

The Rise of the Baptists in South Carolina: Origins, Revival, and their Enduring Legacy

Steven C. Pruitt

Liberty University, spruitt2@liberty.edu

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Abstract

Baptists have played an important role in the development of the religious landscape in the United States since the First Great Awakening. This religious sect's core of influence eventually migrated south around the turn of the nineteenth century. A battle over the soul of the South would be waged by the Baptists, along with the Methodists, and Presbyterians also moving into the area. This Protestant surge coincided with the decrease in influence of the Episcopal (Anglican) Church after ties with England were severed. In many ways, this battle for the future would occur in the newly settled backcountry of South Carolina. The influx of yeoman farmers pouring into the backcountry were an eager audience to the message of the Separate Baptists that espoused "rejecting creeds and paying little attention to formal doctrine" and in turn focusing on "manifesting a deep belief in the power of the Holy Spirit, and emotional and egalitarian ... worship practices." These great numbers of Separate Baptists would eventually coalesce with the other Baptist sects in the State to dominate the religious landscape. This united group used a variety of factors, including the Convention Plan of Richard Furman, to achieve this eventual dominance. This Convention Plan would become the blueprint on which other state conventions in the South were modeled and ultimately led the way for the Southern Baptist Convention. Most historians give credit for many of the successes of Southern Baptists in the twentieth century to this Convention Plan that completed Baptist denominational unification in South Carolina.

Keywords

South Carolina, Baptists, Evangelical Movement, Convention Plan, Second Great Awakening, Richard Furman

Introduction

The Baptist faith has gone through quite a metamorphosis since its roots were planted in the sixteenth century. These roots grew from the original theses of radical change Martin Luther proposed in 1517. Martin Luther voiced direct dissent to the Roman Catholic Church for whom many had seen as distorting the gospel of God's grace. Dissenters claimed that this Catholic distortion came from the church's "teaching that salvation comes from the hands of the priests through the administration of the sacraments in response to human works and merit."¹ This Protestant Reformation would express itself in many ways and within many denominations through the years. Most of all it would be the beginning to eventually bring about the Evangelical movement. Evangelicals all claim that life involves a personal relationship with God in Christ and is established through the Holy Spirit. This creates a profound emotional conversion experience during this realization of faith. This "New Birth" instills a desire to a "life of holiness characterized by religious devotion, moral discipline, and missionary zeal."² None of these Evangelical sects springing up through time would be more important for the culture and enduring legacy of the Southern United States, than the Baptists. Many denominations vied for the soul of the South but this spiritual battle eventually became dominated through a long series of events by Baptists. To a large degree this was a result of the success that Baptists had in the South Carolina upcountry, and eventually the entire state. (The upcountry will be defined as the area in the state north of present day Columbia and extending northwestern to both the North Carolina and Georgia state lines. It will also be used interchangeably with backcountry for the purposes of this paper).

Baptist origins and the Evangelical movement

Baptist origins stem from forces in England that were at work during the same time as the great Calvinism-Armenianism debate was raging in Holland in the early 17th century. It was these forces that would ultimately give rise to the movement that started the modern Baptist denomination. These resultant Baptists sects that arose in England, split ideologically along the same concepts of election which were boiling over in Holland. The General Baptists arose holding the belief in universal or general atonement. Thus, they viewed Jesus's death as being for no one in particular but for everyone in general. The Particular Baptists, on the other hand, were much more Calvinistic in their stance. They viewed Christ's atonement as not a way to make salvation possible for everyone in general but to pay for the sins of a particular people, the elect.³ The other branch that would come into being later in the American Colonies would be known as the Separate Baptists. This movement stemmed from what would become the First Great Awakening and is seen by many to be a direct result of George Whitefield's fiery preaching.

The growth of Evangelical denominations and thought in the United States was not uniform by any means and varied both in geography and in time. The Puritans of New England,

¹ Thomas K. Ascol, "From the Protestant Reformation to the Southern Baptist Convention: What Hath Geneva to Do with Nashville?," *The Founders Journal* (Fall 2007): 4, Accessed February 2, 2017, <http://founders.org/main/wp-content/uploads/fj70.pdf>.

² Donald G. Mathews, *Religion in the Old South*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977, XVI.

