately attentive to urbanizing areas, Anti-Missionary Baptists also contested what Keith Burich has called the professionalization of the ministry.²⁶ What made this possible was the growth of theological schools and seminaries. To “Hard Shell” or “Old School” Baptists, the denomination’s theology was already being corrupted with its departure from Calvinism in favor of Arminianism. Now, it seemed this new knowledge was even for sale in seminaries. To Primitives, these places “profess to hold at their disposal the gifts of the Holy Ghost and to impart them to men for money.”²⁷ Others made it very clear what this represented; God’s religion was “founded in love, but the devil has founded his upon money.”²⁸ While the Second Great Awakening had caused changes in Baptist theology, the Market Revolution was causing changes in Baptists’ social ideology. As more churches, associations, and organizations catered to middle class tastes, Primitive Baptists, many of whom were located in regions isolated from commercial networks and urbanizing districts, found fault with the ways in which Missionary

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Keith Burich, “The Primitive Baptist Schism in North Carolina: A Study in the Professionalization of the Baptist Ministry,” (masters thesis, University of North Carolina, 1973).

²⁷ Communications, *The Primitive Baptist*, (Tarboro: George Howard, 1835).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1836.

Baptists had “uniformly paid more attention to the rich and the learned than to the poor and illiterate.”²⁹

The bourgeois ideologies espoused by southern Baptist churches did not only differ from those of the lower class but also the rural upper class. Because of the peculiar class structure of the antebellum South, the emerging middle class, perhaps because of its intimate connections with northern culture, distinguished itself as against both yeomen and planters. The same frugality and self-denial that Paul Johnson found in Rochester evangelists could be found in the South. Denial of luxury and the “fashions” of the world became a hallmark of southern Baptists. According to Anne Loveland, “it was ‘this slavish deference to the world’ that induced them to participate in ‘fashionable amusements’ and to adopt extravagant modes of dress, equipage, and manners.”³⁰ Among these fashions was the “conspicuous consumption” of many planters. The cult of conspicuous consumption was most often expressed through the planter’s entertaining or hosting of guests, and it signified the hospitality and honor by which he took himself to live. Other elements of planter honor also came under fire by middle class reformers and evangelicals; dueling was especially targeted with rigor. However, it is with respect to the unique treatment and consumption methods of planters that the middle class can be seen as a distinctly antagonistic phenomenon.

The middle class support for both temperance and the proto-industrial work ethic, a central tenet of which was sobriety in the workplace, distinguished it from both poor whites and

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Anne C. Loveland *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 101; for more on ways in which southern Baptists, especially preachers, combatted the fashions of the world, along with luxurious materialism, see Kenneth Moore Startup, *The Root of All Evil: The Protestant Clergy and the Economic Mind of the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997).

aristocratic elites. Many planters and yeomen shared opinions regarding the role of alcohol; although they consumed it in different ways. While some private consumption methods varied with household, both aristocratic and laboring classes consumed alcohol socially. While the former often provided it for guests or at elections, the latter consumed during both civil occasions and laborious activities. It was the protest of both that set the middle class apart as a new, divisive social force in the South. Yet despite temperance taking a unique shape and intensity in the South, it was still a national movement.

The temperance movement did not simply arise from proto-industrial needs to control a wage labor force; it was not only a method of social control. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, up until 1830, “annual per capita consumption increased until it reached 5 gallons.”³¹ It was not until federal taxation allied with the accelerating temperance movement that consumption fell below two gallons. Americans have never consumed as much alcohol as they did in the fifty-year period between 1790 and 1840. According to W.J. Rorabaugh, the first to seriously examine early American consumption rates, it was this “spectacular binge” that necessitated a temperance ethic. In interesting ways, some of the conditions that made the Market Revolution possible also caused the dramatic spike in liquor consumption. The loss of old colonial methods of patriarchal control, especially over workplaces, that made the free competition of labor a game of ambition, self-determination, and mobility also provided ample opportunities for those who were once under the frequent, if not constant, watchful eye of the master craftsman free to drink as much as they wanted. This was compounded by the cultural

³¹ W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 8.

reality that fed into the previous paradigm, namely that public consumption of the “convivial glass” was a sign of respectability. The social atmosphere built around the constant recognition of deference and open performances of respect and condescension toward those of stations above and below each other certainly pervaded tavern culture and drinking habits in the public sphere. However, such a paradigm came under threat when the pillars of patriarchal control fell away when at the same time the price of alcohol plummeted.

The price of liquor, namely rum and whiskey, had been falling since the 1720s. This has something to do with colonial population increases, but much more to do with the increase of domestic production that supplemented importation. While previously, consumption “was limited only by how much people could afford,” by the 1780s, religious leaders were already attempting to redefine such conceptions of freedom, not on the grounds of the quantity of alcohol one could consume, but on one’s self-mastery.³² Interestingly, as soon as Americans’ incredible fifty-year increase in drinking began, the doctrine of self-control entered the republican lexicon.

The final, and most significant, analog between the conditions that made both the Market Revolution and the great binge possible had to do with whiskey distillation in the backcountry.³³ Settlers and farmers of the new republic now saw themselves free from the arbitrary rule of a transatlantic monarchial authority that once drew a line at the Appalachian Mountains,

³² *Ibid.*, 29, 37.

³³ While the term “frontier” carries much more cultural purchase, it nevertheless privileges a single perspective over competing claims for recognition. At risk of reproducing imperial designs by sustaining one structuring analytic over another, the designation “backcountry” is used; this is also done because the signification is less a cultural reference to a place of exception and more an economic referent that implies a periphery. For more on backcountry analyses, see Peter Mancall and Eric Hinderaker, *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). See also Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevill Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

prohibiting western migration. The spirit of independent enterprise was distilled from corn, wheat, and other grains grown from the Allegheny to the Blue Ridge Mountains. For the backcountry farmer, it would almost always be more cost effective to distill any surplus grain into whiskey. This not only allowed for the transportation of a larger amount of (what was) corn, but it reaped a larger profit at the nearest market or establishment of intermediate exchange.³⁴ Frequent emigration into the region met with technological improvements in distillation in order to make whiskey, rum, and other distilled spirits “the third most important industrial product, worth 10 percent of the nation’s manufactured output.”³⁵ The transportation and technological innovations helped to create a national grain market, which made whiskey the first national commodity. Over time, though, the elements that created the circumstances for the Market Revolution became the targets of criticism by the very class the Market Revolution created.

In the same way that the middle class and evangelical churches were forced to accommodate their messages to the peculiarities of the southern slave society, so too was temperance almost-already fitted to the needs of white men who sought complete control over their domestic environments.³⁶ In appealing, most often, to the motivation of self-reform, temperance did not threaten the entire social order of the entire South in the same way that other reform movements did. In this respect, it is obvious why temperance was the most successful of reform efforts in North Carolina. However, it is precisely because of slavery that the impetus for reform took on a unique urgency. Many lower class, landless whites who performed drunken

³⁴ The term “profit” is used advisedly considering the lack of specie from which mountain regions would always suffer. Whiskey was frequently used as a medium of exchange through barter.

³⁵ Rorabaugh, 61-61.

³⁶ See Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, & the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

displays of “degeneracy,” according the Harry Watson, “violated all the cultural assumptions of white supremacy.” In North Carolina, and the South at large, the privileged and superior position occupied by white people was supposed, theoretically, to rely “on their innate racial characteristics, not on acquired traits like education, virtue, or religious conversion.”³⁷ White and enslaved people were supposed to act and live differently. Some of the first prohibitory legislation that passed the North Carolina General Assembly was aimed at policing the public consumption of enslaved people. The first, in 1798, disallowed liquor retailers from selling alcohol or ardent spirits to enslaved people if their masters objected; in 1818, the next outlawed the enslaved from selling liquor; then in 1833, a law prohibited them from purchasing any liquor altogether.³⁸ It is not surprising that this very period of black prohibition of alcohol is what Rorabaugh recognizes as (white) America’s spectacular binge. The progressive denial of the possibility of enslaved people purchasing and consuming alcohol in and through public avenues represents the way in which, in North Carolina at least, temperance helped buttress the social structure of white supremacy.³⁹

³⁷ Harry L. Watson, “The Man with the Dirty Black Beard: Race, Class, and Schools in the Antebellum South,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Spring, 2012), 3.

³⁸ Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 558.

³⁹ For more on the temperance movement in the South, see Ian R. Tyrrell, “Drink and Temperance in the Antebellum South: An Overview and Interpretation,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (November, 1982), 485-510; “‘Drinks He to His Own Undoing’: Temperance Ideology in the Deep South,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Winter, 1998), 659-691; Bruce E. Stewart, “Select Men of Sober and Industrious Habits: Alcohol Reform and Social Conflict in Antebellum Appalachia,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 78, No. 2 (May, 2007), 289-322; Stewart, *Moonshiners and Prohibitionists: The Battle Over Alcohol in Southern Appalachia* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011); Daniel Jay Whitener, *Prohibition in North Carolina, 1715-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946); Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina*, 153, 160, 168-172, 453-458, 797, 801-804.

