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SOUTH CAROLINA BAPTISTS, THE PRIMITIVE-MISSIONARY SCHISM, AND THE REVIVAL OF THE EARLY 1830S

KIMBERLY R. KELLISON*

IN THE EARLY 1830S, A POWERFUL RELIGIOUS REVIVAL MOVED through biracial Baptist congregations in South Carolina, changing the development, composition, and nature of the denomination in the state. In the up-country region, enthusiastic Baptists reported and gave thanks for amazing gains in church attendance. The Saluda Baptist Association, which spanned portions of five districts in the state's northwestern corner, grew from 999 white and black members in 1831 to 2,507 just one year later. Churches in the nearby Reedy River Baptist Association experienced similar growth over the same period, with congregational membership increasing from 1,587 to 2,419. Baptist churches in Charleston and the low country expanded and multiplied as well, including the Savannah River Baptist Association, which burgeoned from 4,113 to 6,807 between 1831 and 1833.¹

The advancement of Baptists in South Carolina was part of a larger revival movement that led to the major expansion and institutionalization of evangelical denominations—particularly Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians—in the industrializing North and the primarily agricultural South during the late 1820s and early 1830s. Northern and southern Presbyterians began to celebrate religious growth starting in 1827. According to Benjamin Rice Lacy, Jr., “In the Presbyterian Church at large, the South as well as the North, the highest peak of the century was reached in 1832 when there were 34,160 new members out of a total membership of 217,328, a gain of 15.7 percent.”² Methodists likewise experienced significant increases in many

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¹ In the nineteenth century, South Carolinians referred to the region north and west of the fall line as the state's up country. The low country typically referred to coastal areas. See Lacy K. Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry, 1800–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 5–95; Walter Edgar, *South Carolina: A History* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 47–323. For tabulations on church growth, see Minutes of the Saluda Baptist Association, 1831–1832, Minutes of the Edgefield Baptist Association, 1831–1833, Minutes of the Reedy River Association, 1831–1833, and Minutes of the Savannah River Baptist Association, 1830–1834, South Carolina Baptist Historical Collection, James B. Duke Library, Furman University, Greenville (hereafter cited as SCBHC). For discussion of revivalism in the low country, see Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 131–170.

² Benjamin Rice Lacy, Jr., *Revivals in the Midst of the Years* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1943), 104.

1955 South Carolina's divorce rate remained well below the national average.⁹⁶ As during Reconstruction, relatively few South Carolinians divorced even when the law permitted it. In November 1949, the state supreme court heard the first divorce case to reach its docket under the new law. In *Brown v. Brown*, the court denied a divorce to Ruth Brown, who filed on grounds of adultery and physical cruelty. Judging the evidence to be insufficient, the court ruled that the new law should be interpreted "to foster and protect marriage, to make marriage a permanent and public institution, to encourage spouses to live together, and to prevent separation" whenever possible.⁹⁷

Despite accusations that lawyers were digging for fees, South Carolina's attorneys had legitimate concerns over the prohibition of divorce. The tension between full faith and credit and the state's rejection of divorce allowed many couples to divorce and remarry fraudulently. Rather than wink at the subversion, the state bar association believed that permitting divorce under tightly controlled procedures would grant relief to the desperate while maintaining the stability and dignity of the law. The conservative legal course pursued by the courts in the years following the divorce bill demonstrated that the lawyers and judges had been largely successful.

That the *Williams* decisions proved the decisive turning point for state policy is especially clear within the South Carolina Bar Association. The state's lawyers were certainly not all of one mind on the divorce issue. Dean Frierson's objections have already been mentioned. Likewise, James Pruitt and O. T. Wallace, the leading opponents of the divorce legislation in the senate, practiced law before entering state politics. But none of these lawyers that opposed the divorce bill were actually practicing the law in 1946 and 1947, when the *Williams* decisions began to severely complicate South Carolina's situation. Whatever the moral concerns with accepting divorce might have been, the actual practice in the context of the new rulings compelled those active in the law to campaign for change.

⁹⁶ From 1950 to 1955, the nation averaged ten divorces per one thousand existing marriages each year. During that span, South Carolina averaged only five and a half. Based on Paul H. Jacobson, *American Marriage and Divorce* (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1959), 42, 90, 110.

⁹⁷ 215 S.C. 502 (1949). For physical cruelty, Ruth charged that her husband had "slapped her twice and pinched her." Her answers about the time of this incident as well as any details about adultery were judged as highly vague.

parts of the country, and in the burned-over district of western New York, a variety of new religious sects developed.³

Curiously, while northern revivalism in the 1830s has generated prolific research by scholars, little attention has been given to revivals transpiring at this same time in some southern states. Instead, most focus on southern revivals has revolved around the spectacular interdenominational awakening that occurred between 1801 and 1805 called the Great Revival.⁴ Yet for South Carolina Baptists, the revival of the early 1830s had as much significance as the far more heavily studied Great Revival. At no time in the antebellum decades, with the exception of the massive conversions experienced during the Great Revival, did church membership increase as dramatically as during the early 1830s. The political agitation gripping the state during the nullification campaign created momentum for the revivalism, as did concern over a nationwide cholera epidemic. The revivals occurred in large measure, though, because of human effort, driven by a new generation of ministers and laypeople who took to heart the admonition of Matthew 3:3, "Prepare the way of the Lord." Called Missionary Baptists because of their energetic support for foreign and domestic missions, these men and women vigorously worked to expand God's kingdom on earth in order to hasten the Second Coming of Christ. They promoted a plethora of outreach activities in the South that included revivalism; formal ministerial education; missionary, tract, and temperance societies; and the Sunday School movement.⁵

Part of a larger, trans-Atlantic effort to purify behavior and assure the salvation of all of the world's inhabitants (and mirroring similar developments in other major denominations), Missionary Baptists quickly gained new membership and influence. Their efforts did not win the support of all Baptists, however. Often residing in less urbanized and populated areas, opponents of the Missionary movement, who by the 1820s began to define themselves as Primitive Baptists, traced their churches directly back to the

³ See Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1989); Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

⁴ See John B. Boles, *The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996); Christine Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁵ See James R. Mathis, *The Making of the Primitive Baptists: A Cultural and Intellectual History of the Antimission Movement, 1800–1840* (New York: Routledge Press, 2004); Jeffrey Wayne Taylor, *The Formation of the Primitive Baptist Movement* (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 1994); John G. Crowley, *Primitive Baptists of the Wiregrass South, 1815 to the Present* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998); Donald Mathews, *Religion in the Old South* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1977), 124–128; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s–1880s*

primitive church of the New Testament and viewed the local congregation as the main form of religious authority. Also known as Old School or Antimission Baptists (critics derisively called them "Hardshell Baptists"), Primitives resisted the various reforms endorsed by Missionary Baptists, believing that such human-driven efforts fell outside of the purview of the biblical church, conflicted with a Calvinistic view of limited atonement, and challenged the spiritual authority of an all-powerful God. Criticism fell particularly on the formation of missionary societies, which some white southerners worried were rooted in the North and might therefore be connected to abolitionist schemes. Opponents also argued that missionary societies were extra-biblical and took money out of the hands of the local congregation. Primitive Baptists drew the most support in parts of North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, but they appeared in all southern states, including South Carolina, where their greatest strength was clustered in up-country congregations that grew out of a Separate Baptist tradition built upon biblical primacy and the centrality of the conversion experience.⁶

This article examines the deep-rooted community and theological divisions that characterized the Primitive-Missionary conflict in South Carolina and argues that one of the many ramifications of the revival of the early 1830s was the decline of the Primitive Baptist tradition in the state. Historians have posited numerous reasons why Missionary Baptists ultimately won over dissenting brothers and sisters in the nineteenth century. Missionary leaders tended to be better educated, wealthier whites who embraced middle-class conventions, particularly a defense of slavery, rather than advocating the socially egalitarian views of some earlier Baptists. Simultaneously, however, Missionary Baptists retained an emphasis upon the individualistic, conversion-centered message that formed the core of evangelical Christianity. Thus, their complex appeal invited large numbers of adherents—poor and wealthy,

(Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 106–135; Wyatt-Brown, "The Antimission Movement in the Jacksonian South: A Study in Regional Folk Culture," *Journal of Southern History* 36 (November 1970): 501–529. Also see Byron Cecil Lambert, *The Rise of the Anti-Mission Baptists: Sources and Leaders, 1800–1840* (New York: Arno Press, 1980); Henry L. Burkitt, *A Concise History of the Kehukee Baptist Association, from Its Original Rise Down to 1803* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1850); James L. Peacock and Ruel W. Tyson, Jr., *Pilgrims of Paradox: Calvinism and Experience among the Primitive Baptists of the Blue Ridge* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989).