³ Joshua Guthman, *Strangers Below: Primitive Baptists and American Culture*, Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015, 25.

founded from the beginning with a religious backing, were bound from their foundation with a social legacy in the form of covenants. This impacted the future path and how the Evangelical mindset in which the individual was subservient to the social order at large would play out. In contrast the debatable late rise of southern evangelicalism would “inherit neither institutions nor ideas to facilitate the development of a social ethic.”⁴ Many including Little⁵ and Smith⁶, claim that evangelism was present in the traditionally Anglican Lower South during this time and started much sooner than is commonly assumed, as early as the beginning of the 18th century. This small evangelical foothold was due not only to the early dissenters that moved in and promoted evangelicalism, but also the role they played as bridge builders to influence greater acceptance from the traditionally Anglican populations.⁷

Baptists in the United States and their Southern migration

The Baptist movement in the United States manifested itself in many different ways. The three main lines of thought stemming from these movements would all be represented: The General, Regular, and Separate Baptists. The Baptists in the United States had most of their early support in the northern and middle colonies. One of the most influential early forces that developed was the Philadelphia Association. Pennsylvania was found to be a fruitful location for Baptist preachers looking to spread their good news to the New World. The Particular or “Regular” Baptists of the Philadelphia Association would be both directly and indirectly responsible for much of the future growth of the denomination that would occur in the South. The first Baptist church in the South was originally started in Kittery, Maine by William Screven in 1682. Screven and the congregation moved the church to Charleston, SC in 1696. This would eventually, with the influence of the Philadelphia Association and new leader Oliver Hart, lead to the development of the Charleston Association in 1751.⁸

During this same time, another wave of influence was moving through the interior of America. As the First Great Awakening progressed through the colonies in the 1730’s and 1740’s, significant impacts were felt in the Baptist faith. Many who came to faith during this period did so under the influence of George Whitefield. Eventually many of the Congregationalist churches that came into being during this Awakening would eventually become Baptist. Churches born out of this revival became known as “New Lights” or Separate Baptists and this movement would soon spread Southward. Virginia participated in a series of religious revivals during the mid-eighteenth century that was “crucial in rooting the Baptist Church in the South.”⁹ The most influential person in this southward movement of the Separate Baptists was Shubal Stearns, a New England missionary preacher. He felt led to leave New England in 1754 for Virginia. He soon moved through Virginia and settled in Guilford County,

⁴ Mathews, *Old South*, 41.

⁵ Thomas J. Little. “The Origins of Southern Evangelicalism: Revivalism in South Carolina, 1700-1740,” *Church History*, Vol. 75, No. 4, (Dec. 2006): 807-808.

⁶ Samuel C. Smith, *A Cautious Enthusiasm: Mystical Piety and Evangelicalism in Colonial South Carolina*, Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, 2013, 5.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Jewel L. Spangler, “Becoming Baptists: Conversion in Colonial and Early National Virginia,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 67, No. 2, (May 2001): 243.

NC and started Sandy Creek Baptist Church.¹⁰ This was the first Separate Baptist Church in the South. Stearns started with sixteen people in his little church, but after three years this had expanded to three churches including a total membership in excess of 900. In 1758, these churches formed the Sandy Creek Association, which would eventually give rise to “forty-two churches and produce 125 ministers.”¹¹

Early Baptists in South Carolina

The first appearance of Baptists in South Carolina was at the coast in Charleston. Some traditions have this date of first arrival as early as 1683.¹² These Baptists who settled in Charleston were of the mainstream Calvinistic English Baptist tradition, known as Regular or Particular Baptists. The influence of this Charleston Congregation was increased in December of 1749, with the arrival of Pennsylvanian Oliver Hart to assume command. He immediately built up his congregation and provided leadership for the nearby churches. One of Hart’s greatest accomplishments came on October 21, 1751 with the formation of the Charleston Baptist Association. This would have long lasting consequences, for the Charleston Association “furnished a model for the other associations in the South, as also for the General Association or State Conventions of the section.”¹³

A second migration of Baptists into the state was the Welsh Baptists of the Pee Dee section. These Baptists originated from the Welsh Tract in Pennsylvania. Based on evidence that remains, these appear to have been General Baptists, even though this data is not conclusive.¹⁴ They were close enough to Charleston and the other low-country churches that they were held to Regular standards.¹⁵ These Baptists would be eventually absorbed in the larger Regular Baptist landscape.