In other ways, North Carolinian temperance efforts mimicked those of northern states. Ian Tyrrell, who argued that the temperance movement “had its roots in the process of industrialization and the commercialization of agriculture” was motivated by “men and women who fashioned the temperance crusade [and] sought to hasten the process of social and economic change.” They drew important similarities between the developments in Worcester, Massachusetts and Salisbury, North Carolina.⁴⁰ Not only did petitions for support of no-license legislation increase in intensity, eventually resulting in the General Assembly entertaining statewide prohibition in 1852, but temperance supporters in Salisbury were also of the same class as those in Worcester. Singling out the Sons of Temperance, Tyrrell identified “small manufacturers in the town, tradesmen, shopkeeper, clerks, merchants, doctors, lawyers, and clergymen” among the membership. “The organization included no semiskilled or unskilled workers at all and very few farmers.”⁴¹ Bruce Stewart, in his own analysis of Salisbury and Rowan County, also recognized middle class townspeople, “influenced by the Second Great Awakening and the expansion of market capitalism” to be “the group from which the temperance reformation garnered its strongest support.”⁴² For Stewart, “the temperance movement in Rowan County suggests that class conflict,” in addition to mitigating political circumstances, “shaped antebellum whites’ responses to alcohol reform.”⁴³ In the same years that the Sons of Temperance grew to 210 members, the Lewis Fork Baptist Association approved the expulsion

⁴⁰ Ian R. Tyrrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1979), 6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴² Bruce E. Stewart, “‘The Forces of Bacchus are Fast-Yielding’: The Rise and Fall of Anti-Alcohol Reform in Antebellum Rowan County, North Carolina,” *The North Carolina Historical Review*, Volume 87, No. 3, (July, 2010), 310-311.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 312.

of Sons of Temperance from Little River Church.⁴⁴ The Mountain Baptist Association also approved the exclusions of Sons of Temperance members in Elk Creek, Beaver Creek, and Old Fields churches.⁴⁵

While recognizing the theological disputes between evangelical churches that argued and withdrew from correspondence over support for alcohol reform, Stewart fails to recognize the ways in which the divisions between Baptist churches in North Carolina were caused by the same class conflict that the temperance debate sparked, “where [some] residents viewed the [Sons of Temperance] as a tool used by middle-class townspeople to achieve economic and social hegemony.”⁴⁶ In an 1843 op-ed, a Buncombe County Primitive Baptist claimed that he intended “to eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of my labor while in this world, as long as I can get it,” in contrast to the sneaks who “preach up temperance, and turn round and take a poor man’s cow for one dollar; and if the poor widow can’t pay a dollar a bushel for his corn, she may go home to her poor perishing fatherless children, and mother and children all perish together.”⁴⁷ The implications of class were clear when the Anti-Missionary concluded that support for the temperance movement by “gentleman preachers riding in carriages with their wives by their side, with their slaves to wait on them [...] is done by picking the pockets of the poor.”⁴⁸

Evangelical Baptist support for the “cause of Temperance” was part and parcel to the overarching “cause of Zion,” which included the “great cause of missions, education, the

⁴⁴ Minutes, *Lewis Fork Association*, 1851.

⁴⁵ Minutes, *Mountain Baptist Association*, 1851; see also J.F. Fletcher, *A History of the Ashe County, North Carolina and New River, Virginia Baptist Associations* (Raleigh: Commercial Printing Co., 1935).

⁴⁶ Stewart, 331.

⁴⁷ “Lapland; Buncombe County, NC,” *The Primitive Baptist*, (Tarboro: George Howard, 1843).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

dissemination of useful books, and tracts.”⁴⁹ The North Carolina Baptist “cause of Zion” is best understood as the missionaries’ millennial aim to convert and perfect society, causing the return of Christ.⁵⁰ The first historian to recognize the Primitive or Hard Shell rejections of the temperance and missionary program as a class conflict was Bertram Wyatt-Brown, whose reading of the Anti-Mission movement as an element of regional folk culture identified “the controversy exhibited deep-seated class antagonisms.”⁵¹ Primitive Baptists recognized the increasing institutionalization of the organizing process that was taking place within and across the denomination at large as a threat to the folk culture of disconnected regions that valued local autonomy. Not only was representation in the State Convention proportionally determined by donations, but the very aims of the funding did not meet with the sensibilities of those who appeared to have been by-passed by both the Second Great Awakening and the Market Revolution.⁵² Wyatt-Brown explained “the evangelicals’ critics were by and large people who lived in districts far from center of trade and refinement,” which meant that the “Baptist associations of the sparsely settled sections on the North Carolina line” as well as “eastern North Carolina [...] were dominated by the antimissionists.”⁵³

While the “bourgeois spirit” animated the missionary movement, especially in areas close to market centers, it was also a source of scorn and dispraise in the eyes of many Anti-

⁴⁹ R. McNabb, “Report on Temperance,” *Baptist State Convention*, 1838; “Annual Report of the Board of Managers,” *Baptist State Convention*, 1854.

⁵⁰ See Jack P. Maddex, “Proslavery Millennialism: Social Eschatology in Antebellum Southern Calvinism,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (Spring, 1979), 46-62.

⁵¹ Bertram Wyatt-Brown, “The Antimission Movement in the Jacksonian South: A Study in Regional Folk Culture,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 36, No. 4, (Fall, 1970), 502.

⁵² Article 5 of the constitution of the Baptist State Convention allowed for one delegate “for every ten dollars paid into the Treasury.” Constitution, *Baptist State Convention*, 1830.

⁵³ Wyatt-Brown, 515.

Missionaries. Wyatt-Brown concludes that the region-specific folk culture that Primitive Baptists sought to defend foreshadowed coming sectional strife by linking evangelical reform efforts to “Connecticut bluenoses [who were] trying to snatch away the convivial glass.”⁵⁴ This is echoed by Stewart, who sees the failure of the Anti-Alcohol movement in Rowan County as a consequence of its opponents’ depictions of temperance as “northern radicalism.”⁵⁵ Primitive Baptists were predominately from areas and regions far from market centers. Most Anti-Missionary congregants were not part of the middle class. It is precisely because the emerging middle class, in places like Salisbury, bore such striking resemblances to—and according to Wells, drew such critical influence from—the northern middle class that many churches excluded members that allied themselves either with the missionary movement or, more often, with the Sons of Temperance.

Many of the Primitive Baptists that rejected the temperance movement in the antebellum period were from regions in the Blue Ridge Mountains that distilled whiskey at rates that were largely disproportionate than the rest of the state. In the same way that many evangelical Convention Baptists held views of personal sobriety, so too did Primitives have staunch views pertaining to alcohol’s significance, both in economic and cultural terms. In order to understand the visceral reaction mountain Primitives had against the temperance movement, the historical significance of alcohol in southern Appalachia needs to be analyzed. Just as whiskey distillation had functioned as a significant aspect of the national economy, since the colonial period, alcohol had served an imperative role in early market formations in western North Carolina.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 508, 520.

⁵⁵ Stewart, 313, 338.

During the colonial period, North Carolina's economic development followed what has been called a "linear urban network."⁵⁶ Existing roadways largely determined communication, transportation, and commodity transactions. As settlers planted towns along these linear trajectories, taverns were among the first financial and commercial intermediaries to be established. In 1753, at the first meeting of the Rowan County Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions, one of the first initiatives undertaken was the approval of a tavern license.⁵⁷

While certainly home to socialization and imbibing among neighbors and travelers, taverns also provided key services related to menial, small-scale credit extension. Not unlike stores and grist mills, taverns could provide a degree of liquidity within a market dominated by barter commodity exchanges, especially for those farmers who distilled their excess corn into whiskey.⁵⁸ In the eighteenth century, alcohol was already providing an economic mechanism through which disconnected mountain farmers could articulate themselves within the larger Atlantic economy and world-system.⁵⁹

Alcohol also played a distinctive role as a cultural folkway. Free-flowing liquor could be found at elections, court dates, and militia musters at various times of the year.⁶⁰ The communal

⁵⁶ Daniel B. Thorp, "Taverns and Tavern Culture on the Southern Colonial Frontier: Rowan County, North Carolina, 1753-1776," *Journal of Southern History* Vol. 62, No. 4 (November, 1996): 669. Thorp borrows the term from Charles J. Farmer in his *In the Absence of Towns: Settlements and Country Trade in Southside Virginia, 1730-1800* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1993).

⁵⁷ Thorp, 661.

⁵⁸ Thorp, 666-667.

⁵⁹ For a more pointed world-systems theoretical approach to the economic development of the Carolina backcountry, see Wilma Dunaway, *The First American Frontier: Transition to Capitalism in Southern Appalachia, 1700-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). Dunaway overturns long-held homesteader myths and illuminates the large degree of landlessness among, what she labels as "disaffected," farmers who were not quite proletarianized into a white wage labor class.