⁶ Separate Baptists began moving into South Carolina in the late 1750s and early 1760s, while Regular Baptists established a presence in the low country starting in the 1680s. Initially, these groups differed on attitudes toward doctrine, revivalism, and society. By the late eighteenth century, Separates and Regulars tended to moderate some of their more extreme differences and began to work together in regional Baptist associations. Most congregations dropped the labels "Separate" and "Regular" in their common vernacular, instead simply referring to themselves as "Baptists." Yet even as the two traditions migrated toward one another, some South

slave and free, male and female.⁷ Unlike Primitive Baptists, Missionary Baptists also developed new efforts to attract and convert members. In 1821 Missionary leaders established the South Carolina Baptist Convention, the first statewide Baptist organization in the southern states, to foster greater communication and action among local churches. Five years later, the Baptist state convention founded Furman Academy and Theological Institution in the town of Edgefield Court House. Although the fledgling school suffered financial problems and was relocated several times before finding a permanent home in Greenville, it produced new Baptist leaders from its inception. A host of additional outreach methods, including support for foreign and domestic missions and a commitment to initiating and facilitating revivals, proved extremely effective in bolstering the Missionary Baptists.⁸

It is the latter approach—the avowed emphasis upon revivalism—that has been largely overlooked in terms of the Primitive-Missionary schism among Baptists. In South Carolina, the revival of the early 1830s proved an important step toward building Missionary Baptist unity in the state. It ushered a new generation of members into Baptist churches, men and women who had little or no theological connection to Separate traditions or Primitive Baptist beliefs. Antimission Baptists initially gained new members from the revivals, too. But their converts often proved more pliant to Missionary ideals, and over time many accepted—and sometimes led—the transition into the Missionary camp. Although the revival of the early 1830s ultimately united Baptists in South Carolina, enhancing both their influence and image among the white and black population, it initially proved a divisive force, accentuating and greatly accelerating the eclipse of the Primitive Baptists.

In order to examine the effects of the revival of the early 1830s on the Primitive tradition, this article will focus on one church that endured a drawn-out, contentious, and hurtful battle caused in large part by theological conflict

Carolina Baptists of Separate and Regular descent continued to harbor suspicion of one another well into the nineteenth century. Therefore, although Primitive Baptists may have absorbed some Regular Baptist beliefs (including an ardent belief in limited atonement), in many up-country congregations they drew more strongly on Separate Baptist traditions and frameworks. Many of the up-country churches that displayed a strong Antimission sentiment, for instance, had Separate backgrounds. Mathis, *The Making of the Primitive Baptists*, 27–28; T. H. Garrett, *A History of the Saluda Baptist Association, Together with Historical Sketches Composing the Body, Biographical Sketches of Deceased Ministers, Moderators, Clerks, Assistant Clerks and Treasurers; List of Ministers Raised Up in the Association; Also, Interesting Statistical Tables* (Richmond, Va.: B. F. Johnson Publishing Co., 1896), 43–54; Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 124–128; Crowley, *Primitive Baptists of the Wiregrass South*, 55–85.

⁷ Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 1–135.

⁸ Joe M. King, *A History of South Carolina Baptists* (Columbia, S.C.: General Board of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, 1964), 167–207. Also see Beth Barton Schweiger, *The Gospel Working Up: Progress and the Pulpit in Nineteenth-Century Virginia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

over joining the newly-formed South Carolina Baptist Convention and support for the convention's Missionary agenda. Big Creek Baptist Church, located in the up-country district of Anderson, existed in an area rife with division over missions.⁹ Like much of the rest of extreme northwestern South Carolina, Anderson District witnessed relatively slow population growth and economic expansion during the early years of white settlement. Whites began to colonize the region in 1785, after state officials opened portions of South Carolina's "Indian Land"—that is, territory ceded by Cherokee Indians through treaty during the American Revolution—for settlement. A mixed group arrived to claim and work the land, including whites and blacks from the low country as well as Separate Baptists and Scots-Irish Presbyterians from North Carolina, Virginia, and other states. Building homesteads close to streams and rivers, residents initially grew corn, wheat, and other food crops and ranged cattle along the pastoral, rolling hills. By the 1790s, cotton began to penetrate the up country, but at the turn of the century, the vast majority of inhabitants were subsistence farmers, with few large planters among them. Over the next several generations, many white farmers and townspeople slowly became integrated into the larger, statewide economy, but this process occurred gradually and unevenly. It was not until the 1850s, when Anderson was connected to Greenville and Columbia by railroad, that towns and commerce in the district started to develop rapidly.¹⁰ Indeed, during the first four decades of the nineteenth century, the population of the district showed only modest gains and was marked by significant fluctuations, as white and black residents moved away, either voluntarily or by force, to take up new land in the Southwest. White population in Anderson District increased by 0.3 percent between 1830 and 1840 and by 8.8 percent between 1840 and 1850. Although slave ownership increased during these decades (Anderson District's slave population climbed by 28.3 percent during the decade of the 1830s and by 32.2 percent during the 1840s), in 1860 Anderson ranked as the only district in the entire state where no slaveholder owned more than one hundred slaves. Of the thirty South Carolina districts in 1860, Anderson came in fifth to last in percentage of slaves and free blacks (37.5 percent, compared to Georgetown's 85.9 percent) and was seventh to last in terms of free per capita wealth (\$22,114 in 1996 dollars, as opposed to Sumter's \$81,140).¹¹

Separate Baptists found a comfortable setting on the South Carolina frontier, a place to practice their religion freely and do so as a tight-knit

⁹ Anderson District was carved out of Pendleton District in 1826. Edgar, *South Carolina*, 245–264.

¹⁰ Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 1–95, 215–277; Gene Welborn, *A Town Springs Forth: The Story of Williamston, South Carolina* (Greenville, S.C.: Family History Publishers, 2000).

¹¹ Population figures are from the University of Virginia Geospatial and Statistical Data Center's Historical Census Browser, <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/>

community. Rejecting creeds and paying little attention to formal doctrine, manifesting a deep belief in the power of the Holy Spirit, and emotional and egalitarian in their worship practices, Separates began migrating south from Virginia and North Carolina in the late 1750s and early 1760s. One of the first Separate churches established in what would become Anderson District was Big Creek, founded in 1788 by Baptist minister Moses Holland. Born in Virginia, Holland later moved to North Carolina, where he belonged to a Separate congregation that included Regulators James Younger and James Welborn, Jr. By 1787 Holland, Younger, Welborn, and other Separates had relocated to South Carolina, settling close to the Saluda River. Initially, this small group of Baptists met in a crude weatherboard building. The increasingly permanent character of their community and church was reflected in the establishment of a new meeting house by the late 1790s, complete with a slave section, not far from the original church location.¹²

Throughout the late 1780s and 1790s, members of Big Creek Church worshipped together and lived in a community closely bound by specific theological beliefs. In the early 1800s, this sense of community was expanded by the Great Revival. Starting as a series of camp meetings in frontier Kentucky in 1801, the interdenominational revival reached western South Carolina the following year, first appearing in the form of a camp meeting in Lancaster District. Within a few months, revivalism swept into other parts of the up country, regularly drawing crowds of five thousand people who participated in days and evenings filled with preaching, conversion, and fellowship. A phenomenon that affected all southern states, the Great Revival led to large-scale conversions among Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian evangelicals, helping to entrench the foundations of these three denominations in the South.¹³ In the up country of South Carolina, Baptist churches such as Big Creek swelled with new congregants. As church members recalled: "The Rev. Moses Holland continued to be pastor of Big Creek Church with unabating zeal and a good degree of success untill [*sic*] about the year 1801 or two when the Church numbered 109 at which time his labours to all appearance was blessed in a most meraculous [*sic*] manner, & many cried out what Shall I do to be saved; at which time there was added to the Church many; several of which have moved to other States, and become Preachers of the gospel."¹⁴ By the end of 1802, over two hundred members belonged to Big Creek Baptist Church.¹⁵ From this dramatic expansion emerged a number of church arms

collections/stats/histcensus/index.html. Edgar, *South Carolina*, 285–287, 312; Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 44–95, 224–228.