The third migration of Baptists into the state was in the backcountry during the late 1750’s and early 1760’s. These Separate Baptists migrated south from Virginia and North Carolina. In the upcountry of South Carolina, these Separate Baptists became the dominant denomination and were church plants from the missionary center of Sandy Creek Baptist Church in North Carolina. These 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 community.”¹⁶ These “New Lights” grew out of the Great Awakening and were fueled in the Backcountry by the large numbers of Ulster Scots streaming into the colony. Separate Baptists gave a greater urgency to missions and evangelism than was typical of Baptist life. This aggressive pursuit of souls fit in well in the harsh environment of the backcountry, in which the difficulties of rural life “furnished

¹⁰ Josh Powell, “Shubal Stearns and the Separate Baptist Tradition,” *The Founders Journal* (Spring 2001): 16, Accessed October 18, 2016, <http://founders.org/fj44/shubal-stearns-and-the-separate-baptist-tradition/>.

¹¹ Ascol, “Protestant Reformation,” 13.

¹² J. Glen Clayton, “South Carolina Baptist Records,” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 85, no. 4 (1984): 320, Accessed September 14, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27567874>.

¹³ Clayton, “South Carolina Baptist Records,” 321.

¹⁴ Loulie Latimer Owens, *Saints of Clay: The Shaping of South Carolina Baptists* (Columbia, SC: The R.L. Bryan Company, 1971), 30.

¹⁵ Leah Townsend, *South Carolina Baptists, 1607-1805*, Florence, S.C.: The Florence printing company, 1935, 413.

¹⁶ Kimberly R. Kellison, “South Carolina Baptists, The Primitive-Missionary Schism, and the Revival of the Early 1830’s.” *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 110, no. 3/4 (2009): 158-159, Accessed September 14, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25745982>.

the people with a surfeit of hardship, boredom, sickness, and death.”¹⁷ The habit of Separates of “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” was very attractive to the masses of yeoman farmers in the Backcountry. One of the most prominent of the Separate preachers coming into the Backcountry of South Carolina was Rev. Philip Mulkey. Rev. Mulkey became a Baptist in 1756 and was ordained as a minister in October of 1757. He was associated with the Sandy Creek Association and soon led a group of thirteen from “Deep River in North Carolina to Broad River in South Carolina.”¹⁸ This group incorporated as Fairforest Baptist Church in the Backcountry of South Carolina and soon grew to a congregation of over a hundred. Fairforest Baptist Church is the oldest Baptist church in the backcountry and its influence was widely felt. Rev. Mulkey was very influential in the planting of many of the early churches in the backcountry of South Carolina. Besides his central congregation, there were several offshoots, “One at Lawsons Fork; One at Catawba in North Carolina; One at Thickety; and one at Enoree...”¹⁹ His work would continue to blossom and expand through the years.

The Second Great Awakening (the Great Revival)

As time went on through the turmoil of The American Revolution in the late eighteenth century, communities and congregations throughout the colonies were severely disrupted. Many of these congregations were never the same after the war and some ceased to exist all together (particularly in the south). This, along with the perceived widespread secularization of society, caused many to pray for revival in the new Union. This revival finally came around the turn of the 19th century, from around 1795 through the 1830’s. With its large timeframe and “its many expressions,” many historians have debated if the Second great awakening can be identified as one event.²⁰ Regardless of view on this point, this time period turned out to be “the most influential revival of Christianity in the history of the United States.”²¹

As opposed to the First Great Awakening, which most claim had its greatest impact on the northeastern colonies, the Second Great Awakening’s power was most solidly felt in the South. Most credit the start of this era to the last few years of the eighteenth century, when Presbyterian minister James McGready’s church in Kentucky started to pray on a regular basis for the conversion of sinners in their community and throughout the world. This led to an electric spiritual environment and a then a few years later the great “camp meeting” at Cane Ridge, KY. This was a non-denominational event – attracting Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists – and all races of people.²² Through the next several years just as this “awakening enthusiasm” traveled from Gasper River to Cane Ridge in Kentucky, it “swept back over the entire South with amazing rapidity.”²³

¹⁷ John B. Boles, *The Great Revival: Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1996, 141.

¹⁸ Townsend, *South Carolina Baptists*, 413.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 420

²⁰ Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in The United States and Canada*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992, 166.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 167.

²³ Boles, *Great Revival*, 70.