⁶⁰ The "treating" that occurred around elections and political campaigns was seen as a corruptive and un-republican influence by temperance supporters. Bruce E. Stewart, "'Select Men of Sober and Industrious Habits': Alcohol Reform and Social Conflict in Antebellum Appalachia," *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 73, No. 2 (Spring,

binge fostered a degree of egalitarianism among the white men gathered. Such social cohesion was further cemented through labor-pooling tactics, like barn-raising, corn-shuckings, and log-rollings; all of which were thoroughly lubricated with collective consumption.⁶¹ During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the increasing population of Ulster-Scots in western North Carolina accompanied a correlative increase in whiskey distillation. The Scots-Irish brought a unique and industrious tradecraft that made expedient and efficient use of crops that exceeded domestic subsistence and consumption capacities.⁶² The western region of North Carolina increasingly produced more domestically distilled whiskey than the rest of the state.

These trends accelerated in the first half of the nineteenth century as technological improvements to distilling made whiskey ever more profitable. This hundred-year period in which alcohol cemented itself into the cultural and economic fabric of the Blue Ridge Mountains was married to the long-standing tradition of obstinate Calvinism the same Ulster-Scots had maintained. And a social mentality altogether unique to these predominately poor, landless or renting, semi-proletarianized farmers was forged. It would be from this socioeconomic, cultural, and religious milieu that mountaineers crafted an ideology altogether different than that held by the emerging middle class.

Part of historian Wilma Dunaway's dispelling of the "homesteader myth"—the long-held conventional wisdom that saw the Appalachian Mountains as populated nearly exclusively by

2007): 300; "This Country Improves in Cultivation, Wickedness, Mills, and Still": Distilling and Drinking in Antebellum Western North Carolina," *The North Carolina Historical Review* Vol. 83, No. 4 (Fall, 2006): 471.

⁶¹ Stewart, "This Country Improves in Cultivation, Wickedness, Mills, and Still," 470; "Select Men of Sober and Industrious Habits," 294.

⁶² For more on the Ulster Scot migration, see H. Tyler Blethen and Curtis W. Wood Jr., *From Ulster to Carolina: The Migration of the Scotch-Irish to Southwestern North Carolina* (Raleigh: Office of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, 1998); Robert W. Ramsey, *Carolina Cradle: Settlement of the Northwest Carolina Frontier, 1747-1762* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1964).

completely free and independent settlers—are the shocking statistics her analysis brings to light. Not only were two out of every five farms operated by non-landowners, but in the first part of the nineteenth century, “*the bottom half* of the region’s free households—those most likely to become subsistence farmers—owned *less than one percent* of the land.” It is within this extremely exploitative context that Dunaway argues the region’s masses were never quite unified into a proletarianized wage labor force; they were “marginalized” as a semi-proletariat. It is also within this context that mountain Primitive Baptist obstinacy to elements of the bourgeois work ethic (to wit, temperance) needs to be understood.⁶³

The top whiskey-producing counties, namely Surry, Burke, Ashe, and Wilkes were all hotbeds of Anti-Missionary debate. Those same counties also had some of the lowest cash value of farms in the entire state in 1850. Despite most western counties falling behind the agricultural and manufacturing capacities of their piedmont neighbors, Surry and Wilkes out-performed Ashe and Burke in both cash value and acres of improved land.⁶⁴ Regarding the latter, Surry actually found herself in the top 18% of counties in North Carolina.⁶⁵ Wilkes’ and Surry’s relative affluence most likely had everything to do with the Pee Dee River, which cut across both counties, providing a unique avenue of transportation that other mountain counties did not have. Not all mountain counties distilled whiskey, however. Stewart has argued conclusively that proximity to the Buncombe turnpike, which was completed in 1828, provided an excellent

⁶³ Dunaway, *The First American Frontier*, 91, 70.

⁶⁴ Surry County’s \$962,741 and Wilkes’ \$799,527 blew away Ashe’s \$458,436 and Burke’s \$564,647 in cash value of farm land in 1850; the same year, Surry had 104,119 acres of improved land to Wilke’s 65,322, Ashe’s 64,805, and Burke’s 29,195; U.S. Census Office, *Seventh Census, 1850, Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States*, as made available by the University of Virginia Library. <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/>

⁶⁵ Surry’s 104,000-plus acres of improved land outpaced the state average by a factor greater than Burke’s acreage—30,081; *Ibid.*

transportation route for farmers to market their grain, eliminating the incentive to distill whiskey at pace with other mountain regions.

Similar discrepancies can be seen in proportions of the value of homemade manufactures over the amount of aggregated accommodations for Baptist Churches.⁶⁶ Western counties like Ashe, Burke, Catawba, and Iredell all held higher financial ratios—revenue realized from domestic production of goods versus accumulated provisions for churches—than that of the state as a whole. The largest discrepancies came from within western urban areas, and this is in large part due to the rural dispersal of Baptist churches, rather than an overt reflection of the poverty-stricken Baptist accommodation areas. Altogether the “top four whiskey-manufacturing counties [...] in 1840 (Surry, Burke, Wilkes, and Ashe) together accounted for 48 percent of the mountain population and 89 percent of the alcohol distilled in the region.” Census data from Ashe, Burke, and Iredell counties reveal ratios of 12.15, 12.16, 14.87 respectively. These are compared to the 10.34 of the state in general. Catawba County accounts for \$29,358 in homemade manufactures, while providing nothing in the form of aggregate accommodations of Baptist churches. This could be a calculation error, a concurrent mistake made by the census distributor. However, these western counties were frequently and explicitly mentioned in State Convention correspondence for dispraise regarding the “depressed condition” of Baptist activity and fiduciary contributions.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ While homemade manufactures are not exclusively limited to whiskey distillation, the category does include it.

⁶⁷ Stewart, “This Country Improves in Cultivation, Wickedness, Mills, and Still,” 464; U.S. Census Office, Seventh Census, 1850, *Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States*; Guion Griffis Johnson, *Ante-Bellum North Carolina: A Social History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 342; Minutes, *Baptist State Convention*, 1846. The most significant arguments drawn from economic analyses of distillation in southern Appalachia have been made by Stewart. In many ways, the other calculations and ratios regarding the topic in the paragraphs above simply, although not merely, echo his conclusions. The original research displayed above is meant to place such conclusions in relation to the economic presence of the Baptist

In 1857, the State Convention's Report of the Board of Managers devoted special attention to the "Destitution of Baptist Preaching in N.C." and all the regions named were not only western counties, but also areas known for their distillation of whiskey. "In the county of Catawba there is very little Baptist preaching—only three or four churches in all the county." The report also pointed out that "Wilkesborough [Wilkes County] is an important place for our ministry. Several Associations around are anti-missionary, embracing a membership of some seven or eight thousand." Just beyond the mountains, in the foothills, over 25 miles from Salisbury (Rowan County), the report noted "in Iredell there is also a great destitution," yet some promise could be found.

Statesville, in that county, is a very important and growing place, being near the railroad, and having a most flourishing female school. The Baptists have no church and seldom is a sermon preached there by a Baptist. There are some precious Baptists in that village, and if our ministry could be established there, no doubt could remain concerning its ultimate success.⁶⁸

It was in those counties of Ashe, Burke, Wilkes, and—eventually—Alexander that many, if not most, of the exclusions of Sons of Temperance took place. In 1838, the Mountain Baptist Association, which represented churches in Burke, Wilkes, and most other counties in the northwestern region of the state, passed an ultimatum where they effectively dropped "correspondence with all associations," planning only to renew old connections once their constituent churches had dealt "with any member of their body who may have trespassed against

church. However, even this is imperfect, as the value of homemade manufactures does not perfectly capture the amount of revenue generated from domestic whiskey stills any more than the measure of accommodations to the Baptist church can fully depict the number of Primitives attending services in public meetinghouses and private residences.

⁶⁸ "Report of the Board of Managers," Minutes, *Baptist State Convention*, 1857.

them by joining any of the institutions of the day.” By “institutions of the day,” the Mountain Association meant supporters of either missionism or temperance. These were the same targets that, a decade later, the Mountain Association went on record favoring excluding again.⁶⁹ In 1851, the same year that the Lewis Fork Association approved the exclusion vote of the Sons of Temperance from Little River Church, the Mountain Baptist Association approved the exclusion of Elder Aaron Johnston from Beaver Creek Church. Almost simultaneously, Elder Richard Gentry and his son were turned out of Old Fields Church in Ashe County.⁷⁰ Primitive Baptists were sending clear messages regarding what they saw as not only the corruption of church function with its support of secular organizations, but temperance ideology at large.

The year 1851 was certainly significant for the temperance movement in North Carolina. Members of the Sons of Temperance were circulating dozens of petitions, gathering thousands of signatures, which would force the General Assembly to put state-wide prohibition up for a vote the following year. Those members who had been excluded from their respective churches gathered together to form new associations, which would in turn found more churches, all in overt support of temperance and missions. Elders R.L. Steele, Aaron Johnston, and Richard Gentry all rallied other supporters who had either been turned away themselves or left voluntarily to create the Taylorsville Baptist Association, which explicitly stated its aim as one

⁶⁹ Minutes, *Mountain Baptist Association*, 1838, 1848; in the latter, they identified persons who allied themselves with “any sort of secret order.” This might have included masons, but definitely targeted the Sons of Temperance. See Fletcher, *History of Ashe County Baptist Associations*, 31.