¹² Welborn, *A Town Springs Forth*, 131; Minutes of Big Creek Baptist Church (hereafter cited as BCBC), SCBHC, book 2, first page, no date.

¹³ Boles, *Great Revival*, 78–81.

¹⁴ BCBC, book 1, 1802–1803.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, book 2, first page, no date.

that eventually became independent congregations. These included Neal's Creek and Hopewell (both established in 1803) and possibly eighteen other churches in the region (by the 1850s).¹⁶ The proliferation of new churches led to the growth of regional organizations, called associations, to coordinate communication between individual congregations. In 1803 Big Creek helped to form the Saluda Baptist Association, comprised of nine churches scattered across the most northern and western districts of the state. Big Creek's minister, Moses Holland, served as moderator of the first associational meeting, a leadership position he would hold frequently for the next several decades.¹⁷

While the creation of the Saluda Baptist Association revealed the growth that had taken place within Baptist circles in up-country South Carolina, it also evoked concern among some Baptists, who charged that regional associations were unscriptural and posed an outside interference to congregational autonomy. As a pivotal figure in the association—revealing the vanguard role that Big Creek Church played in local leadership—Moses Holland assured doubters of its practical necessity and scriptural legitimacy. In 1809 Holland defended membership in such organizations, noting that, among other things, “associations are supported by the Scriptures,” they exercised “sufficient control over the churches composing it to see that their practice conforms to New Testament doctrines and discipline,” and “they afford an occasion for ministers to judge each other’s ministerial gifts and methods of Biblical interpretation.”¹⁸

Moses Holland proved an important leader in initiating and supporting changes in Baptist practice while holding firm to the scriptural autonomy of the congregation. But the confusion over the Saluda association was only a hint of the much larger controversy to come, one that Holland and other longtime up-country Baptist ministers had a harder time trying to diffuse. In 1821 low-country leaders such as Richard Furman and John Roberts took the initiative in forming the Baptist state convention. From its inception, one of the state convention’s major functions was the promotion of missions. The convention engendered strong opposition in parts of upper South Carolina, resulting in widespread disagreement over whether regional Baptist associations, including the Saluda association, should join the organization. In 1823, just two years after the convention was established, delegates to the Saluda association resolved to join the statewide body. However, opponents garnered sufficient strength to reverse the resolution one year later, and the association withdrew its membership.¹⁹ Support for missions increased in the

¹⁶ Welborn, *A Town Springs Forth*, 131.

¹⁷ Garrett, *Saluda Baptist Association*, 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27–31.



Big Creek Baptist Church, located in modern-day Williamston, was organized in 1788 by a group of Separate Baptists from North Carolina. A rift formed in the congregation in the early 1840s that reflected the larger schism between Primitive and Missionary Baptists in South Carolina. The church reunited under Missionary minister William P. Martin, who was pastor at Big Creek from 1845 to 1873. Two years after the Martin era ended, the extant meeting house pictured here was completed. Courtesy of the Pendleton District Commission, Pendleton.

next decade, in part because the revival of the early 1830s greatly enlarged the Baptist population in the up country. In 1835 the Saluda association began hosting a charity sermon where delegates collected contributions for benevolent purposes; that same year, Missionary supporters established the Anderson Missionary Society as an arm of the state convention, effectively creating a regional Missionary organization, even though the Saluda association opposed such efforts. By the late 1830s, Missionary Baptists had captured a majority of votes in the Saluda Baptist Association. As a result of the Missionary takeover, at least five churches withdrew membership from the Saluda association and formed the Fork Shoal Baptist Association, an Antimission organization.²⁰ Delegates to this association, made up primarily of churches

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 43–54; Minutes of the Saluda Baptist Association, 1837, SCBHC. Other up-country associations experienced similar difficulties. See Minutes of the Bethel Baptist Association, 1847, Minutes of the Tyger River Baptist Association, 1840, SCBHC.

with Separate Baptist origins, affirmed their disregard for those who attempted to engineer change through the state convention: "We believe that the Baptist State Convention, with all her train of kindred institutions, are unscriptural, and cannot be supported from the word of the Lord; and therefore have no fellowship for them; and no question relative thereto shall be introduced or discussed in the Association."²¹ The Fork Shoal association remained in existence until 1844, when it dissolved for lack of membership.

While the Antimission controversy divided members of the Saluda Baptist Association as early as the 1820s, it was not until the late 1830s and early 1840s that individual up-country churches witnessed major discord over the issue. Dissension took longer to reach a boiling point in many churches for several reasons. First, the Missionary "takeover" of the Saluda association and the resulting origination of the Antimission Fork Shoal association may have prompted Baptists on both sides of the schism to act more decidedly in identifying with either Primitive or Missionary beliefs. Second, theological and cultural opposition to formal ministerial education worked against Primitive Baptists, who suffered from a dearth of ministers by the 1830s and 1840s. Since Missionary Baptists, by contrast, created educational institutions to train new clergy, the latter group held the upper hand when it came to providing ministerial manpower in churches. Largely because of their cultural as well as theological disagreement with ministerial education, then, Primitives suffered a war of attrition in terms of leadership. Finally, because they interpreted certain biblical mandates differently than Primitives, Missionary Baptists were better organized and took more assertive measures to gain new adherents. One of their most fruitful recruiting methods was the revival of the early 1830s, which initiated a new generation of men and women into the ranks of millennial, Missionary Baptists. The Primitive-Missionary conflict at Big Creek Baptist Church illustrates the convergence of all of these factors, while simultaneously revealing the raw emotion and hurt that emanated from a rending of church and community.

Throughout the 1820s, members of Big Creek Church faced growing concern over the Missionary movement pulsing through Baptist circles. While some church members may have voiced cautious support for Missionary activity, Moses Holland's leadership seems to have stabilized any desire to join the state convention. After a special meeting held in the autumn of 1828, members agreed "to have nothing to do with it [the convention] directly or indirectly [*sic*]."²² Under Holland, Big Creek Church remained a religious community defined by strict opposition to the "extra-Biblical" endeavors endorsed by Missionary Baptists. In September 1829, however, an event

²¹ Minutes of the Fork Shoal Baptist Association, October 4, 1839, SCBHC.

²² BCBC, book 1, November 1, 1828; Garrett, *Saluda Baptist Association*, 27-36.

occurred that would throw the church into turmoil: at the age of seventy, and after almost forty-one years of religious leadership, Moses Holland died. Holland's death marked a turning point for church relations, creating a leadership vacuum and catapulting the congregation to a new level of theological anxiety. Nostalgic church members interpreted his passing as God's sovereign act. "On the 8th of September 1829," remembered the worshippers, "He who had been so good to him in blessing him together with others; by his instrumentality thought proper to call him to the enjoyments of his labours, on the day following his remains was deposited in the burying grounds of the Church he so much loved." Holland's death, church members believed, contributed to major dissention at Big Creek; some noted of their minister's demise, "This visitation by God, brought distress not only on the Church but neighbourhood, there was a chasm never to be filled."²³

Even as Holland's death left the Big Creek community reeling and in search of new leadership, the congregation faced another change. This time the occasion was a more celebratory one—at least initially—as a major revival led to the addition of over one hundred new members in the early 1830s. Spiritual awakening had been propounded in the early and mid 1820s by Primitive as well as Missionary Baptists, both of whom noted with sadness the spirit of declension in their midst, but Missionary Baptists were much more aggressive in their efforts to bring about revival. Believing that spiritual awakening was caused by God alone (through the work of the Holy Spirit), Antimission Baptists helped facilitate conversions within their own congregations, but opposed efforts to reach out to the larger, un-churched masses. Missionary Baptists, on the other hand, used a cross between old revival methods, primarily the open-air camp meeting, and newer techniques, including protracted services held in individual churches, to promote conversions and preach the need for worldwide salvation. Their populist message embraced all nonbelievers and deemphasized the idea of predestination, stressing instead the urgency of enlarging the kingdom of God on earth. As mentioned earlier, Missionary Baptists also benefited from their drive to build an educated ministry. The South Carolina Baptist Convention's creation of Furman Academy and Theological Institution in Edgefield District in 1826 resulted in a number of young Baptist ministers anxious to assure the salvation of the heathen.²⁴

²³ BCBC, book 2, first page, no date.