In South Carolina, the upcountry was to be “the stage of most of the state’s revival activity.”²⁴ There were many reasons for this area providing more tinder for the revivalistic fires to burn bright. First, this was the area where Separate Baptist influence was the strongest. By tradition, this sect was known to be emotional, revivalistic, and to place a great emphasis on missions and evangelism. In coastal South Carolina, the Regular Baptists were the dominant denomination, along with what remained of the Episcopal congregations. Both of these groups were both built on a more traditional, formal, non-emotional, and creed oriented foundation. Second, this area was mostly composed of small farmers, as opposed to large landowners near Charleston that were more likely to be occupied by “politics, markets, and slavery.”²⁵ Many of the yeoman farmers understood how uncertain and ephemeral life could be. Common rural life for most people in the upcountry was “often literally short, nasty, and brutish.”²⁶ Faced with this reality “thousands throughout the South found immense attraction in the glorious release offered by ministerial descriptions of redemption and heaven.”²⁷ When this awareness of physical condition and accepted religious belief finally intersected with the increased revivalistic fervor of the Great Awakening, people became electrically stirred by the Good News. Camp meetings arrived in South Carolina in 1802 and with the revival, congregations grew exponentially. For example, the Bethel Baptist Association in the upcountry of South Carolina, grew from 2,690 converts in 1802 to 4,029 in just three years.²⁸ This growth and development would ebb and flow throughout the next twenty plus years with much success. In South Carolina, as opposed to some other areas of the South, the most significant time of this revival came near the end during the 1830’s.

Revival of the 1830’s

The Second Great Awakening waxed and waned during the early 1800’s, as hot spots popped up in various locations and cooled down in others. As it progressed it became “the most important single generation in the modern history not merely of English religion but of the whole Christian world.”²⁹ In South Carolina, the greatest time of revival for this whole period did not come until the 1830’s. Congregations had their numbers skyrocket and converts poured in. Many factors have been credited with playing a role into this explosion of evangelical movement during this time. Some cite the “nullification crisis” as playing a key role. This seems to be supported by Baptist Minister Luther Broadus, who states that “In the midst of this political fermentation the most remarkable religious awakening of this century, if not in the history of this country, took place.” He also states that some of the “strongest and most influential Churches in South Carolina had their origin” during this time of revival in the early 1830’s.³⁰ Still others point to a nationwide Cholera epidemic also as a potential contributing factor. Even with all of these reasons factored in, one cannot forget the still smoldering religious fervor of the time, the increase in organization by Baptists in the 1820’s, as well as all the hard work and time put into

²⁴ Ibid., 78-79.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 118.

²⁷ Ibid., 119.

²⁸ Ibid., 185

²⁹ Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989, 220.

³⁰ Kimberly R. Kellison, "South Carolina Baptists, The Primitive-Missionary Schism, and the Revival of the Early 1830's." *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 110, no. 3/4 (2009): 165, Accessed September 14, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25745982>.

evangelism and missions by many dedicated leaders in the preceding decades. Regardless of cause, “at no time in the antebellum South, with the exception of the massive conversions experienced during the Great Revival, did church membership increase as sharply as it did during the early 1830s.”³¹ 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.”³² This is seen even more clearly as we look at a few individual churches just through the lens of 1832 alone. In January 2, 1832, Fork Shoals Baptist Church received 25 converts “by experience.”³³ Around this same time, January-March 1832, Mountain Creek had 25 come forward “by experience” and join their congregation.³⁴ Summer proved to be even more fruitful than the start of the year. Brushy Creek Baptist Church was among these congregations that saw great revival during this period. They experienced on July 8, 1832, as stated in their church records, that “a great many came forward” and it was potentially “the largest [number] ever known in the district for a common church meeting.”³⁵ This congregation continued to see steady growth.³⁶ As well as nearby Unity Baptist Church, who had 52 “received by experience”³⁷ between May 19-July 14, 1832. Also in the month of July, Standing Springs Baptist Church “received by experience” 32 new members.³⁸ Then in September of 1832 alone, Friendship Baptist received 18 new members “by experience” and then 21 more “Rec’d” in Nov/Dec.³⁹ We continue to see this throughout the year in the Upcountry with Mt. Zion Baptist receiving 27⁴⁰ and Reedy River Baptist Church, 35⁴¹, “by experience” both during a two-month period. The significance of these records must be considered in light of, at the time these very small churches were in extremely rural locations, so by their standards these were large gains in membership.