⁷⁰ Minutes, *Mountain Baptist Association*, 1851; Fletcher argues that later in his life, Elder Johnston claimed that he “was turned out of the church for doing the best thing he ever done in his life.” By this, he meant joining the Sons of Temperance. Fletcher, 34.

of furthering the cause of missions and temperance, encouraging other likeminded believers to join them in the “Cause of Temperance.”⁷¹

Over the 1850s, other associations and other churches began considering exclusions for members who were distilling whiskey. In 1858, Bear Creek Church sent a query to the Senter District Baptist Association requesting advice regarding how to deal with members who were making and selling liquor, “spoiling the youths of our country and brining disgrace on the cause of religion.” The association responded advisedly, saying that “if any member or members of our churches use too much ardent spirits, after the first admonition, should be expelled without sending for them.” Going further, they emphasized “if any member should make or buy spirits and allow a drunken crowd at their house, or still house, so as to constitute a disorderly house, we advise our churches to exclude them.”⁷² The militancy with which evangelical Baptist churches sought to further the temperance movement continued the following year when three associations joined to form one, large composite association. On November 11, at Zion Hill Baptist Church in Wilkes County, the Lewis Fork, Lower Creek, and Taylorsville Associations all met in convention “for the purpose of uniting in one association, in order to be enabled to carry out the gospel principles of missions and temperance, having become united as a Missionary and Temperance body,” the United Baptist Association.⁷³

The schismatic and dichotomous conflicts that defined Missionary and Primitive encounters in the antebellum period were caused by the emergence of middle class ideology. The Market Revolution had created a class of people with an altogether unique social mentality,

⁷¹ Minutes, *Taylorsville Baptist Association*, 1851; *Taylorsville Church Book*, 3-4.

⁷² Minutes, *Senter District Baptist Association*, 1858.

⁷³ Minutes, *United Baptist Association*, 1859.

imbued with a reform impulse that had been magnified by the evangelicalism of the Second Great Awakening. Breaks in correspondence, exclusions from church membership, and the breakdown and recreation of entire associations of churches either in favor-of or against temperance represented a larger cultural conflict that centered on the debate over alcohol's acceptability. This debate was promulgated by those who combatted the temperance ethic promoted by middle class reformers. Many mountain Primitive Baptists saw their cultural paradigm coming under threat by new bourgeois reformers that dared to claim that the destruction of their world view signified the perfection of society. Such threats were compounded by the irreversible faceless phenomenon that appeared to reproduce this potentially hegemonic ideology at almost mechanical, industrial rates. It was not simply that a new class of people rode westward, preaching what was seen as a form of heresy, but that that heresy was seamlessly reproduced through what were allegedly benign schools, organizations, and towns. Debates over the social acceptability of alcohol within and between Baptist churches ebbed and flowed in the antebellum period. State-wide prohibition would fail. Local no-license laws were also frequently ignored or voted down. Indeed, just three years after the United Baptist Association printed its constitution, in which Article 11 read "[t]his Association shall withdraw her fellowship from any church in her confederacy who holds members in fellowship who distill, vend or use spirituous liquors as a beverage," no fewer than thirteen churches were under investigation for violation of Article 11.⁷⁴

Evangelical Baptist support for temperance was but one of the many hallmarks of the new bourgeois ideology of the middle class; the emergence of the middle class had been a direct

⁷⁴ Minutes, *United Baptist Association*, 1859; Fletcher, 36-37.

result of the Market Revolution. Ironically, many of the conditions that made the Market Revolution possible were animated by the distillation of alcohol. The intricate web and frequent conflict between religious social mentalities and alcoholic cultural modalities spanned the foothills and mountains of western North Carolina in the antebellum period. While the class conflict entrenched in religiously-housed temperance debates persisted, as represented by the violations of Article 11, a far more pervasive influence acted as a lightning rod of social unification during this period. By 1845, and certainly in 1859, the defense of slavery was the most powerfully unifying issue among Southern Baptists. As investigations pertaining to violations of Article 11 were being conducted in North Carolina, a collection of both Primitive and Missionary Baptist preachers stood united in defense of the preservation of something both thought was far more imperative.

CHAPTER THREE: “WITH MARKED INTREPIDITY, OVERTHROWING PEODISM”: THE JEFFERSON BAPTIST ASSOCIATION AND DENOMINATIONAL SOLIDARITY

On the final day of the annual meeting of the Jefferson Baptist Association in 1853, Elder J.A. Davis ascended to the podium and proceeded to deliver a “large and attentive auditory on the subject of Baptism, for *three hours* [sic].”¹ Using the final two verses of the twenty-eighth chapter of Matthew, Davis’ sermon swept across the room, captivating the audience. While the subject of the sermon largely emphasized the necessity of baptism by full immersion—the baptismal method whereby the believer is dipped entirely beneath the water—the tenacity with which Elder Davis delivered the “great commission” seemed to stir the congregation. Having been called to go and “teach all nations, baptizing them” in the name of the Trinity, the audience was then so roused by the address that following two funeral orations and the conclusion of the meeting, no one appeared intent on dispersing and returning home.² What resulted was a protracted camp-meeting, a perceived Holy Spirit-led revival which lasted eleven days, “during which time 18 professed to find the Saviour, and 25 were added to the church.”³

¹ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1853, in Baptist Historical Collection, (Winston-Salem: Wake Forest University Library).

² The “great commission” is what is the commonplace term for Jesus’ last instructions to his disciples: “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:16-20 (KJV). This is the scriptural locus for the motivations of Evangelicals, in general, and Missionary Baptists, in particular, who were intent on spreading their faith.

³ *Ibid.* It should be noted that Missionary Baptists certainly believed in spontaneous, spirit-led revivals, and the Jefferson Association’s revival was not atypical. The critical distinction between how Primitives and Missionaries saw revivals is the latter believed that *in addition* to those brought on by the Holy Spirit, revivals could also be mapped, planned, and orchestrated as part of larger organizational efforts intent on garnering support and new members.

The protracted meeting that followed the 1853 Jefferson Baptist Association meeting was not planned. It was not an orchestrated revival designed strategically to attract non-believers in order to baptize them into their new church. It was a spontaneous occurrence, a reaction by a congregation moved by the Holy Spirit, occasioned by a fiery sermon intent on encouraging missions and proper baptism. The combination of a vocal support for missions and an unplanned revival is but one of the many ways in which the Jefferson Baptist Association represented a middle ground between Calvinist and Arminian, Primitive and Missionary Baptists. While those who were sympathetic to the missionary cause often believed revivals could and should be pre-arranged and coordinated ahead of time, the Calvinist Anti-Missionaries understood protracted meetings to be a seemingly random experience brought on through divine intervention.

The theological and political issues that divided Baptist churches in antebellum western North Carolina, namely those pertaining to the role of preachers, source of revivals, proper baptismal method, and support for missionaries and temperance did not force all congregations and associations to fall wholly into one camp or another. An otherwise disagreeable member of the audience at Davis' sermon even "acknowledged that the sermon was so well authenticated by the scriptures, that he was compelled to believe every word of it."⁴ The Jefferson Baptist Association consisted of churches made up of congregations from similar socioeconomic circumstances of both Primitive and Missionary Baptists, and its policy decisions frequently reflected and fostered a centrism within the Baptist community. The association represents the marriage of worlds that were both exposed to and passed by the changes that were sweeping

⁴ *Ibid.*

North Carolinian communities. It also demonstrates that the Second Great Awakening and the Market Revolution, although having caused, did not necessitate divisions within and between all Baptist churches in North Carolina.

Here, the Jefferson Baptist Association is used as a representative sample of churches, pastors, and congregations who were profoundly affected by the religious, economic, and social changes of the mid-nineteenth century, yet who still refused to exclude parishioners based on their opinions regarding missionaries or temperance. From its creation in the late 1840s, through the 1850s, the Jefferson Association inculcated similar professionalization strategies as other Missionary Baptist Associations and retained a correspondence with the Baptist State Convention. At the same time, the association also loosened certain bureaucratic restrictions that frustrated many rural and mountain Baptists, Primitive or otherwise. Although proudly self-styling themselves as inclusive and “liberal,” the Jefferson Baptists did take a hardline approach on one critical issue, baptism, intending to distinguish themselves from other competing evangelical denominations. In this way, the inclusiveness fostered by the association was partly accomplished through its denominational conflict with Methodists and Presbyterians; it was not enough to just convert non-believers, they had to be baptized into the correct denomination.

Broadly, the Jefferson Baptist Association is also indicative of the ways in which Southern Baptists accommodated their message and methods, over time, to the social context of the Antebellum South. Church discipline, inner-denominational unity, and the attempted popularization of the Baptist doctrine were all accomplished through the frequent use of gendered and racial language and policy decisions. The theological and economic changes wrought by the Second Great Awakening and the Market Revolution, although causing divisions

between many Baptist churches, also affected how Baptists made themselves at home in the mountains and foothills of western North Carolina.