²⁴ One of the main reasons that South Carolina Baptists decided to locate their theological institution at Edgefield was the hope that Georgia Baptists, led by Missionary ministers such as Jesse Mercer, would cooperate with them in creating a joint institution. Edgefield District bounded the Georgia state line. King, *South Carolina Baptists, 180–189*; Hortense Woodsen, *Giant in the Land: A Biography of William Bullein Johnson, First President of the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1950), 55–65.

The growth of Missionary Baptist activity in portions of western South Carolina helped ignite revival. Missionary leaders provided the spark by delivering sermons at various churches and yearly associational meetings. Their activism, combined with a massive Baptist revival that moved through Georgia in 1827 and another started by Presbyterian minister Daniel Baker in Savannah in 1831, broadened the appeal of the Missionary Baptists' millennial vision in the up country. At the 1827 meeting of the Saluda Baptist Association, an estimated three thousand people attended day-long sessions of Sunday preaching. Three years later, between four and five thousand turned out to hear five Sunday sermons—three in the morning and two in the afternoon—at the Saluda association's annual meeting. "Animation and zeal strongly characterized the performances of the brethren, and the multitude . . . behaved with much good order," the Baptists enthusiastically reported.²⁵ By 1830 religious interest among both practicing and potential up-country Baptists seemed palpable and electric.

Baptist revival broke out the following year and moved through much of northern, western, and central South Carolina. Appropriately, the revival started in Edgefield District, at a church called Sardis located near Edgefield Court House. Aware of the success of a Baptist camp meeting in Virginia, locals who had gathered for their quarterly union meeting at Sardis Baptist Church felt so moved by God's spirit that they transformed the three-day July assembly into a camp meeting. "That," according to one Baptist, "was the beginning of the revival that swept the [Edgefield Baptist] association."²⁶ Inspired by the success of the camp meeting, which led to twenty-eight conversions and "not fewer than five hundred souls" receiving "deep awakenings," hopeful Baptists returned to their home churches, where they worked to effect revivals in their own congregations. At the Baptist church at Edgefield Court House, congregants invited some of the ministers who had shaped the Sardis revival to continue their work, resulting in services held "for ten successive days and nights" that attracted most of the town as well as residents of surrounding vicinities.²⁷

The Edgefield revivals that began during the summer of 1831 quickly spread to neighboring districts like Anderson, the home of Big Creek Baptist Church. Regional organizations such as the Saluda Baptist Association experienced major congregational growth through the autumn of 1831 and most of 1832. So overwhelmed were Saluda association Baptists in 1832 that

²⁵ Minutes of the Saluda Baptist Association, 1827, 1830, SCBHC; William Mumford Baker, *The Life and Labours of Reverend Daniel Baker, D.D., Prepared by His Son, Rev. William Mumford Baker* (Philadelphia: William S. and Alfred Martien, 1858); J. H. Campbell, *Georgia Baptists: Historical and Biographical* (Macon, Ga.: J. W. Burke and Company, 1874), 14–15.

²⁶ Woodsen, *Giant in the Land*, 74. Unions were subgroups within associations.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

they set aside a day of fasting and prayer to celebrate the vast additions to the fold and declared: "Whereas, the Lord has been pleased, during the last Associational year, in a wonderful manner to pour out his Spirit in many quarters of his vineyard, and in an especial manner within the bounds of our Association, and many, we trust, in consequence thereof, have been brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus," the second Thursday in November would be observed as "a day of Thanksgiving and Prayer, for what the Lord has done for us, and for a continuance of his favors among us, and that the Associations, with which we correspond, be requested to unite with us that day."²⁸

Although much of the groundwork for revival had been set in place by hard-working Missionary Baptists before 1831, and although the 1831 Edgefield revival proved the immediate impetus for large-scale religious conversions among up-country Baptists, one additional factor incited some men, women, and children, both black and white, to join Baptist churches in the early 1830s. By the turn of the decade, South Carolinians passionately debated the course they should pursue in relation to the Tariff of 1828, a law that many in the Palmetto State deemed unconstitutional. Citizens held varying positions on the issue. Some felt that the state should nullify the tariff, affirming state authority over what they perceived to be federal tyranny. Fearing that radical action could lead to civil war, others disagreed with the tariff, but did not support nullification. Still others sat on the fence. By the autumn of 1831, as Congress debated passage of a new tariff, the possibility of nullification intensified. South Carolina politicians took open stances on the topic, and the rest of the state divided over the issue. Both Unionists and nullifiers mounted grassroots campaigns, using passionate and often angry rhetoric to convince each other of the dangers of the opposing argument. Debated in town squares, educational institutions, and even churches, nullification created an environment of intense uncertainty. Although this heated political issue ultimately pulled apart some churches, it initially contributed to the revival of the early 1830s. Baptist minister Luther Broadus later wrote about the direct connection between nullification and religious revivalism. "It is a fact that has been commented upon, but has never been satisfactorily explained, that great political movements are often attended or followed by great religious movements," Broadus observed in 1882. For several years, "the most intense political excitement prevailed throughout the country," but was felt particularly in South Carolina, "threatening to precipitate the dreadful conflict which was destined to come thirty years later, and deluge the country in blood." In the "midst of this political fermentation," Broadus recounted, "the most remarkable religious awakening of this century, if not in the history

²⁸ Minutes of the Saluda Baptist Association, 1832, SCBHC.

of this country, took place." Religious fervor spread throughout the Atlantic states like "a great tidal wave," affecting "almost every village and hamlet and home in the country." South Carolina experienced the fulcrum of political as well as religious excitement during the nullification controversy. Throughout the state, "the people were thoroughly aroused, and gathered in multitudes wherever preaching could be heard." Some of the "strongest and most influential Churches in South Carolina had their origin" in the revival of the early 1830s.²⁹

Membership began to swell at Big Creek as early as 1827, but starting in September 1831, an arresting sense of spiritual awakening pervaded church services. By December, after "much exhortation [*sic*] and prayer," more members joined, ushering in a momentous revival that hit its peak in 1832 and continued into the following year. Church and lay leaders quickened the spirit by holding church meetings twice a month—rather than once, as usual—throughout much of 1832. Their efforts paid off. During the first five months of 1832, seventy-two individuals joined the church, and by the end of the year, an additional thirty-nine had their names added to the roll.³⁰ White men and women as well as slaves took part in the conversion process, although more whites joined the church than blacks. While the age of conversion is difficult to ascertain in many cases, some of the most visible male leaders who rose to prominence after the revival ranged in age from their twenties to their sixties, illustrating that the awakening at Big Creek was not confined primarily to children or young adults. And although women comprised more of the congregational membership than men, the ratio of men to women who joined the church during the revival was roughly equal, a fact that opens intriguing questions about the myriad of factors that prompted spiritual conversion in the anxious political times of the early 1830s.³¹

²⁹ John B. Carwile, *Reminiscences of Newberry, Embracing Important Occurrences, Brief Biographies of Prominent Citizens, and Historical Sketches of Churches: To Which Is Appended an Historical Account of Newberry College* (1890; reprint, Columbia, S.C.: R. L. Bryan Company, 1970), 99. For discussion of nullification and revivalism, see McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, 137; Orville Vernon Burton and David Herr, "Religious Tolerance and the Growth of the Evangelical Ethos in South Carolina," in *The Dawn of Religious Freedom in South Carolina*, ed. James Lowell Underwood and W. Lewis Burke (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006), 152–153. For detailed analyses of South Carolina's nullification controversy, see Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, 120–144, and William W. Freehling, *Prelude to the Civil War: The Nullification Controversy in South Carolina, 1816–1836* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

³⁰ BCBC, book 1, January–December, 1832.