Baptist relations within the state

During this time of great revival from 1795 through the 1830’s, all of the mainline denominations in South Carolina flourished. A gradual coalescing of the state’s Baptists though would progressively propel their dominance over the spiritual lives of South Carolina’s residents.

³¹ Ibid., 155.

³² Ibid., 154.

³³ Fork Shoals Baptist Church Records, South Carolina Baptist Association Collection, Furman University Special Collections, Greenville, SC.

³⁴ Mountain Creek Baptist Church Records, South Carolina Baptist Association Collection, Furman University Special Collections, Greenville, SC.

³⁵ Brushy Creek Baptist Church Records. South Carolina Baptist Association Collection. Furman University Special Collections, Greenville, SC.

³⁶ Susan Frazier Kahl, *The Bicentennial History of Brushy Creek Baptist Church, Taylors, South Carolina 1794-1994*, Taylors, SC: Brushy Creek Baptist Church, 1994.

³⁷ Unity Baptist Church Records, South Carolina Baptist Association Collection, Furman University Special Collections, Greenville, SC.

³⁸ Standing Springs Baptist Church Records, South Carolina Baptist Association Collection, Furman University Special Collections, Greenville, SC.

³⁹ Friendship Baptist Church Records, South Carolina Baptist Association Collection, Furman University Special Collections, Greenville, SC.

⁴⁰ Mount Zion Baptist Church Records, South Carolina Baptist Association Collection, Furman University Special Collections, Greenville, SC.

⁴¹ Reedy River Baptist Church Records, South Carolina Baptist Association Collection, Furman University Special Collections, Greenville, SC.

There had historically been distinct differences between the different groups of Baptists – Separate, Regular, and General that were scattered throughout the state. The most distinct and independent minded were the Separates. They had many unique qualities including three new kinds of rites in addition to the “traditional Protestant sacraments of the Lord’s Supper, and Baptism, to express the newness of their community.”⁴² The Separates claimed scriptural support for the implementation of these traditions. Regardless of the theological legitimacy of these, they helped juxtapose the old world and societal norms of the day (in which little physical contact was conveyed), to the new life in Christ in which they reinforced their communal solidarity and Christian love for one another. The first of these included symbolic acts “which emphasized the communities concern for persons in special circumstances either because of age, health, or official duties of the church.”⁴³ These included: devoting children to Christ, anointing the sick, and the laying on of hands. The second included opportunities for the congregation to express their sense of God’s love for them publicly. This included a love feast. Then the third involved “acts which reaffirmed their Christian commitment to one another.”⁴⁴ These included the washing of feet, the kiss of charity, and the right hand of fellowship. The other Baptist sects did not share any of these rites and many thought them strange. Theologically though the different Baptist groups were close enough that an eventual merging started to occur between the groups in the state in the early part of the 19th century.⁴⁵ Much of this work toward unification was initiated by the Charleston Association and the work of Richard Furman. Building on the work of Oliver Hart, Furman set out to bring all Baptists in the state together for common purposes.⁴⁶ His genius was “his method of combining a number of ideas from many sources to form his ‘convention plan’.”⁴⁷ This organization led to the formation of the South Carolina Baptist Convention in 1821. This was a blueprint for other state conventions to form in the South and then climax with the eventual formation of the Southern Baptist Convention. Many of the smaller issues such as inclusion of rituals and rites and how all that looked under a loose common leadership played itself out over the next few decades. We see an example of this from the church minutes of Standing Springs Baptist Church. On April 14, 1832, they decide that “The church agree[s] to consult on the ordinance of washing feet and g[ive] their opinion in respect to that ordinance again next meeting.”⁴⁸ What made up the typical “Baptist” at this time was still in flux. Many of the rites of the Separate Baptists were eventually integrated into the typical Southern Baptist Church and are still practiced today, such as devoting children and the right hand of fellowship (when new members join shaking the hands of the entire congregation). The strengths of each sect helped to make the denomination more well-rounded as the process of unification occurred within the state. The Separates helped “bring into practice the evangelistic convictions of the Regulars” and in turn the Regulars helped the Separates “give expression to their theological convictions.”⁴⁹

⁴² Mathews, *Old South*, 26.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 66.

⁴⁶ James A. Rogers, *Richard Furman: Life and Legacy*, United States of America, Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1985.

⁴⁷ Clayton, “South Carolina Baptists,” 321.