The history of the Jefferson Association is not perfectly linear; it does not sketch a perfect zone of compromise between two conflicting Baptist sects. Its history is a back-and-forth, dialectical synthesis of actions that were affected by the same arguments that caused divisions between churches elsewhere. From the 1840s, through the 1850s, its leaders attempted to chart a median position between those outside the organizational structure created by the Baptist State Convention and inside the Baptist denomination as a whole. The strategies and perspectives of Jefferson's leaders were not ecumenical but denominational, focused on creating solidarity among Baptists within a competitive religious marketplace fostered by the disestablishment of state churches and the Second Great Awakening. Here, a brief history of the Jefferson Association's founding will be given in order to highlight the original viewpoints of church leaders as well as the tumultuous and divisive environment from which the Association emerged. The original policies of the Association reflect the vision of its founders, and what is mentioned and not mentioned in its constitution are equally important. Then, challenges leveled against the Association's policies, and especially against certain founding ministers, will be brought to light in order to show the ways in which the Association compromised on some issues while doubling-down on others. This leads to a final analysis of how the Jefferson Association, along with Baptists in general, selectively accommodated aspects of hegemonic masculine culture in order to popularize their message. In other words, the attempts by the Jefferson Association to foster Baptist solidarity were undertaken to both distinguish themselves from other

denominations and make their version of evangelical Christianity palatable to a culture that took issue with many of its attributes.

Following the foundation of the Baptist State Convention in 1830, one of the first associations consisting of churches “from the other side of the Blue Ridge, who petitioned to be organized into a new association” was born from the discord caused by the 1838 Mountain Baptist ultimatum in which the Mountain Baptist Association decided to “drop correspondence with all associations at present and agree to renew them” only once their constituent churches “deal with any member of their body who may have trespassed against them by joining any of the institutions of the day and continue in them, causing divisions.”⁵ Upon the call of Primitive Mountain Baptists to break all communication with their sister associations and constituent members until those who “meddle in the missionary business” were dismissed, otherwise indifferent Baptists found themselves forced into pro-missionary company.⁶ At its foundation, despite being outwardly ambivalent toward the mission issue, the new Jefferson Baptist Association was quickly labeled a missionary body.⁷ Formed by a committee during the 1848 meeting of the Briar Creek Association, the Jefferson Association inscribed its ambivalence toward the missionary controversy within its constitution, stating in Article 15 that the “Mission question shall be no bar nor test of fellowship with any; but all shall be free, and shall have the

⁵ Minutes, *Briar Creek Baptist Association*, 1848; Minutes, *Mountain Baptist Association*, 1838; J.F. Fletcher, *A History of the Ashe County, North Carolina and New River, Virginia Baptist Associations* (Raleigh: Commercial Printing Co., 1935), 17-18, 42.

⁶ Minutes, *Mountain Baptist Association*, 1838.

⁷ George Washington Paschal characterizes the Jefferson Association as being “strongly missionary” in its inception, despite the intentional ambivalence afforded the issue in its constitution, as well as its subsequent qualifications attached to donations to missionary endeavors. However, Paschal also notes that even the Three Forks Baptist Association, according to the Baptist State Convention tables, “from the beginning is classed as a missionary body” despite its maintaining “friendly relations” with the Mountain Baptist Association. *History of North Carolina Baptists, Vol. 2* (Raleigh: The General Board, North Carolina Baptist State Convention, 1955), 179-180.

privilege of acting and doing with his own, as he or they may in their own judgment think proper without interruption or molestation.”⁸

Present at the Briar Creek meeting, and one of the pastors responsible for aiding in the founding of the Jefferson Association, Reverend Richard Jacks wrote a “Circular Letter” which was to be printed in the minutes and distributed to neighboring churches and associations. The purpose of the letter was to explain “a part of the reasons that led to the division between the churches that now compose the Jefferson Association, and Mountain and Three Forks Associations.”⁹ The letter reads, however, as a list of excoriating critiques leveled, primarily, against the Mountain Baptist Association. Jacks itemizes his complaints by year, beginning in 1836 when “the Mountain Association while in session, assumed to itself the name and character of an Anti-Missionary Association.” He elaborated, “[w]e being possessed of liberal principles, refused to fellowship the name and character.”¹⁰ The following year, at the Mountain’s next annual session, Jacks alleges that two missionaries were denied a seat due to an objection raised by a member who claimed the “Missionaries” were attempting to build a monument over a grave that would cost between fifty and one hundred thousand dollars. The difference in spelling between the reference to the transient ministers—*missionaries*—and the objector’s *Missionaries* alludes to the distinction between travelling, visiting preachers and the institution of which they are a part, the Baptist State Convention. Jacks means to say that these individuals could have had little knowledge or influence regarding any decision pertaining to some supposed statue. Which

⁸ Minutes, *Briar Creek Association*, 1848 as referenced in Fletcher, *A History of the Ashe County, North Carolina and New River, Virginia Baptist Associations*, 42.

⁹ Richard Jacks, “Circular Letter,” Minutes, *Briar Creek Association*, 1848.

¹⁰ Jacks, 1848.

is why he is incensed by the decision to exclude the missionaries who “asked leave to reply to [the objector’s] erroneous statements, which was denied them. Thus they were denied liberty of speech and from having a seat, and most astonishing of all, [the Mountain Baptist Association] kept this important movement out of their minutes.”¹¹

Next, Jacks refers to the 1838 ultimatum laid out by the Mountain Association. He explains how the decision was “protested against at the time” by members and churches who pleaded with the association for “equal protection, which they utterly refused to grant.”¹² The Briar Creek and Lewis Fork Associations are explicitly mentioned as having overtly rejected correspondence with the Mountain Association along with its terms for continued fellowship.¹³ Jacks goes on to claim that from 1838 through 1840 the Mountain Association began violating her constitution by accepting churches from other Associations without proper letters of dismissal. He then begins to conclude his critique with a pointed insinuation, that “the Mountain Association retains in her fellowship a minister against whom charges of the most acrimonious nature have been brought and he has ever failed to acquit himself of these charges.”¹⁴ While the subject of his attack is unknown, it is curious that such a remark would find its way into a prolonged explanation regarding the divisions evidently caused by the Mountain Association’s staunch Anti-Missionary stance. The letter ultimately concludes with another brief list of reasons

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ It should be noted that the clerk transcribing the 1838 minutes was Richard Gentry, a Reverend who undoubtedly protested the Mountain Association’s decision. Gentry, himself, would later be excluded along with his son from Old Fields Church for alleged membership to the Sons of Temperance in the early 1850s. It should also be noted that the Lewis Fork Baptist Association is the same that excluded members for belonging to the Sons of Temperance in 1851. Never an Anti-Missionary association, Lewis Fork nevertheless distrusted other organizations external to the church and its religious prerogatives.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

why the Lewis Fork, Briar Creek, and, presumably, the Jefferson Associations would be accepting members from churches belonging to the Mountain Association without letters of dismissal.¹⁵

Reverend Jacks was a polarizing figure. And although the association he helped found would spend the next eleven years trying to hold the Baptist community together, other churches and associations would have a hard time divorcing Jacks' influence from the Jefferson Association's policies. If the Jefferson Association is indicative of a population of Baptists refusing to identify as either Pro- or Anti-Missionary, then Reverend Jacks and the enemies that reacted against him represent the depths of entrenchment those on either side of the aisle could and did sink into. To forecast, the Jefferson Association's attempt at uniting Baptists would fail. Nevertheless, the ways in which they adapted their policies in order to accommodate their message to the widest audience reflects the resolve of many Baptists not to be divided. Interestingly, even the debates and vitriolic arguments other associations had with Jacks also reflect a certain resolve born from the same religious and socioeconomic forces that motivated members of the Jefferson Association. Churches were still growing at unprecedented rates, and the Jefferson Association, along with Reverend Jacks and his enemies all recognized this process as God's endorsement of their own perspectives.

The growth of churches belonging to the Briar Creek Baptist Association had made the creation of the Jefferson Association necessary. And as an association born from the discord of

¹⁵ The qualifier "presumably" is here used because nowhere after its founding does the Jefferson Association seem to have held Richard Jacks as a member or visitor at any of its annual meetings. Therefore, his "reasons why *we* receive members from their churches without letters of dismission" might only be referring to Briar Creek and Lewis Fork; *Ibid.* [italics added]

1838, its founders made a conscious effort to chart a median course for believers who did not wholly identify as either Anti- or Pro- Missionary. However, these efforts were frustrated by Richard Jacks' inflammatory "Circular Letter" which was attached to its founding minutes. The Jefferson Association, at its outset, announced itself as in correspondence with the Baptist State Convention; and it allowed for the collection of donations for the cause of missions. It maintained that such individual members should only pay if their own personal convictions led them to donate, and their concerns regarding missionary activity would never be a condition of their membership. Elder Richard Jacks was a much more ardent supporter of missions, and he would continue to travel, preach, and proselytize in favor of missions, education, and temperance in the years to come. Indeed, he would be among the founding members of the Taylorsville Association, which itself would spawn from the tumultuous divisions caused by affiliations with the Sons of Temperance in 1851.¹⁶ While Jacks would never be a member or even a visitor of the Jefferson Association in the following years, his influence at its founding would haunt the Association's attempt at maintaining a middle ground for moderate believers.