³¹ Between September 1831 and June 1832, during the height of the revival, forty white women, thirty-seven white men, thirteen black women, and fifteen black men joined Big Creek Church.

By the spring of 1833, new additions to Big Creek Church waned significantly. Not all of those who joined the church during the revival remained regular participants in the congregation, and at least one group broke away, first forming an arm and then an independent church. Still, the revival of the early 1830s permanently changed the social and theological face of Big Creek Church. Throughout much of the previous decade, the congregation had averaged only thirty-five members—a number small enough that men and women knew one another well, operating in an intimate, interpersonal worship setting that recognized social differences, but often moderated them as well. By the late 1820s, membership increased into the forties, and by the early 1830s, into the fifties. After the revival surge of 1832, the congregation swelled to 162, and for the remainder of the decade, membership ranged from 120 to 160. A much larger church membership, including the addition of new converts who had no connection to the theological beliefs or traditions of the church, altered the personal, direct sense of self-government that members had shared with one another. By the early 1840s, moreover, many of these new members would take active leadership roles in the congregation. While one leadership faction would support the Primitive stance, the other would increasingly move Big Creek Church away from its Separate—and now Antimission—roots. The revival of the early 1830s, therefore, led to a glorious outpouring of new church members, but it also changed what was familiar and recognizable within the walls of the church.³²

As alluded to earlier, the differing religious and political issues that converged to produce a major Baptist revival in South Carolina in the early 1830s significantly altered the denomination's identity. Starting in this decade and continuing until the Civil War, Baptists, like other evangelicals, grew not only in number, but also in cultural power and influence, particularly because of the rise of abolitionism in the North and the accelerating need of white southerners to justify slavery on religious and moral grounds. For South Carolina Baptists, however, the missions question proved an obstacle to denominational unity and statewide influence; the discord was not fully resolved until the 1840s, and in some churches, not until the 1850s. Again, Big Creek Baptist Church serves as a microcosm of the conflict, and ultimately the resolution, that revolved around the controversial issue of Missionary activity.

Even as the revival of the early 1830s—and the political turmoil of nullification—subsided, religious angst among members of Big Creek Church, now totaling over one hundred, remained. One of the first problems the church encountered upon Moses Holland's death was finding a minister who conformed to the theological beliefs and Separatist heritage of the congregation. In 1832 church members initially elected Antimission minister Jonathan

³² BCBC, book 1, 1820–1840.

DeWeese, who turned them down, and then voted in favor of Robert King, the former minister of nearby Neal's Creek Baptist Church and Moses Holland's son-in-law, whose wife had taught him to read in the 1820s.³³ Forty-one years of age when he accepted the pastorate of Big Creek, King symbolized the changes transpiring in Baptist circles throughout the state. Although raised in churches of Separate Baptist heritage, by the 1830s King had shifted his allegiance to the Missionary Baptists. However, as Baptist historian T. H. Garrett lamented, King's "usefulness was completely jeopardized and the spirituality and progress of the church wholly impaired by an anti-Missionary party which controlled the church."³⁴ When in 1838 Big Creek members voted to leave the Saluda Baptist Association (which increasingly voiced support for missions) and join the Fork Shoal association, King resigned his position. "Both Church & Congregation . . . without a decenting [*sic*] voice" elected John Vandiver, an avowed Primitive, as their regular supply.³⁵ Going further, the congregation "entered into a resolution not to Correspond with the State Convention or any of the institutions of the day" and added a new amendment to their church constitution, which also was adopted by the Fork Shoal association, that "the Association Shall not open a Correspondance [*sic*] with the Baptist State Convention or with any other association that does correspond or that is in any other way connected with that boddy [*sic*] and no question reletive [*sic*] to the Convention Shall be introduced or discussed in the Association."³⁶ In 1840, in a show of unity for their Separate traditions and Primitive beliefs, church members agreed to "washing Each others feet" at their next meeting.³⁷

In 1840 those who supported an Antimission stance seemed in charge at Big Creek Church. Members had affirmed their Primitive identity by rejecting all ties to the Baptist state convention, even practicing the primitive tradition of foot washing as a visible symbol of their unbroken continuity with the early Christian church. Yet a segment of the church remained inquisitive, if not convinced, about the merits of the Missionary system. Many of these men and women had joined Big Creek during the revival of the early 1830s. They had been reached and converted by Missionary Baptists and were more open to Missionary views than the older generation of church members, for whom the Separate-Primitive tradition held greater authority and meaning. Over time, their advocacy of the New School grew, particularly as the church endured

³³ Welborn, *A Town Springs Forth*, 132; Garrett, *Saluda Baptist Association*, 244–245.

³⁴ Garrett, *Saluda Baptist Association*, 245; Federal Manuscript Census for South Carolina, 1850, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (hereafter cited as SCDAH).

³⁵ BCBC, book 1, June 30, August 17, and September 1, 1838.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, August 17, 1838.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, October 3, 1840.

periods without strong leadership and direction. A sign of this shift occurred in 1841, when the congregation elected Miles Ellison, who joined the church during the revival of the early 1830s and by the early 1840s openly supported Missionary activity, as their deacon. The election took place in January 1841. In May of that year, before Ellison's ordination, the church again voted "on whether their minds had changed on the choice of Bro. Miles Alison [Ellison] which appeared to be unanimous."³⁸ The election of Miles Ellison as church deacon evinced a more open attitude by Big Creek members toward Missionary Baptists. Then, in 1843 a new dynamic was introduced into the congregation that eventually provided an outlet for missions advocates to assume permanent leadership and forge a new identity for Big Creek Church.

That dynamic was an itinerant Baptist minister named Edward W. Musgrove, whose strongly Calvinistic beliefs—and very Calvinistic temperament—would transform both the church and the community into a theological battle zone. Born in South Carolina in the 1790s, Musgrove's location during his early adult years is difficult to ascertain—he does not appear on census schedules until 1850, when he, his wife, a stepdaughter or adopted daughter, and one mulatto slave are listed in his household at Pinckneyville, Georgia.³⁹ Referring to himself as an "Old School Baptist Preacher," Musgrove first surfaces in the church minutes at Big Creek in September 1842, when he helped the regular minister, John Vandiver, conduct the worship service. By the summer of 1843, Musgrove had become a formal member of the congregation.⁴⁰ Almost immediately after he joined the church, Musgrove engaged in a heated dispute with sixty-seven-year-old deacon Hugh Willson, who openly discussed support for Missionary activity.⁴¹ Musgrove seems to have verbally attacked Willson. The minutes of September 2, 1843, report that "there arose a difficulty" between the two men, "which seemed to End that day in confusion." The following day, before he preached to the church, "Bro. Musgrove made a public acknowledgement, for the day before," and at the end of the sermon, church members attended a special meeting to "finish the unfinished business." The meeting did not last long, for Willson rose from his seat and informed the church that "he could releave [*sic*] us, the church of that trouble, that he was no more a member of this church."⁴²

A member of Big Creek Church since the revival of the early 1830s, Hugh Willson was one of the older and wealthier congregants. His seventeen slaves in 1840 gave him proximity to planter status in a district with few large slaveholders. The exodus of Willson from Big Creek Church marked the start

³⁸ *Ibid.*, January 2, May 1, 1841.

³⁹ Federal Manuscript Census for Georgia, 1850, Federal Slave Census for Georgia, 1850, SCDAH.

⁴⁰ BCBC, book 1, September 3, 1842, July 1 and August 5, 1843.

⁴¹ Federal Manuscript Census for South Carolina, 1840, SCDAH.

⁴² BCBC, book 1, September 2, 1843.

of a formal divide that would mar the church for years. In the months following the Willson-Musgrove dispute, Musgrove's controversial behavior further ruptured the Big Creek congregation, prompting church members, both white and black, to break into two distinct factions: one that accepted Musgrove as its leader, and the other that did not. The fissure created by Musgrove brought to the surface the complex disagreement over Missionary activity that had threatened to splinter the church for more than a decade. Thus, Edward Musgrove became a polarizing figure within the Big Creek congregation for two reasons: his abrasive personality, and his adamant refusal to embrace any Baptist who endorsed missions. Those who supported Musgrove, at least initially, were motivated first and foremost by their strict theological opposition to Missionary activity on the grounds that it was not mentioned in the Bible. Musgrove's opposition, by contrast, galvanized first around resistance to his leadership style and only secondly to his hostility to missions, as some of the early members of the anti-Musgrove faction remained uncertain over the missions question.