⁴⁸ Standing Springs Baptist Church Records, South Carolina Baptist Association Collection, Furman University Special Collections, Greenville, SC.

⁴⁹ Powell, “Separate Baptist Tradition,” 72.

This time of unification by many Baptists in revival, organization, and numerical increase during this first half of the 19th century, was not marked without controversy. Two factions emerged in the denomination, known as Primitive, or Old School, and Missionary, or New School Baptists. These were “labels that did not correspond to a particular sect but rather evoked those believer’s association with what Primitives considered the objectionable traits of modern evangelicalism.”⁵⁰ The primitives condemned other Baptists for the elevation of the newly formed missionary and benevolent organizations, as they saw it at least, above the authority of the local church. They also were adamantly against the “new measures” of the day. These included such things that played on the emotions of potential converts, such as the “anxious bench,” the precursor of today’s altar call. This schism between the two, Primitive and missionary, created a gulf in many congregations and associations. The Primitive Baptists rejection of modern evangelicalism, innovations in doctrine, and the emergent mission’s movement, would eventually lead to its demise. This anti-mission creed of the Primitives was partially related to the threat of loss of the local church autonomy. In a much more embedded sense it was due to their hyper-Calvinist theological viewpoint. In their mind, they knew “that God had decided, even before the foundation of the world, who among the planet’s later inhabitants would be saved and who would be damned. They knew as well that not only could they never know or understand God’s decision, they could do nothing to alter it.”⁵¹ With this mindset, they only were open to helping facilitate conversions among their own congregations and adamantly opposed outreach to the un-churched masses because spiritual awakening could only be caused by God alone.

Eventually unity did occur between most Baptists in the state, under the Missionary and generic “Baptist” banner. The missionary Baptists became the dominant sect for various reasons. Their leaders were wealthier and better educated, they embraced new methods, and most importantly unlike Primitives, the Missionary Baptists looked to develop new efforts to attract and convert new members. This schism was amplified by this time of largescale revival of the early 1830s in the state. This time proved to be an important step in building this Missionary Baptist unity through this dissociation with the Primitives. The new members recruited during the revival had little knowledge of the theological conflict and were open to those who sought them out, the Missionary Baptists. The influence and image of these Baptists were enhanced because of this factor among both the white and black population of the state. This unifying of Baptists state wide by the result of the Great Revival, the Missionary/Primitive schism and the formation of the South Carolina Baptist Association led to their continued success through the current day.

Conclusions

The rise of the Baptists during the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century had a huge influence on South Carolina, including religiously, politically, and socially. From the early increase of Separate Baptists in the upcountry, they had a significant impact on the region and was one of the many new denominations that thrived in this early backcountry. The impact of this “early claim of the Separate Baptists to the upcountry population” would be responsible “for the numerical dominance of the Baptists over other religious bodies in South Carolina in the

⁵⁰ Guthman, *Strangers Below*, 22.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

19th and 20th centuries.”⁵² Accompanied with the later Merging of the different Baptists factions in the early part of the 19th century, they became the dominant force both in their communities and in an ever-expanding way throughout the world with missions. They accomplished this progression in many ways across this span of time. These factors included, the use of aggressive strategies for outreach⁵³, their combination of determined congregationalism and institutional association⁵⁴, implementation of modern organizational abilities⁵⁵, being a guiding light during times of political turmoil⁵⁶, using aggressive measures and missions⁵⁷, and being flexible enough with traditional Calvinism to adjust to the American environment⁵⁸. All of these made Baptists a powerful force in South Carolina and throughout the South. The systematic incorporation of these factors would eventually leave the Baptist’s spiritual competitors (Methodists, Presbyterians, Primitive Baptists, etc.) lagging far behind, in both numbers and influence. Most historians that study the Southern Baptists usually give credit for many of the successes of Southern Baptists in the twentieth century to the Convention Plan that really completed Baptist denominational unification in South Carolina. This Convention Plan was the blueprint on which other state conventions in the South were modeled and ultimately led the way for the Southern Baptist Convention.⁵⁹

⁵² Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 44.

⁵³ Noll, *History of Christianity*, 180.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Owens, *Saints of Clay*, 66.

⁵⁶ Kellison, “South Carolina Baptists,” 154.

⁵⁷ Hatch, *Democratization*, 15.

⁵⁸ Noll, *History of Christianity*, 180.

⁵⁹ Clayton, “South Carolina Baptists,” 321.

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