Apparently aware of Richard Jacks' antagonisms in advance was the Mountain Baptist Association which, in 1848—the same year the "Circular Letter" was attached to the Jefferson Association's founding convention minutes—instituted a new policy regarding both new members and Elder Jacks. Preceding the creation of a special investigative committee, the Association announced that "from the best information she is able to get, has come to the conclusion that in the reception of some churches into our union, we have set our doors too

¹⁶ The Taylorsville Baptist Association would be the first, and most outspoken, "Missionary and Temperance body" until it would later join with the Lewis Fork and Lower Creek Associations to form the United Baptist Association. Minutes, *Taylorsville Baptist Association*, 1851; Minutes, *United Baptist Association*, 1859.

wide.”¹⁷ The committee’s purpose was “to review and revise all of the acts and resolutions of this Association from the year 1836 until the present year in relation to Richard Jacks and report them to the next Association.”¹⁸ A year later, although the committee was excused for non-compliance, a query was read from Little River Church:

Is it right to receive a member who has belonged to a missionary institution or church, who was baptized by Richard Jacks or Stephen Ross without being baptized by one of our ordained ministers?

Answer: Nay.¹⁹

Baptism was a critical ritual that signified a new member’s welcoming into the church. But more significantly, baptism represented the spiritual re-birth of the soul. After a person had been converted—after she or he had accepted the gospel, confessed their sins to God, and asked for forgiveness—it was understood they were “born again.”²⁰ The Baptist denomination at large placed extraordinary emphasis on baptism as the first public performative act of a new, reborn believer. The Baptists neither invented nor held a monopoly over the rebirth metaphor. In the nineteenth century, all evangelical denominations as well as the American culture at large played off the same symbolism. As ideologies of the Second Great Awakening spilled over into popular

¹⁷ Minutes, *Mountain Baptist Association*, 1848.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.* see also Fletcher, 22. The records are unclear as to the circumstances surrounding the committee’s non-compliance.

²⁰ The biblical foundation used by evangelicals is found in John 3:1-21 in which Jesus explains to a religious Pharisee, Nicodemus, that he must be “born again” in order to see the kingdom of God. It is not surprising that the following passage (versus 22-36) contains, seemingly out of context, John the Baptist exalting Jesus, explaining that one must believe in order to have everlasting life. His analogy of Jesus as a bridegroom (and himself as friend of the bridegroom) in this passage has been interpreted as one of Jesus and the church—the church as the “bride of Christ.” Thus, Baptists place significant performative meaning on the baptism ritual, the new member joining the church, joining the spiritual body that symbolically represents the bride of Christ. For more on the prototypical “conversion experience” required of new believers, or what Edmund Morgan calls the “morphology of conversion,” see Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), 72.

culture, so, too, did the metaphor of rebirth. It is not an accident that reform movements thrived in a cultural environment that, following the revolutionary birth of a republic, also spurred authors and social critics to romantically reflect upon the constant rebirth found in nature and the political experiment of the United States as a whole. The popular understanding of America as a Promised Land, a New Jerusalem or Zion became imbedded in tacit assumptions and understandings by which Americans navigated their lives; it was everywhere in popular cultural discourse.

So in 1849, when the Mountain Baptist Association answered in the negative to Little River Church's query of whether it was proper to admit new members who had been baptized by Richard Jacks or Stephen Ross, the Association was effectively denying the authenticity of the performative gesture of baptism. It was refusing to recognize the method by which the new believer joined the ethereal body, which communed and related to Christ. This was in no way a negation or slight against the believer's conviction. It was refusing to acknowledge the legitimacy of Jacks' and Ross' conducting of baptism. While Richard Jacks' antipathy for the Mountain Association, and Anti-Missionary sentiment as a whole, was reflected poignantly in his Circular Letter, Stephen Ross' evident unpopularity among Primitives is more curious. There are few church records that indicate open hostility between the two. And his activity as a missionary following the foundation of the Jefferson Association was much more reserved than Jacks'.

Part of the conventional exercises of church associations was to annually appoint different preachers to visit churches and other associations with which they may be corresponding or hoping to commune. In 1853, Stephen Ross moderated the Jefferson Baptist

Association, reported to have visited a neighboring association the previous year, and was selected, again, to visit the Briar Creek, Yadkin, and Holston Associations the following year. What is most significant about Ross' appointment is the way in which the Jefferson Association sought to share the cost of Ross' payment with other associations. This mitigated any potential financial burden on the congregations of member churches—churches which undoubtedly had congregants who were suspicious, if not contemptuous of missionary activity. In this sense, Stephen Ross' appointment, although a small example, represents one of the different ways the Jefferson Association attempted to skirt the line between those who outwardly supported the cause of missions and those who did not.²¹

While it was frequently the central topic of concern, missions were not the only issue used by the Jefferson Association to sustain a central or neutral ground between Primitive and Missionary Baptists. In the eleventh article of its 1848 founding constitution, the Jefferson Association requested that all ordinations to the ministry—which is to say, all approvals or official recognitions for new preachers to begin their spiritual work as pastors—must pass through “the Association for examination, and if found orthodox and qualified, to be ordained in the presence of the whole association. Ordinations only to be attended to in or at our associations.”²² This kind of organizational superintendence was not unlike that of the State Convention. However, given the Jefferson Association's minimal (if occasionally nonexistent) donations to the Convention, this article should be read as a synthesis between the policies of an

²¹ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1853.

²² Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1848.

overarching administration of the Convention and the completely unregulated autonomy of local churches.

Further evidence for the Jefferson Association's flexibility can be seen during its 1853 meeting, which housed the protracted meeting spurred by Elder Davis. Evidently responding to critiques leveled by its member churches, the policy of ordination management by the association was repealed. The association resolved to "advise the churches to offer no man for ordination without the concurrence of the ablest and most judicious brethren within their bounds and the fullest assurance that such candidate is 'apt to teach.'"²³ The Jefferson Association ceded authority back to its constituent churches when requested. Yet despite its flexibility and willingness to compromise on certain logistical policies concerning school construction or pastor ordination, the Jefferson Association continued to be hounded by its affiliation with missionaries generally, and Reverend Jacks specifically.

Part of the frustrations Primitive Baptists had with missionaries had to do with the amount of money they needed, or at least asked for, to sustain their activities. The Jefferson Association, aware of this, made a point at its founding to not only make the mission question a non-issue by not requiring, or even expressly asking for special tithes and donations for the purpose of supporting missionary activities. While the Association, as a whole, was friendly to the conceit of missions, its members fully recognized the problems many had with institutions like the State Convention. Despite declaring itself to be in correspondence with the Convention,

²³ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1853.

the records of the Jefferson Association are unclear as to whether any money, or even if any traveling pastor, was sent to the organization.

The dual threat Primitives saw in missionary activities was both the corruption of the function of the preacher—from the ancient traveling disciple into a functional salesman, hawking educational and social reform endeavors—and the subversion of local autonomy. The money many State Convention missionaries asked for went to projects and programs that were organized far from the location of the church he was visiting. This is not to say that missionaries were not sincere in hoping to build schools, seminaries, and other improvements around the church he was visiting. However, Primitives were already predisposed to disagree with missionaries due to foundational theological differences, namely that the former were Calvinists and the latter, Arminian. And in addition, there was also something threatening about a distant, vertically-integrated organization that mapped out the religious and spiritual improvements it hoped to foster throughout the state, fueled by donations collected by missionaries sent to visit local churches who, in the grand scheme, had little input in said mapping.

The Jefferson Association attempted to fall within the larger project of evangelism imagined by the State Convention yet remain outside its organizational structure of financial networks. It reconceived missions as a more grassroots endeavor in asking the Goshen Association to assist in the funding of Stephen Ross' missionary campaign. The emphasis the Jefferson Association placed on more locally-led mission finances was echoed the following year when, after the Association's Bible Society failed to get off the ground, the Association resolved that "the funds remaining in the hands of the Treasurer [of the Bible Society] go into the hands of the Treasurer of the Association, to be appropriated for the advancement of the cause of

Missions, at home.”²⁴ The italics in the original text indicate an emphasis, not on the sponsorship by a large organization intent on sending missionaries abroad, but on more local efforts where responses and successes could be seen and where changes could be made to fit regional concerns. It should be noted that the prefacing remarks to this resolution referred to the Goshen Association committee formed the previous year, the committee assigned the responsibility “to ask the Goshen Association for funds to assist in sustaining a Missionary in the bounds of this Association.” The members “reported that they had conferred with that body, but failed to get aid.”²⁵ Unable to secure the aid originally hoped for, the Jefferson Association rerouted the money from its defunct Bible Society into a missionary endeavor which, it emphasized, would focus on its local community, at home.