Leaders of both groups shared a number of similarities. Most were farmers who owned their own land; many owned a small number of slaves; most were literate; and a significant number lived in the immediate Big Creek community, often residing in close proximity to one another. While members of the anti-Musgrove faction displayed a greater age range, both groups contained older men in their fifties and sixties as well as younger men in their twenties, thirties, and forties. White women and slaves also played a fundamental role in the schism. Although at times supporting the positions taken by their husbands or masters, white women and slaves were autonomous church members whose decisions to side with one faction or the other carried important political implications. Indeed, their support or opposition to missions and Edward Musgrove deepened the wedge that divided the congregation, making the issue one that touched the entire church (see tables 1 and 2).⁴³

Leaders on both sides of the schism, moreover, shared a common link in that many had joined Big Creek Church during the revival of the early 1830s. Musgrove's most vocal supporters (at least as recorded in church minutes, which largely exclude the activity of white women and slaves in the controversy) either joined the church in the early 1830s or early 1840s, around the same time as Musgrove's appearance in the congregation. Even more than his supporters, almost all of the active leaders who opposed Musgrove were products of the revival of the early 1830s. It was this group of church members who would lead their faction of Big Creek Church toward Missionary reform,

⁴³ The list of Primitive and Missionary adherents presented in tables 1 and 2 is incomplete, as it only includes leaders who were mentioned in church minutes or excluded for actions pertaining to the schism. The Primitive faction retained control of the church minutes, thus keeping a more complete record of excluded members.

TABLE 1. LEADERS OF THE PRIMITIVE CAMP AT BIG CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age, 1840</i>	<i>Number of Slaves, 1840</i>	<i>Occupation, 1840</i>	<i>Year Joined Church</i>
Thomas Cates ^a	N/A	N/A	N/A	1835
Isaac Clement	50-60	8	Farmer	1843
David Dunkin ^a	N/A	N/A	N/A	1843
Nathaniel Gaines	40-50	1	Farmer	N/A
Harper Gambrell ^a	N/A	N/A	N/A	1832
John Gambrell	50-60	14	Farmer	1830
John Harper, Sr. (or John Harper, Jr.)	60-70 (or 30-40)	1	Farmer	N/A (or 1832)
Edward Musgrove ^a	N/A	N/A	N/A	1843
John Vandiver	60-70	0	Farmer	N/A
Jasper Williams	20-30	3	Farmer	1832

TABLE 2. LEADERS OF THE MISSIONARY CAMP AT BIG CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age, 1840</i>	<i>Number of Slaves, 1840</i>	<i>Occupation, 1840</i>	<i>Year Joined Church</i>
Nathan Briant ^a	N/A	N/A	N/A	1832
Terrell Briant	30-40	0	Farmer	1832
Miles Ellison	40-50	1	Farmer	1831
Peter Johnson	30-40	1	Farmer	1832
Henry Lawless ^a	N/A	N/A	N/A	1831
William Stone	50-60	0	Farmer	N/A
Harvin Vandiver	30-40	0	Farmer	N/A
Thomas Vandiver	20-30	1	Farmer	N/A
James Wardlaw	60-70	3	Farmer	N/A
M. B. Williams	20-30	9	Farmer	1832
Hugh Willson	60-70	17	Farmer	1832
Murray Woodsen	50-60	1	Farmer	1832

^a These individuals appear in the federal census for the first time in 1850. Thomas Cates was fifty-four years old, a cobbler, and owned no slaves. David Dunkin, Harper Gambrell, Nathan Briant, and Henry Lawless were farmers. Dunkin was sixty years of age and owned three slaves; Gambrell was thirty-four with four slaves; Briant was twenty-nine with zero slaves; Lawless was seventy with three slaves. Edward Musgrove, whose occupation was recorded as "Old School Baptist preacher," was sixty-one and owned one slave.

Sources: BCBC, book 1, 1843-1850; BCBC, book 2, 1844-1850; Federal Manuscript Censuses for Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, 1840, 1850, SCDAH; Federal Slave Censuses for Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, 1850, SCDAH.

invite Primitive members into their fold, and ultimately reunify the Big Creek community in a new, more stable direction.

Several months after Willson left the church, the congregation entered into its annual election for their yearly supply. Musgrove seemed confident that he would receive the nod to assume the pastorate of Big Creek Church. When the election occurred in early 1844, however, a majority of church members chose John Vandiver, who trained in the Old School tradition but seems to have tolerated sentiment supporting missions, to head the congregation.⁴⁴ Infuriated, Musgrove plotted his strategy, presenting himself at the next monthly business meeting of the church. As the meeting opened, according to the anti-Musgrove faction, "a confusion arose by Edward W. Musgrove which lasted or continued about two hours when Musgrove called on John Gambrell to take the Church Book Which he did after which Musgrove with a Mannority [*sic*] withdrew out of the House in disorder." The anti-Musgrove faction "remained and [transacted business]," electing John Vandiver their minister for the 1844 year.⁴⁵

To the pro-Musgrove faction, events unraveled differently. According to church clerk John Gambrell, after preaching the Musgrove faction "went into our former rules when there could be nothing done nor understood according to the gospel order, and seeing this was thought best to withdraw ourselves from such a violent party of conspirators against the church which was then ready to be proven and they the violent party knew it."⁴⁶ Pro-Musgrove church members called a meeting two days later, coming "together in council to adapt [*sic*] such measures as to save the church; according to the rules and constitution." Perhaps because of Musgrove's itinerant status, the group voted unanimously to call Antimission minister Nathaniel Gaines as their regular supply for the year. In addition, they elected two new deacons, J. Harper and John Gambrell, and wrote to Salem Baptist Church in Saluda and Mountain Creek Baptist Church near Anderson—both of which had rejected the missions impulse and belonged to the Antimission Fork Shoal association—for assistance. Finally, Musgrove followers voted to withdraw fellowship "from that violent party that dont [*sic*] regard our Constitution nor church rules."⁴⁷

The lines having been clearly drawn, the two feuding factions of Big Creek Church now battled to claim their authority—and dispel the legitimacy of the other side. One key way to do this was to establish control of the meeting house and the church minutes. Another was to preserve their reputation as moral, upright citizens within the community at large. Just days after Musgrove's party met at the church, the anti-Musgrove faction passed a resolution that

⁴⁴ BCBC, book 2, first page, no date.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, January 6, 1844.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, book 1, January 6, 1844.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, January 8 and February 7, 1844.

"Edward W. Musgrove is no longer a member with us and that he is now Excluded from us for publick lying and we as [a] church have no fellowship for him." Individuals from the anti-Musgrove faction were selected "to demand the Church Book of John Gambrell by our next meeting," and the entire group "agreed to have Musgrove published as an [imposter] and the word to be made use of."⁴⁸ This was accomplished by presenting a notice in the district newspaper, the *Anderson Gazette*, warning other Baptists of the interloper. This "imposter representing himself a Baptist preacher by the name of Edward W. Musgrove roaming through the country—a man who delights in disorder and creating disturbances in churches and neighborhoods—we respectfully request all Editors of papers friendly to the cause of Religion and good order in this State to insert this publication."⁴⁹

The clash between members was far from over. His personal dignity and godly mission sullied in a very public way, Edward Musgrove waited until regular conference day at Big Creek Church, entered the meeting house as business was being conducted, and according to the *Anderson Gazette*, "this impudent cur had the effrontery to . . . walk up the aisle, enter the pulpit and commence his service, during all which time the Church kept calling on him through its deacon," while others were also "entreating him to desist." Rather than retreat, Musgrove sang, prayed, and exhorted, laying charges against Primitive minister John Vandiver, whose slightly more moderate attitude toward the New School offended him deeply, and in the end forcing the anti-Musgrove faction to withdraw from the church.⁵⁰ For the anti-Musgrove faction, the fiery preacher had gone too far. Their church minutes (recorded separately from the regular minute book, which was still in the hands of the rival faction) stated that "Musgrove entered the House and in the most insulting manner interrupted the church & congregation for which he was indited [*sic*] & found guilty [*sic*]."⁵¹ Angry members swore out an arrest warrant for Musgrove, who was jailed for disturbing religious services. Musgrove represented himself at his trial, which took place at the Anderson District Courthouse in April 1844. A judge found him guilty and sentenced him to a fine of three hundred dollars or to twelve months in prison.⁵²

Although the anti-Musgrove party viewed his behavior with outrage, Musgrove saw his actions as legitimate in the eyes of God. He especially resented his opponents for attempting to publicly discredit his religious character. In subsequent church meetings, Musgrove singled out individuals from the opposing faction whom he felt had compromised his religious

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, book 2, January 9, 1844.

⁴⁹ *Anderson Gazette*, January 20, 1844.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, April 5, 1844.

⁵¹ BCBC, book 2, February 2–3, 1844.

⁵² Garrett, *Saluda Baptist Association*, 110–111.

integrity before the public. The Old School preacher accused three church members—all products of the revival of the early 1830s—of “being guilty [*sic*] of backbiting Callumnating [*sic*] and abusing him to the brethern [*sic*] & the world for the last four months, Contrary to the gospel order.” In addition, Musgrove charged one of these men with “trying to raise confusion in the church or lay a charge against Musgrove for his objecting to a Missionary deacon Serving in our church.” Another in the group was “guilty of aiding, & corcusing [*sic*] with others to split the church or fellowship all sorts of Baptists the new School as well as the old, and boldly trying to justify himself as an Elder in doing so.”⁵³ A new generation of Big Creek members, initiated during the revival of the early 1830s, had come together to either support or tolerate missions, a position that Musgrove and his followers found anathema to the teachings of the Bible. As evidenced by his pulpit harangues, Musgrove believed that the members opposing him had no business belonging to a true Baptist church.

In defending their party's role in the schism that had divided both church and community, Musgrove and his followers carefully delineated their Primitive Baptist beliefs. They accepted the “articles of our faith at Big Creek as a church of the old School baptists,” which resolved that “in obedience with the apostle Paul a chosen vessel of God, we are disposed to Comply with that appossels [*sic*] orders & withdraw from all those that depart from the faith for the love of money.” Their command, they felt, came straight from the Bible: “Sd. Orders is on record 1. tim[othy] ch. 5 & 6 verse, as also 2nd tim and 3rd Chapter 5, V., and as we take the old and new testament for the onley [*sic*] rule of faith & practice we find that we must withdraw from such or disobey there [*sic*] Com'nds of the apostle above mentioned.” Should anyone think that God wanted more from His Church than was set forth in the Bible, Old School adherents warned,

Our answer is its not So for our proof look, duet. [Deuteronomy] 4. Ch. 2nd [verse] prob. [Proverbs] 30:6 Rev. [Revelation] 22: & 18; 19, and you will find that there is nothing to be added or deminished [*sic*] to his word and he does not require of us anything that he has not told us of and therefore brethern we are disposed to act as we Say & we will not say & then refuse to act as we Say, and if anyone Should Say that they are willing to withdraw from the institution and not from the brethern that patronises them Our answer is that the institution could do no harm if no one wood [*sic*] practice them and therefore Such people as practises them is the eye sore with us & is precisely the people we have no fellowship for, for this reason we think it wood be entirely in consistant [*sic*] Reasoning for any one to Say that he did not fellowship hors [*sic*] Raceing [*sic*] But that he did and wood fellowship the people that done thees [*sic*] things for what harm could hors [*sic*] rasing

⁵³ BCBC, book 1, January 8, 1844. Musgrove lodged his specific complaints against Miles Ellison, M. B. Williams, and Henry Lawless.

[sic] do if no one wood practice it & what harm could the institution do if no one wood practice it & therefore our resolution is as follows; that we as a church withdraw fellowship from all Benovilant institutions falsly [sic] So cald [sic] Such as the Baptist State Convention the temperate [sic] Society the track [sic] society the Sunday School Society, the Baptist furren [sic] Mishinn [sic] Society the Baptist Home Mishion [sic] Society & the abolition Society.⁵⁴

While Old School members at Big Creek blamed the opposite faction for the explosive division of the church, they also hoped that errant members would change their ways and again become part of the biblical fellowship. Members who remained loyal to Musgrove had asked for help from other churches within the Fork Shoal association, a customary response when congregational disunion occurred. They attested that their minister "had stated the facts and had not presented any thing [w]rong brethern." The three representatives, or "helps," from the neighboring Antimission churches returned a verdict in favor of the Old School faction at Big Creek, reporting that "we find no cause for such confusion by the church as has been reported and we sustain the church and Bro. Musgrove in full fellowship, according to our faith & constitution."⁵⁵ In addition, church members friendly to Musgrove approved a resolution contradicting the opposition's printed newspaper admonition about their leader.⁵⁶ The resolution, written July 20, 1844, appeared in the *Anderson Gazette* six days later. "We, the Baptist Church at Big Creek, feel disposed to give the public our reasons for sustaining Bro. Elder E. W. MUSGROVE in our fellowship," wrote church clerk John Gambrell, who then gave three grounds for the congregation's continued backing of its beleaguered minister. First, Baptists were not in the habit of excluding a member "on the authority of public clamor." Second, the church believed "a number of falsehoods" had been spread about Musgrove that his followers "were able to abundantly prove were basely false." And third, those circulating the rumors represented the disgruntled New School Baptists with whom Musgrove's faction refused to fellowship. Therefore, Old School Big Creek members felt "it to be our duty to sustain not only [Musgrove], but any other preacher of our order, from being so wrongfully put down, by misrepresentation and falsehood, as we do know some people have tried to exercise against him."⁵⁷

By the summer of 1844, Big Creek Baptist Church seemed irrevocably split. The ramifications for the surrounding community were severe. Neighbors who had once been brothers and sisters in Christ were now intensely divided over the past year's events. When a sort of healing process began to occur in

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, February 7, 1844.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, March 1, 1844.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, February 7, 1844.

⁵⁷ *Anderson Gazette*, July 27, 1844.

late 1844 and 1845, the actions of Edward Musgrove were once again central. Perhaps because he hoped to avoid serving a jail sentence, Musgrove and his wife applied for and received letters of dismissal from the Old School faction of Big Creek Church in November 1844, probably moving to Georgia shortly thereafter.⁵⁸ Almost immediately after his departure, Big Creek members who initially allied with Musgrove now began to shift their allegiance to the anti-Musgrove bloc. Sometimes in groups, sometimes individually—men, women, and slaves stopped attending the Primitive meetings, instead “rejoining” the opposing congregation. Many of the first members to leave the Primitive congregation after Musgrove’s departure had joined the church during the revival of the early 1830s. Jasper Williams, for instance, joined Big Creek Church in 1832, but sided with Musgrove during the schism of 1843 and 1844, soon thereafter becoming a deacon of the Primitive faction. When Musgrove left Big Creek, Williams switched his allegiance to the anti-Musgrove side. In August 1845, the Primitive faction excluded Williams as well as Sarah Pepper, Ann Cooley, and Elizabeth Wilson for joining “the Excluded party.” At least two of these three women had joined Big Creek Church during the revival of the early 1830s.⁵⁹

Despite defections, the Primitive faction continued to convene on a regular basis for worship. Various Antimission leaders preached to the group, but as membership declined, the congregation began meeting at the school house and then at the homes of members or friends. By 1847 the Antimission faction had begun to call itself the Big Creek Primitive Church; only one sermon text survives from these years, a “Fielding lecture” condemning the Arminian message of the Methodists, “which we hope,” noted the church clerk, “had a very good [e]ffect on the Congregation.”⁶⁰ Occasionally, new members joined the small group, but by January 1850, the Primitive church had decided to postpone business meetings indefinitely.⁶¹ The last recorded meeting of Big Creek Primitive Church occurred on March 2, 1850. After worship the moderator “inquired for the pease [*sic*] of the church,” and all was found at peace.⁶²

In contrast to Big Creek Primitives, the group that formed in opposition to Edward Musgrove grew steadily after the church divided. Antimission minister John Vandiver, the man who had been much maligned by Edward Musgrove, assisted with preaching during 1844. For undisclosed reasons, Vandiver did not continue his position at the church the following year. Perhaps Vandiver did not feel comfortable leading a congregation where prominent members voiced support for missions. Nevertheless, under new

⁵⁸ BCBC, book 1, November 16, 1844.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, August 16, 1845.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, May 7, 1848.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, January 5, 1850.