Not all donations requested by the Jefferson Association were specifically for home missions. Occasionally, lists of pamphlets, newspapers, and special religious publications were mentioned by the Association. In recognizing that the “Baptist Denomination has suffered much persecution in past years, particularly in the mountain section of country, in consequence of her benevolent institutions” the Association requested that its churches “contribute more liberally of what God has given them.”²⁶ Two years later, in 1856, the Treasurer suggested funds collected by a special call for donations from the previous year “be appropriated to the benefit of Br. Roberts in China” by way of “the Board of Foreign Missions, Richmond, Virginia, to be expended for Missionary purposes in China, at its direction.”²⁷ Other evidence remains that

²⁴ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1854.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1856. During this meeting the apparently aloof “President of the Jefferson Association Bible Society reported, that he called a meeting of the Board according to the requisition of the last

suggests there were members of the Jefferson Association who supported missionary endeavors outside the state. However, the most common form of missionary support mentioned in the Association's records is that of home missions.

While the Jefferson Association continued to sponsor local missionary endeavors in a manner amenable to those who distrusted the State Convention, the animosities that had been ignited by Richard Jacks continued to reemerge. Indeed, from the 1840s, through the 1850s, as the Association kept carving a space in between both Primitive and Missionary polarities, the most frequent and constant frustrations it faced pertained to the rebaptism of its former members. During the 1859 annual meeting of the Senter District Baptist Association, an association that had been founded by churches from both the Mountain and Three Forks Associations, a query from Beaver Creek Church was read:

How shall we receive a member who belongs to the Jefferson Association?

The answer was:

We advise our churches to receive all that went off from them by acknowledgment.

Those that have joined the Jefferson Association and have been baptized by those we believe to be in this order, must come in by experience and baptism.²⁸

Here, the "experience" that precedes baptism refers to the conversion experience, the personal testimony recounted by a potential member that tells the story of their coming to Christ. The

session, but the Secretary failed to attend, or to deliver to the President any property belonging to the society whatever." After a thirty minute recess, "[t]he Delegates resumed their business. Agreed to take up a public collection to-morrow at the close of the second sermon for home missions." Due to the bureaucratic method of minute-recording, the minutes appear unclear on whether financial mismanagement of the Bible Society funds was at the heart of the three-year frustrating attempt at sponsoring home missions.

²⁸ Minutes, *Senter District Baptist Association*, 1859, referenced in Fletcher, 29.

experience, the first part of the public profession of faith, is gauged by the church to be either authentic or not, in order to determine whether a baptism (the second part) can be administered.

Altogether, the Senter District Association repeated the same negation of baptismal method performed in earlier years by the Mountain Association. However, in the latter, the qualifications for specialized admittance pertained solely to the persons of Richard Jacks and Stephen Ross. Senter District's refusal to recognize the spiritual authenticity of the Jefferson Association, as a whole, suggests a longer, on-going feud between the leaders of the Jefferson and Senter District Associations.²⁹ Although the two associations would agree, along with "all Baptists that Christian Baptism consists in the immersion of a true believer in the name of the Trinity by a proper administrator," the paradox remains—the method of antagonism between the two associations is the same method that the Jefferson Association used to both differentiate Baptists from rival denominations and create a form of solidarity within the sect.³⁰

Among the resolutions carried at the Jefferson Association annual meeting in 1856, three years before Senter District's response to the Beaver Creek query, are the first decisions of non-fellowship ever made by the Jefferson Association. The first resolution declared,

[t]hat this Association, as Christians [sic] and citizens of the land, can neither fellowship, nor respect, the moral and Christian character of persons, and more especially, professed ministers of the Gospel, who will ridicule and denounce immersion as unscriptural,

²⁹ Due to the method of recording, and the information contained within, association and church records, it is difficult to surmise what actions or statements catalyzed this argument. Although it could be surmised that old animosities held between Jacks, the Mountain and Three Forks Association carried into the creation of the Senter District Association.

³⁰ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1856. In their Articles of Faith, the Senter District Association explains the perspective more succinctly: "We believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of Jesus Christ, and that true believers are the only subjects of those ordinances; and we believe the only true mode of Baptism is by immersion." Minutes, *Senter District Baptist Association*, 1853.

indecent and disgusting, and yet, in order to receive or retain members, sanction or administer it in the name of the Holy Trinity for Christian Baptism.³¹

Here, “immersion,” again, refers to the method whereby the believer is subsumed entirely under water in the name of the Trinity. This stands in contrast to “Infant Baptism” or “pedobaptism,” which the Jefferson Association regarded “as unscriptural, and fraught with evil consequences.”³² While immersion is intended for new believers and incoming church members, infant baptism involves the sprinkling of water onto the head of a young child. While denominations differ on the spiritual effects or significance, the functional practice of infant baptism still involves introducing the child into the church.³³ In this instance, the seemingly uncharacteristic animosity read through the first resolution was supposed at the time to be aimed at Methodists who not only practiced infant baptism, but also were actively competing with Baptists for non-believing souls. In a religious environment absent a state church, free competition between evangelical churches reigned, and the Baptists and Methodists, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, were the most successful denominations at adding people to their ranks.

Stephen Ross attempted to explain the hostility behind the 1856 resolutions. He recognized that while the first was “strenuously opposed by some of the more lenient, who seemed to sympathize to a considerable extent with our Methodist friends [...] The reader will see, however, that the resolution says nothing about Methodists, nor any other religious sect.”³⁴

³¹ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1856.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Denominations differ on the theological significance of PedoBaptism. While many claim it removes the “original sin” inherent to the human condition, others believe it introduces the drive to seek salvation to the child. Altogether, the practical effects of church membership remained, at least in the nineteenth century, broadly the same.

³⁴ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1856.

Although correct, there can be little mistaking that the resolution was indeed intending to refuse fellowship with those “individuals” who saw immersion as biblically unfounded yet continued to practice it, namely Methodists. This, however, was not the first instance in which the issue of baptism was so intently used to mark the distinction between denominations.

The spontaneous revival of 1853, the impromptu-protracted meeting that led to twenty-five additional church members, began because of Elder Davis’ three-hour “unsurpassed, if not unequalled” sermon “on the subject of Baptism.”³⁵ According to John Perkins, the clerk of the meeting, Reverend Davis “amply sustained his position, with marked intrepidity, overthrowing Peditism.”³⁶ It is significant that a sermon delivered before a diverse crowd of Baptists and Methodists, believers and nonbelievers, would take as its main subject the issue of proper baptism. This indicates that not only was Davis concerned with saving souls, but bringing them into the correct church body. For the Baptists belonging to the Jefferson Association, the millennium could not be brought about through simply converting the unsaved. The people needed to signify its rebirth through immersion. Perkins remained perplexed at how his “Pedit friends” could “remain so prejudicial, and so tenacious of the royal lineage to which they belong, that they cannot for a moment endure to hear the customs of their old grandmother invaded.”³⁷ For Perkins, Davis, and the rest of the Jefferson Association, the issue of baptism was a matter of being intellectually consistent, of recognizing the performative act of rebirth by someone who had chosen to accept salvation; to them, it was a matter of logic.

³⁵ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1853.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

In his analysis of the “natural theology” that emerged in the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century, E. Brooks Holifield combats the conventional wisdom that had long argued that the preservation and utilization of emotionalism (ever the engine of the revival) had been the defining feature of American theology. He argues instead that the evangelical clergy of the Old South understood their spiritual cosmologies through logic and reason, creating a rational orthodoxy. When discussing the enormous preoccupation antebellum religious leaders had with baptism, Holifield concludes that much of it stemmed from “half-conscious” philosophical presuppositions, stemming primarily from a covenant tradition. Although he admits “the topic would not have been so ‘fruitful’ had it been divorced from the desire of competitive churches to dramatize their differences in order to attract members.”³⁸

The Jefferson Association certainly dramatized the differences between themselves and the Methodists, while always attempting to deemphasize differences within their own denomination. It frequently tried to “earnestly solicit all Baptists, both Missionaries and Anti-Missionaries, to lay down their prejudices against each other [...] and thereby unite their efforts in vindicating and disseminating the truths of the Gospel, and combatting error and falsehood.”³⁹ The Jefferson Association, while attempting to foster denominational solidarity in the face of competing religious sects, also adopted certain secular cultural aspects in order to reinforce church discipline. Similar to the irony of immersive baptism being the site of both inner-denominational strife and inter-denominational distinction, so, too, did masculinity move from

³⁸ E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1978), 155.

³⁹ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1854.

being an obstacle in the way of evangelicals to a tool used by leaders to enforce religious principles.

While previous historical scholarship has emphasized the degrees to which southern evangelicals distanced themselves from worldly fashions and certain elements of dominant culture, highlighting the ways in which many evangelical men opposed dueling, drinking, and other violent aspects of southern manhood, more contemporary analyses are examining how, according to Christine Heyrman, “Baptists and Methodists alike found common ground with worldlier men, the cultures of primal honor and evangelical Christianity interpenetrated, and their distinctiveness, once sharply etched, began to blur.”⁴⁰ Most recently, David Moon has looked at how Southern Baptists in particular engaged the complex nexus of white supremacy, masculinity, violent aggression, and honor. Annoyed by the simplicity of a dyad consisting of an aggressively male cultural code and a consequently feminized collection of evangelical standards like humility and sobriety, Moon studies “an evangelical version of manhood that selectively accommodated aspects of the dominant masculine culture and allowed white evangelical men to migrate inward from the social fringes.”⁴¹

For Moon, church discipline provides an interesting window into what elements of masculinity evangelicals deplored while simultaneously functioning as a policing mechanism, encouraging the attributes and behaviors they respected.⁴² In an 1850 Circular Letter, Isaac

⁴⁰ Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 248; see also Anne C. Loveland, *Southern Evangelicals and the Social Order, 1800-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1980), 101-102.

⁴¹ David T. Moon, “Southern Baptists and Southern Men: Evangelical Perceptions of Manhood in Nineteenth-Century Georgia,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (August, 2015), 565.

⁴² Moon, “Southern Baptists and Southern Men,” 588.

Oxford described the interrelation between faith and works. While arguing that the commandments and laws of God should not be seen as burdensome, but rather a delight, he explained how the Word of God charges Christians to “practice reverence, submission and gratitude to God, justice, truth, and universal benevolence to men. To forgive an injury is more manly than to revenge it; to control a licentious appetite is better than to indulge it.”⁴³ Oxford’s subtle deployment of masculinity implies that it would take more strength to restrain from the passions of violence than to succumb to them. This logic is mirrored in the following sentence where he uses rationale similar to contemporaneous temperance literature. For Oxford, a true man of God is submissive and reverent to the Lord’s commandments, yet strong and steadfast in his restraint from sin.⁴⁴

Gender policing in church discipline was not limited to axioms, however. Acting in response to the repeated frustrations of unpaid ministers and projects, the Jefferson Baptist Association resolved that it “considers it unmanly, ungentlemanly and unchristian in the extreme, for any person and more particularly for church members, to subscribe to a preacher, or any *benevolent* cause, and refuse to meet their obligation.”⁴⁵ Here, the Association cleverly amalgamates the responsibilities of one who had requested a pastor, pamphlet, or other religious service with the honor code of the gentleman’s word.⁴⁶ The additional emphasis placed on church members implies the higher standard to which all Christians should hold themselves. For

⁴³ Isaac Oxford, “Circular Letter” Minutes, *Lewis Fork Baptist Association*, 1850.

⁴⁴ For more on the ways in which the domestic responsibilities of manhood were used in the temperance movement, see Scott C. Martin, *Devil of the Domestic Sphere: Temperance, Gender, and Middle-class Ideology, 1800-1860* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

⁴⁵ Minutes, *Jefferson Baptist Association*, 1853.

⁴⁶ Edward R. Crowther, “Holy Honor: Sacred and Secular in the Old South,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (November, 1992), 619-636; see also Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

a gentleman, not meeting an obligation is a slight against his honor and character just as for the Christian, it is a slight against God. In order to reinforce the proper behavior and ensure that the responsibilities of its church members were met, the Jefferson Association borrowed from a cultural language, from the secular corpus of performative actions corresponding to an appropriate gender. One of its more subtle methods of church discipline involved correcting transgressions not just according to the Bible, but according to a set of judgments that existed outside the church and from which the Association carefully and selectively accommodated.

From its inception in the late 1840s, through the 1850s, the Jefferson Baptist Association attentively carved out a space between Primitive and Missionary Baptist camps. Although established in correspondence with the State Convention, little to no coordination with the Convention and its benevolence campaigns was maintained. Instead, the Jefferson Association collected special, itemized donations for endeavors specific to local needs and according to the requests of its constituent churches. Despite being mission-oriented in tendency, through its history, it remained intentionally ambivalent on the mission and temperance questions, making neither one a condition of fellowship for its members. However, the Association did take a hard stance on immersive baptism, intent on exaggerating the differences between its churches and Methodists. While the Jefferson Association labored to cultivate a form of denominational solidarity, it was never entirely immune from acrimony. Its frequent attempts to placate Primitive Baptists were frustrated by long-standing feuds begun by individual ministers. And although free from the impersonal organizational apparatus of the State Convention, many of its local missions efforts failed to get off the ground. With many of its churches and members located in the mountainous sections that intersected and overlapped with the bounds of other Primitive

Associations, the Jefferson Association recognized that compulsory funding for missions would never be a unanimously supported effort. The opinions and relative support for missions by the members of the Jefferson Association reflected a congregation whose composition included people who had been both exposed to and passed by the Market Revolution. For the leaders, it was always a chore to distribute tracts or religious newspapers, never mind attempts at school construction or missionary ordination. Indeed, even managing to ensure that preachers were paid by their congregations required the deployments of selectively accommodated aspects of southern masculinity.

All while struggling to preserve a median position, a synthesis between ardent Primitive and Missionary Baptists, the Jefferson Association also feared becoming too liberal. It could not risk its members and potential new members from identifying with the beliefs of Methodists. In this way, the Association also represents the competitive religious marketplace in which evangelical churches battled for the souls of the unsaved. Catalyzed by energetic revivals and protracted meetings, the Second Great Awakening was an opportunity, not for ecumenism but for dramatizing denominational differences, over and against the competition. Although the theological and economic changes wrought by the Second Great Awakening and the Market Revolution were the root causes of the divisions between Southern Baptist churches in antebellum western North Carolina, the Jefferson Baptist Association is but one representative indication that these changes did not necessitate divisions. In attempting to manage a middle ground between Missionary and Anti-Missionary Baptists, the Jefferson Association also demonstrates the ways in which Southern Baptists, at large, attempted to popularize its message by both accommodating certain dominant social aspects and actively distinguishing themselves

from competing evangelicals. For the first half of the nineteenth century, the same social and economic forces that drove rifts between Southern Baptist churches also affected how Baptists, broadly, fit themselves into the social and religious fabric of the mountains and foothills of western North Carolina.

CONCLUSION

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the United States separated church and state, at least financially. Christian denominations were thrown headlong into a free and open marketplace where they competed with each other for potential converts. Preexisting and even brand new denominations looked out upon an open field of souls ripe for harvest and further cultivation. This impetus to evangelize gave rise to novel modes and methods of converting the unsaved, the most prevalent being revivalism. And as revivals produced more salvations, baptisms increased, and church membership rolls lengthened. Baptists, in particular, began creating large, bureaucratic institutions, like the North Carolina Baptist State Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention, to manage the increasing number of churches and church members. Simultaneously, the denomination at large began modifying its doctrine to make its specific brand of Christianity more palatable to a larger consumer base, mainly under the auspices of these new institutions (or at least the men seated in positions of power within them). However, many Baptists took umbrage at the prospect of donating money and resources to these new, alien organizations that seemed hell-bent on propagating an ostensibly sinful doctrine.

Coincident with the surge of revivalism and evangelicalism, America was also experiencing a rapidly expanding economy that progressively linked more sections of the country together within a tighter and more fluid market system. Those living or working near transportation crossroads and market centers were exposed to new ideas and social perspectives espoused by an emerging middle class of citizens. Notions of personal industry, frugality, and sobriety aligned with a social reform impulse that helped compose and motivate a new bourgeois

mindset. And as more preachers began to adopt this middle class mentality, they also saw their own occupations in relation to doctors, lawyers, and other paid professionals. However, many Baptists who lived, worked, and attended services far from the market's purview felt threatened by seemingly foreign ideas that pertained directly to what they produced or consumed privately.

Self-identified Primitive Baptists witnessed the construction of new state and national conventions, which augmented the denomination's theology, and were housed by ministers whose worldviews and understanding of the pastoral vocation differed sharply from their own. What made matters more frightening was that these conventions had the capacity to plant schools and seminaries—establishments that appeared less like training centers for future preachers and more like factories that reproduced an ominous and unfamiliar theology and social ideology ad-infinitum. All the more egregious were the requests by the conventions for more money to fund these very endeavors that spelled doom for Primitive Baptist spiritual and social understandings.

In antebellum western North Carolina, both theological changes, made by new denominational organizations, and new social perspectives, upheld by the nascent middle class, caused divisions within the Baptist community. And while the organizing process of the Second Great Awakening and the budding middle class' reform ideology both caused the fracturing of Baptist churches and associations, they did not always necessitate bifurcation. Many Baptists attempted to maintain a middle ground between Primitive and Missionary perspectives, partly in order to maintain denominational unity within a competitive religious marketplace. The Baptists who refused to be torn apart, and fall into one camp or the other, provide an excellent window into the ways in which Baptists—and evangelicals at large—accommodated certain aspects of

secular culture in order to shore up their sect against outside competition and make their theology more attractive to non-believers.

The complicated set of affairs that caused disunion among North Carolina Baptists also reveal the myriad other ways that Baptists made themselves at home in western North Carolina. The chaotic milieu that spawned Baptist factions and unifiers demonstrates the paramount significance of not only recognizing the ways in which churches or denominations interact with the secular world, but also the permeability of religious perspectives—that even spiritual understandings are radically affected by socioeconomic and cultural forces that are traditionally understood to exist only outside the sanctuary.

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