⁶² *Ibid.*, March 2, 1850.

church leaders, Big Creek in 1845 called a new minister, one clearly in the Missionary camp, William P. Martin. Martin, a seasoned Baptist preacher in his early fifties who already headed a congregation in adjacent Abbeville District, proved an important addition to the church, for he possessed a leadership ability and preaching style that had been absent on a regular basis at Big Creek since the days of Moses Holland. "Elder Martin was no ordinary man," remembered one Baptist. Although lacking a formal education, "he possessed a giant intellect, great wisdom and zeal, which made him a power among men." Martin's charismatic preaching style and personal demeanor made him a popular preacher: "Endowed with a commanding personal appearance, a strong sonorous voice, a fluent delivery, and an active imagination, he never failed to impress his hearers."⁶³ Martin, who owned six slaves in 1850, supported the Missionary goals of the Baptist state convention. Under his leadership, which lasted until 1873, Big Creek Church joined the Saluda Baptist Association in 1845, which in turn joined the South Carolina Baptist Convention in 1850. Brother Martin's sermons—and a changing religious culture—helped assure many members who had first supported the Primitive faction that Missionary efforts were spiritually and theologically acceptable. By the eve of the Civil War, Big Creek Baptist Church was heartily focusing not only on the spiritual health of its own congregation, but also on converting and reforming men and women in distant lands as well as close to home to hasten the millennium.⁶⁴

By the mid 1840s, the theological character of Big Creek Church had changed dramatically. A deeply divided congregation worked on healing and reconciliation under the guidance of a Missionary Baptist minister. No longer did the issue of Antimission sentiment create an open public schism. Many of those who initially followed the staunch Old School teachings of Edward Musgrove ultimately reunited with the New School faction, while others probably drifted away from the church altogether. What caused those members of Big Creek Church who originally opposed the Baptist state convention and its "manmade" reforms to change their outlook and hold membership in a congregation that supported missions? How did those members who embraced a Calvinistic view of salvation transition to a church setting that rapidly embraced Missionary activity? How can Big Creek Church serve as an example for the larger changes that took place in Baptist growth and ideology in South Carolina? Historians have partially explained the Primitive-Missionary conflict as a contest between two clashing ways of life. On one side of the spectrum were the Missionary Baptists, comprised of middle-class leaders who hoped to modernize their growing denomination; on the other,

⁶³ Garrett, *Saluda Baptist Association*, 110–112, 284–285.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 48–69, 110–112; Federal Manuscript Census for South Carolina, 1850, SCDAH.

the Primitive Baptists, usually from rural areas and often economically and socially marginalized. Primitives gradually gave into Missionary demands, according to this line of reasoning, because of their desire to become more middle class themselves.⁶⁵ Economics certainly played a part in the story. Anderson District, like the rest of the up country, slowly integrated into a statewide market economy, ensuring greater cross-communication of new ideas and values—including differing theological visions for South Carolina Baptists. Along the way, some up-country Baptists may have joined the Baptist state convention, which originated under the leadership of wealthier, urban low-country leaders, in order to enhance their own status. Others found the millennial enthusiasm of Missionary Baptists infectious and genuinely came to believe that Missionary reform would help to prepare God's earthly kingdom.

At Big Creek Baptist Church, the Missionary faction was neither dominated by older, wealthier church leaders nor spear-headed by an ambitious, younger group. Instead, a different type of generational shift was occurring by the 1830s. Many of the first and even second generation of Big Creek members, men and women who had worshipped as Separate Baptists, were dead. Revival brought an influx of members early in the decade who had greater exposure to competing theological ideas, including the enthusiastic, millennial views espoused by Missionary Baptists. Throughout the 1830s, most in the church remained opposed to missions, but by the early 1840s, the congregation seemed content to tolerate members who proclaimed the merits of Missionary activity. Whether this tolerance represented the church's slow evolution toward full support for missions or a simple desire to maintain unity and harmony is difficult to ascertain. What is certain is that the harmony and unity was shattered when Edward Musgrove, a dyed-in-the-wool Primitive, arrived at Big Creek and attempted to steer the church in one direction only. Musgrove's disruptive personality pushed the congregation to its breaking point, causing men and women to divide into two competing factions and forcing many members to choose a cause they were unsure of over a minister whose actions met their clear disapproval.

The significance of both leadership and revivalism to the eclipse of Primitive Baptists in South Carolina, then, begs further research and scrutiny. The large number of converts who joined Big Creek Church during the revival of the 1830s proved a shot in the arm for the congregation, drastically altering its size and voice. In the process, however, the revival led to the downfall of an older version of the church. Although the congregation showed signs of theological disunity as early as the 1820s, the religious awakening deepened that disagreement. Some members of the revival generation adamantly ad-

⁶⁵ Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture*, 106–135; Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, 124–128.

hered to Primitive beliefs, but many others, particularly in the midst of widespread anger over the actions of controversial leader Edward Musgrove, entertained and eventually embraced a millennial, Missionary Baptist vision for Big Creek Church. And while white males were the most visible players in the Primitive-Missionary schism, at least in terms of information recorded in church minutes, women and slaves had roles in shaping conflict and consensus as well. While initially accelerating theological controversy at Big Creek Baptist Church, the revival of the early 1830s ultimately helped solidify congregational unity. Similar transitions occurring in other up-country churches fostered greater denominational harmony, allowing Baptists to forge an identity that would become an increasingly important part of both secular and religious culture during the decades leading to the Civil War.

BOOK REVIEWS

Thomas Green Clemson. Edited by Alma Bennett. (Clemson, S.C.: Clemson University Digital Press, 2009. Pp. xviii, 358; \$29.95, cloth.)

The authors of this anthology present a convincing argument that Thomas Green Clemson was a “nineteenth-century Renaissance man” (p. xi). Nevertheless, Clemson’s most enduring achievement came at the end of his life, through a bequest for what became Clemson University. Written to commemorate the two hundredth anniversary of Clemson’s birth, *Thomas Green Clemson* sheds light on the role of philanthropy and philanthropists in public higher education, a subject of growing importance as taxpayers demonstrate increasing reluctance to support state colleges and universities.

A native Pennsylvanian educated in Europe, Clemson married Anna Maria Calhoun, daughter of Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, in 1838. Prior to the Civil War, he managed Calhoun’s plantation, served as a United States diplomat in Belgium, observed the progress of agricultural and technical education in Europe, and later resided outside of Washington in Prince George’s County, Maryland. Clemson played a leading role in the 1856 founding of the Maryland Agricultural College; supported the prewar efforts of Vermont congressman Justin S. Morrill to use public lands to further agricultural education; and in 1860 took the federal post of superintendent of agriculture. The following year, he resigned to join the Confederate army. Following the war, Clemson returned to South Carolina, where he resided until his death, spending much of the time at his late father-in-law’s home, Fort Hill.

During his life, Clemson demonstrated skill and interest in a multitude of subjects, including mining, engineering, chemistry, art, and music. He submitted articles to the scientific journals of his day. Following his marriage to Anna Maria Calhoun, Clemson’s interest in agriculture, a subject that also concerned his father-in-law, only increased. With the passage of time, both Thomas and Anna Maria became committed proponents of agricultural education, and upon his death in 1888, Thomas left the bulk of his estate to further the cause in South Carolina. Clemson’s last will and testament put his adopted state in a difficult position: South Carolina could either found a college devoted to agricultural and technical education or appear ungrateful to the daughter and son-in-law of the late Senator Calhoun.

After political and legal wrangling, the state established the school named in Clemson’s honor. Opened in 1893, that institution became custodian of the federal funds provided through the Morrill (1862) and Hatch (1887) Acts. The Morrill Act allowed instruction in any subject, but required courses in agriculture, mechanics, and military tactics. The Hatch Act provided support for applied research in agriculture. The new school’s academic